FOLLOWER BEHAVIOUR IN THE GERMAN SERVICE INDUSTRY:

RESEARCH CONSTRUCTS AND LIVED EXPERIENCES JUXTAPOSED

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DEDICATION

To Dorothea

In loving memory of my grandma, who shared her incredible sense of humour, her love for books, and her humble appreciation for words with me.

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ABBREVIATIONS

B2B	Business-to-business
B2C	Business-to-consumer
EBO	Employee back office
EFL	Employee front line
EU	European Union
FB	Follower Behaviour
GLOBE	Global Leadership and Organizational Behaviour Effectiveness
HR	Human Resources
IfM	Institut für Mittelstandsforschung
	[institute for research on small and medium-sized enterprises (Mittelstand)]
IFT	Implicit Followership Theories
LMX	Leader Member Exchange
MBO	Manager back office
MFL	Manager front line
OCB	Organizational Citizenship Behaviour
RVQ	Review Question
SET	Social Exchange Theory
SLR	Systematic Literature Review
TPB	Theory of Planned Behaviour
UoG	University of Gloucestershire

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this social constructionist research is to explore practitioners' understanding of follower behaviour in terms of its conceptualization, process, and sense-making in the German service industry, and to provide an agenda for future research.

A hybrid approach, combining a narrative and systematic review is implemented to achieve richness. The narrative review reveals that followership research, as an emerging field of investigation, is gaining a growing academic community. In organizational contexts, voluntariness has been proposed to distinguish between formal and informal followership. The latter is linked to followers' beliefs about traits, attitudes, and behaviours associated with their responsibilities. The systematic literature review in this thesis problematizes the missing understanding of the meaning and conceptualization of follower behaviour.

To address this, the data from 40 narrative interviews with formal managers and employees are analysed with template analysis. Findings indicate that follower behaviour is context-sensitive, meaning that voluntariness and expectations vary across organizations, cultures, and individuals. The informality of follower behaviour suggests that it can be exhibited not only towards formal line managers, but also towards organizations, immaterial concepts, groups, or individuals. The follower role can be adopted by all individuals in the organization, regardless of their formal position, if they have the potential and opportunity to do so. Follower behaviours serve as a source of psychological contract maintenance, self-affirmation, and organizational success. Furthermore, they constitute a platform for self-presentation.

The findings provide insights to the lived experiences of a relatively small number of participants and, therefore, need to be viewed in light of moderatum generalization. Nevertheless, this thesis makes several contributions. First, it offers a conceptualization of follower behaviour and voluntariness in organizational contexts demarcating follower behaviour from other concepts. Second, it offers future research directions by revealing a plurality of process and meaning layers and suggesting the psychological contract, self-enhancement, and self-verification as explanatory theories.

AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

I declare that the work in this thesis was carried out in accordance with the regulations of the University of Gloucestershire and is original except where indicated by specific reference in the text. No part of the thesis has been submitted as part of any other academic award. The thesis has not been presented to any other education institute in the United Kingdom or overseas.

Any views expressed in the thesis are those of the author and in no way represent those of the University.

Signed …………………………………….. Date ……………………………..

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1 INTRODUCTION

"The only definition of a leader is someone who has followers."

Peter F. Drucker (1993, p. 103)

Contemporary companies that seek to establish an attractive employer brand often have a high-quality leadership development programme to emphasize personal advancement opportunities, but few also invest in developing employees who do not have a formal leadership role (Riggio, 2020). A similar pattern surfaces in academic considerations: leaders, their actions, personalities, and influence are well researched, while examination of followers is barely beyond its infancy (Uhl-Bien & Carsten, 2018). However, as the introductory quote by Peter F. Drucker highlights, followers play a significant role, as there would be no leaders without them, making the two concepts interdependent (Blom & Alvesson, 2015). Therefore, followership should be given more attention both in practice and in research. Yet, before such meaningful consideration can occur, careful attention must be given to what constitutes a 'follower'. For instance, are 'employee' and 'follower' synonyms? If so, why do we need two constructs? Can leaders (or managers) also be followers? And what do followers do when they are following? In the initial reflections on followership that are apparent in the literature, its complexity and limited conceptual understanding become evident (Alvesson & Blom, 2022). This research integrates a narrative and a systematic literature review (see chapters 2 and 3) using a hybrid approach and, thereby, providing a rich understanding of existing definitions and conceptualizations in the research field of followership and follower behaviour. Additionally, it aims to contribute to understanding practitioners' experience, and meaning of follower behaviour and, as such, it adds to the creation of balance between leadership and followership research. Furthermore, it is conducted in the hope that organizations will be better equipped to realize the potential of their entire workforce and acknowledge the worth of both leadership and followership.

1.1 RESEARCH FIELD

The concept of leadership has been of interest to researchers and practitioners for some time. Leadership has been investigated variously, starting with leaders' personalities, their behaviour, and then by focusing on the situation and influencing factors (Judge et al., 2002; Riggio, 2006). In the 1990s, researchers, such as Kelley (1992, 1998) and Chaleff (1995) took up the term 'followership' and by doing so introduced a new perspective. Until then, researchers had essentially focused on leaders and the outcome of their actions and presupposed a situational perspective on employees. Kelley and Chaleff, however, saw employees as individuals who are not merely a situational factor but part of the leadership process. Nonetheless, contemporary research is still chiefly leadership-centred, as followership is investigated as a supportive function for leadership rather than an interlinked, but equally important, concept.

A significant shift in the approach towards followership took place more than 15 years ago, when Shamir (2007) emphasized that researchers, such as Meindl (1990, 1995) and Collinson (2005) had already criticized the assumption that followers are part of the leadership concept, albeit in the form of passively receiving the leader's influence. However, there was also recognition that such research had not changed the way leadership was approached in their work. Shamir, therefore, encouraged scholars to 'reverse the lens' and see followers as an influence on leaders. Since Shamir's (2007) call to reverse the lens and to engage in follower-centred research, the appreciation of followership has increased and advanced into a distinctive area of interest for researchers (Riggio, 2014). This growing scholarly attention is supported by the first published textbook on followership (Linville & Rennaker, 2022) and the recent establishment of an academic conference focusing solely on followership (Chaleff, 2021). The published papers led to meta-reviews on the topic, emphasizing its increasing prominence and relevance (Bastardoz & Van Vugt, 2019; Crossman & Crossman, 2011; Epitropaki et al., 2017; Leung et al., 2018; Uhl-Bien et al., 2014), hence, framing the impetus for this research.

1.2 PERSONAL REFLECTION

My interest in followership originates in my professional experience as a Human Resource (HR) Business Partner. During my time as an HR Business Partner at a large retail company, I worked with many leaders, and I remember one conversation in particular with a senior manager. He expressed his surprise when he learnt that I was not a specialist manager – that is what the company calls leaders without disciplinary authority. We talked about influence and power and discussed how one can lead without being a manager. His response, and the implicit assumption that influence goes hand in hand with a formal position, first made me aware of the presence and impact of informal roles.

A second conversation, this time in my employee role, fundamentally influenced my perception of leadership and management. I was responsible for a project in HR digitalization. My manager at that time said: “Thank you for leading the team to success.” It seemed like I was a leader without officially being designated as such. These two conversations emphasized the possible pluralities that can be present between what is enacted and formal role recognition through job title or responsibilities.

After completing my Master of Science in HR Management, I started lecturing part-time, and developed a real passion for education. To progress my academic career, I decided to pursue a doctoral degree. Originally, I intended to explore the subject of retention management for apprentices in my research, because I had written about it in my master’s thesis. A few months into the programme, I realized that the field had been extensively researched, and I decided to explore other topics. I knew I wanted to do research that has the potential to impact future research and collaboration in organizations. Whilst considering what I might do, I came across a paragraph in a book section (Coetsee & Flood, 2018) presenting followership as a developing research field. It related to my own experiences, and I began reading around the subject. Initially, I thought that Sy and McCoy’s (2014) notion of leader and follower role switching would provide a promising avenue, but I soon realized that it did not afford a sufficient foundation to enable further exploration. This recognition led me to undertake the empirical work I am presenting in this thesis.

My decision to explore the German service industry as the contextual focus of the research felt natural to me. As I will explain in the following section, it is highly relevant for the German economy due to its size. Equally, I acknowledge that I have gained most of my professional experience in the German service sector, which equipped me with a unique insider perspective, supporting interpretation and the generation of insights, as well as credibility.

However, the trajectory of my doctoral journey was affected by the coronavirus pandemic and a related job change, making this experience essentially a solitary one. Conversely, extended use of the digital made it possible for me to attend at a virtual seminar on critical leadership organized by Lund University, which significantly shaped my understanding of the research field. Also, workshops on research methodology were now delivered online, and I used this to extend my methodological knowledge. When the effects of the pandemic lessened, I exploited the opportunity to gain a coaching qualification. I also extended my teaching, adding qualitative research to the portfolio and conducted research on part-time leadership, published in an edited book (Kugler, 2022). After data generation for my doctoral thesis, I presented my initial findings at the 2nd Global Followership Conference (Kugler, 2023) in the United States and even though the isolation during the pandemic had made me doubt if I would fulfil my goal to conduct impactful research, I realized that this research field is open for contributions and as Prof. Dr. Kathleen Patterson so fittingly described it: I found my tribe.

1.3 RESEARCH PROBLEM AND JUSTIFICATION

Research questions are regularly formulated based on gaps identified in existing research (Sandberg & Alvesson, 2010). These gaps can be established on contradicting explanations, overlooked or under-researched areas and aim to extend current literature (Alvesson & Sandberg, 2011). While these contributions are valuable to research and practice (Clark & Wright, 2009), Sandberg and Alvesson (2010) suggest problematization as an alternative source of research questions. Problematization means “that we should question assumptions and not take previously established findings for granted” (Chatterjee &

Davison, 2021, p. 228). By critically reviewing the assumptions contemporary research is built on, research questions based on problematization can transcend the limits of current boundaries in the research field (Clark & Wright, 2009). This approach is essential in times of increasingly rapid change in practice and academia (Chatterjee & Davison, 2021). This research employs a form of problematization called 'critical confrontation'. "Here, the researcher criticizes a theory or a field based on the identification of some shortcomings" (Sandberg & Alvesson, 2010, p. 38). Alvesson and Sandberg (2011) identify leadership research as a suitable field for problematization, as it has already been implemented in the adjoining domain of critical management studies (Sandberg & Alvesson, 2010).

In the following, the shortcomings identified in the field of followership research, particularly in relation to follower behaviour (FB), are discussed, and it is "demonstrate[d] how the outcomes of prior research constrict our understanding of the phenomenon" (Chatterjee & Davison, 2021, p. 228). Alvesson and Sandberg (2011) identify five types of assumptions that potentially lead to research shortcomings. Two of them, paradigmatic and in-house assumptions, are relevant to this research and are, therefore, discussed next. Paradigmatic assumptions are "ontological, epistemological, and methodological assumptions underlying existing literature", whereas in-house assumptions are "assumptions that exist within a specific school of thought" (Alvesson & Sandberg, 2011, p. 260). Three key discussions have been identified and are outlined below: (a) the dominance of quantitative methods, (b) an absence of concept demarcation, and (c) the relevance of leadership and followership research. The first and the third aspects address the paradigmatic assumptions present, and the second responds to the endemic in-house assumptions that are evident.

Dominance of quantitative methods: Methods in leadership research are predominantly nomothetic in nature, operating in a realist epistemological and ontological frame (Klenke, 2016). Gardner et al. (2010), for instance, found that 88% of the 468 empirical leadership studies published between 2000 and 2009 in *Leadership Quarterly* were quantitative. Such studies can reveal correlations and investigate relevant aspects to explain a phenomenon. However, they lack the capacity to generate a deeper understanding of lived experiences (Klenke, 2016). There have, however, been some attempts to gain more insights into the processes of leader-follower interaction in followership research, which have though remained theoretical. For example, DeRue and Ashford (2010) propose a process for claiming and granting leadership to explain its emergence and acceptance and, subsequently, followership. Bastardoz and Van Vugt (2019) assert an approach to explain the occurrence of leadership and followership through an evolutionary lens. Sy and McCoy (2014) offer a model of leader-follower switching, acknowledging the informal nature of followership. The emergence of these varied theoretical concepts equally indicates that there is no generally accepted conceptualization of followership.

Absent concept demarcation: Even though scholars have attempted to develop a general theory of leadership, no definition or theoretical framework has gained sufficient acceptance in the research community to become dominant (Alvesson, 2020; Alvesson & Blom, 2022; Sorenson et al., 2011). Followership research is similarly affected by the shortcomings of leadership research due to their interconnected nature. A variety of possible conceptualizations have emerged and some authors (e.g. Crossman & Crossman, 2011; Uhl-Bien & Carsten, 2018) claim that researchers must make their approach to followership explicit to enhance transparency, which many would fail to do.

The use of the terms ‘leader’ and ‘follower’, hence, tends to be inconsistent (Learmonth & Morrell, 2016). These terms are frequently used in academic (see chapter 3) and practical contexts (e.g. Hamm & von Bismarck, 2022; Personalwissen, 2018). However, their use is commonly not carefully considered, lacking clarification of their meaning and sufficient differentiation from management literature (Collinson & Tourish, 2015). Learmonth and Morrell (2016) showed that – in publications with poor definitions and demarcations – the terms ‘leader’ and ‘follower’ can be substituted by ‘manager’ and ‘worker’ without losing the meaning of the article, emphasizing the hierarchical nature of many leadership and followership studies. Conversely, the evolutionary view on followership introduced by Bastardoz and Van Vugt (2019) stipulates that employees can choose not to follow.

Consequently, *follower resistance* would imply not being a follower (Collinson & Tourish, 2015), which again shows that some authors do not adequately define the concept of followership.

In a similar, but broader vain, Banks et al. (2021) state that research on organizational behaviour has lost its focus on actual behaviour. They argue that behaviour is often not defined in research papers and demand more research focused on actual behaviour rather than perceptions and evaluations as well as “attitudes, feelings, or behavioral intentions” (Banks et al., 2021, p. 2). They recommend that “scholars should broaden their conceptualization of behaviors in order to fully develop frameworks of behaviors” (Banks et al., 2021, p. 7). This demonstrates that it is important to distinguish concepts from measures to avoid circular arguments and to re-evaluate existing concepts.

The position is heightened as the term ‘follower behaviour’ is often used in an unreflective way. This surfaces in the literature review by Oc et al. (2023), who claim that only 4% of followership research actually focuses on FB. Upon closer examination, it becomes clear that FB has not been defined but has nonetheless been used as an umbrella term for follower typologies. Those typologies partly, but not exclusively, contain behaviours. Due to the absence of concept demarcation, proxies, such as intentions are regularly investigated as behaviour (Banks et al., 2021).

Furthermore, the use of the terms ‘follower’ and ‘leader’ as synonyms suggests that there is no difference between these concepts, which would lead to one of the terms being redundant. In addition, current research does not correspond to the complexity of the concept of FB. Therefore, further research is needed to explore FB’s conceptual boundaries and depth.

Relevance of leadership and followership research: Starkey and Madan (2002) introduced another aspect related to paradigmatic assumptions by discussing the relevance of leadership and management research. In addition to epistemological and ontological assumptions, they challenge the notion that leadership research can be separated from practical application. Consequently, they invite scholars to conduct more research relevant to actions in the workplace. Huff and Huff (2002) additionally call for a variety of scholarly work in the “pursuit of knowledge that has no apparent commercial benefit” (p. 51) but add that research should also benefit society to be relevant. Following that notion, Guthey et al. (2019) investigated the importance of leadership research for leadership development. Carsten (2017) suggests a processual model for followership development in organizations, which links followership research to practice. Butler et al. (2017) explored business researchers’ motivation to conduct specific research following the retraction scandal that hit the research area in 2014, forcing prestigious journals to withdraw seven articles and casting a shadow over the credibility of many more (Retraction Watch, 2014). They found that researchers are often influenced by the potential for publications and journal expectations rather than the contribution to knowledge and practice. They state:

> What we need most are scholars who are willing to problematize dominant assumptions about how to study complex social phenomena, such as management, leadership, and organization, and it would be a shame if our journals continue to exclude those voices from the debate by insisting upon a particular image of science. (Butler et al., 2017, p. 106)

Through the focus on academic relevance represented by the potential for publications, researchers might lose sight of practical relevance. Therefore, the question arises if current research is relevant for practical application.

Given the concerns outlined above, three main issues can be identified in the research field of FB:

1. Knowledge is primarily based on quantitative research methods. This limits the scope of the research and does not consider the complexity of the phenomenon.
2. Definitions of followership, behaviour, and follower behaviour are absent. Due to the unreflective use of the terms and concepts, the proxies regularly investigated, lead to doubtful research contributions.
3. The relevance of leadership and followership research to practice has been challenged. Research in the field risks being labelled as irrelevant by nurturing a

culture that fosters methodological and content decisions guided by potential academic reputation and journal expectations rather than the relevance for practical application.

In conclusion, all three shortcomings underscore that foundational work in understanding FB is lacking, and that the practitioner perspective must be incorporated to develop a relevant research field. Furthermore, various research opportunities in the field of FB are not currently investigated empirically even though theoretical works exist. It also remains unclear if current research is relevant for practical application. It is against this backdrop that this study has been developed.

1.4 RESEARCH AIM, QUESTIONS, AND OBJECTIVES

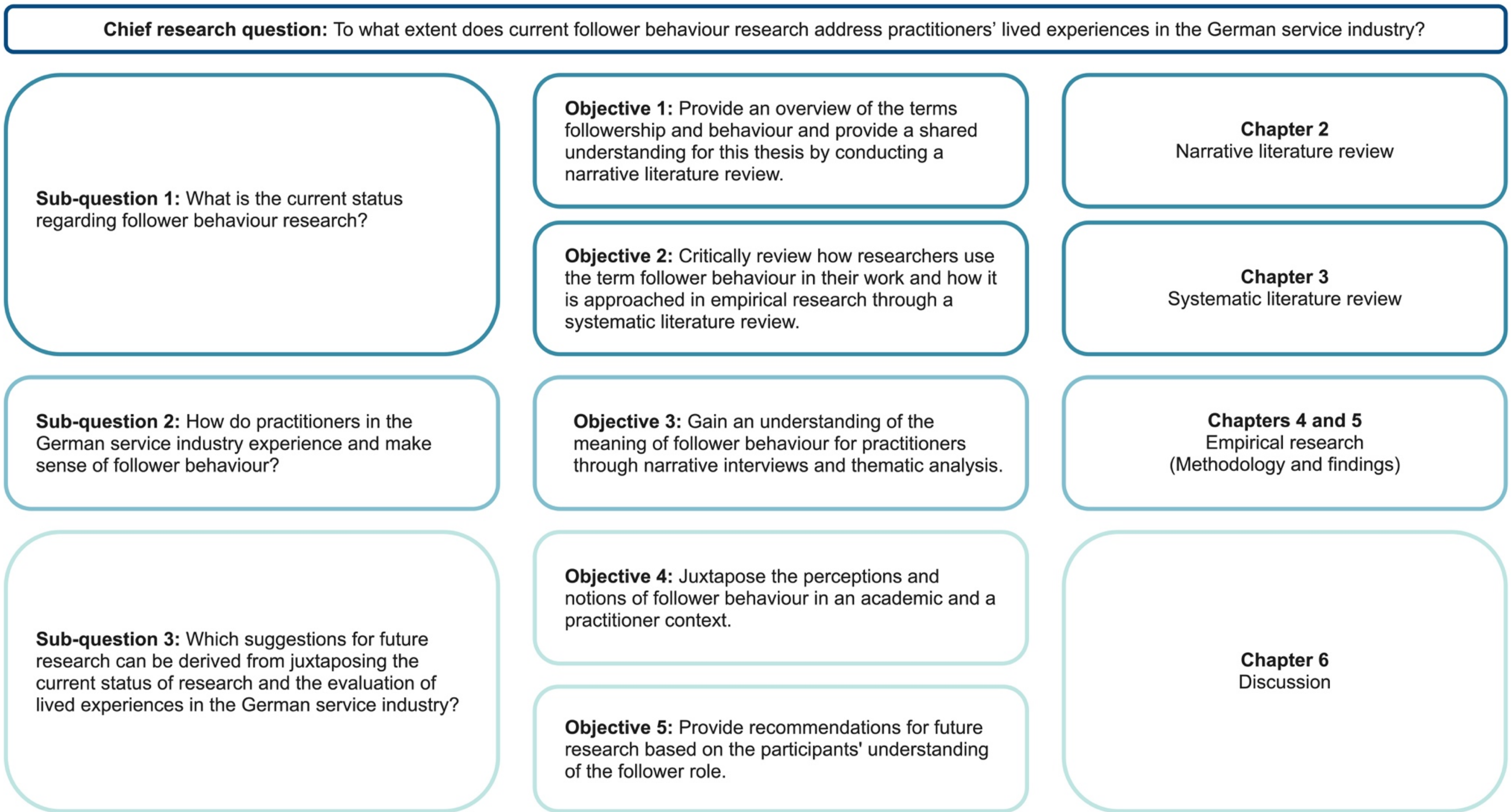
This research aims to explore practitioners' understanding of follower behaviour in terms of its conceptualization, process, and sense-making in the German service industry and to provide an agenda for future empirical research. One chief research question, with three sub-questions, has been developed to achieve the research aim (Creswell, 2014):

- Chief research question: To what extent does current follower behaviour research address practitioners' lived experiences in the German service industry?
  - Sub-question 1: What is the current status of follower behaviour research?
  - Sub-question 2: How do practitioners in the German service industry experience and make sense of follower behaviour?
  - Sub-question 3: What suggestions for future research can be derived from juxtaposing the current status of research and the evaluation of lived experiences in the German service industry?

Five research objectives have been formulated to address the sub-questions. Figure 1 displays these objectives linked to the respective questions. Furthermore, the structure of the thesis is presented visually, connecting the chapters of this thesis to the objectives.

Figure 1

Research Questions, Objectives, and Structure



1.5 RESEARCH APPROACH, CONTRIBUTION, AND LIMITATIONS

As a social constructionist, I believe that knowledge is socially constructed and that it does not exist outside social relationships and interactions (Blaikie & Priest, 2017). Current research on FB, as problematized earlier, is limited by philosophical and domain assumptions (Alvesson & Sandberg, 2011) and, therefore, offers only a partial understanding of the phenomenon. To explore practitioners' experience and sense-making of FB more fully, 40 narrative interviews are conducted with participants varying in their job roles and socio-demographic backgrounds (Schütze, 1983). The term 'lived experiences' is used in a variety of relativist worldviews and research strategies, such as phenomenology, ethnography, and feminist theories (McIntosh & Wright, 2019). In this social constructionist research, I understand lived experiences as

> a representation and understanding of a ... research subject's human experience, choices, and options, and how those factors influence one's perception of knowledge ... [that] can resemble and respond to larger public and social themes, creating a space for storytelling, interpretation, and meaning-making. (Boylorn, 2008, p. 489)

Through this understanding, I acknowledge the variation of perception and conceptualization of FB based on individual past experiences. Nevertheless, lived experiences can be utilized to explore patterns of phenomena such as FB, which makes them a suitable foundation for social constructionist research.

A hybrid literature review approach, combining a narrative and a systematic review, is implemented in chapters 2 and 3. Methods, not only in empirical studies but also in literature reviews, need to be chosen based on the research questions and objectives they are supposed to address (Gough et al., 2017). Narrative literature reviews are defined as "a comprehensive synthesis of existing work that often discuss theory and context with the aim of provoking thought and controversy" (Meglio & Risberg, 2011, p. 420). In contrast, systematic reviews aim to "systematically search for, appraise and synthesize research evidence, often adhering to guidelines on the conduct of a review" (Grant & Booth, 2009, p. 95). In this research, sub-question one (see Figure 1 on page 10) includes two objectives.

Objective one aims to provide an overview of the terms ‘followership’ and ‘behaviour’ and provide a shared understanding for this thesis. Based on the critique regarding the absence of definitions and an unreflective use of terms and concepts voiced in section 1.3 (see p. 5 et seq.), a critical engagement with existing definitions and conceptualizations of the main terms ’followership’ and ‘behaviour’ is necessary. A narrative literature review offers the opportunity to provide in-depth discussions regarding the relevant terms, taking literature from several research fields into account. Therefore, a narrative approach has been chosen to address objective one. Objective two seeks to critically review how researchers use the term ‘follower behaviour’ in their work and how it is approached in empirical research. Through a systematic approach, a broader range of publications can be covered and evaluated regarding their contribution to addressing objective two. The analysis is then conducted based on pre-defined review questions (see section 3.3, p. 74). Therefore, an overview on the understanding of FB in existing research can be derived based on comprehensible criteria. Overall, a hybrid approach is suitable for addressing the different natures of objectives one and two, providing the literature review with richness and unfolding the full potential of both approaches.

In the empirical study, participants are asked to report work-related situations in which they exhibited or observed voluntary behaviour that supports either the goals of another person or those of the organization. Participant selection is based on a purposive approach, reflecting a variety of experiences evident in the research context (Hussy et al., 2013). Data analysis is conducted through template analysis (King, 2012).

This research contributes to knowledge in several ways. First, a systematic literature review (SLR) of *follower* behaviour is conducted. As no such review appears to have been undertaken previously, this aspect of the research identifies, structures, analyses, and synthesizes the existing body of literature in the field of FB. As a result, an overview of current research is provided. Second, the research identifies participants’ FBs and those they observed in others. Furthermore, the meanings attributed to FB are stated. FB is categorized as being informal, situational, and expectation based. The functions of FB are described at an organizational, relational, and individual level. Through this understanding, the research contributes to acknowledging and mapping the complexity of the research field. Third, this research provides an understanding of voluntariness in FB and offers a conceptual demarcation of ‘employeeship’ and followership through the notion of voluntariness. Fourth, the research contributes to the development of the research field by deriving future research opportunities and recommendations for methodological approaches. Practically, this research can provide the content for followership development in organizations. Overall, this research contributes to conducting the fundamental work needed to address the problems identified in section 1.3 (see p. 4 et seq.).

This research is, however, limited by the small number of participants. Even though 40 interviews are considered a large qualitative study (Mason, 2010) and provide rich insights into the experiences of these interview partners, only a selective view of practitioners’ perceptions in a specific industry is provided. Findings apply to the service industry, but transferability to other sectors, such as the automotive industry, can be developed. The background of national culture further restricts the potential for moderatum generalization (Payne & Williams, 2005), indicating the need for further research within different cultural settings.

1.6 RESEARCH CONTEXT

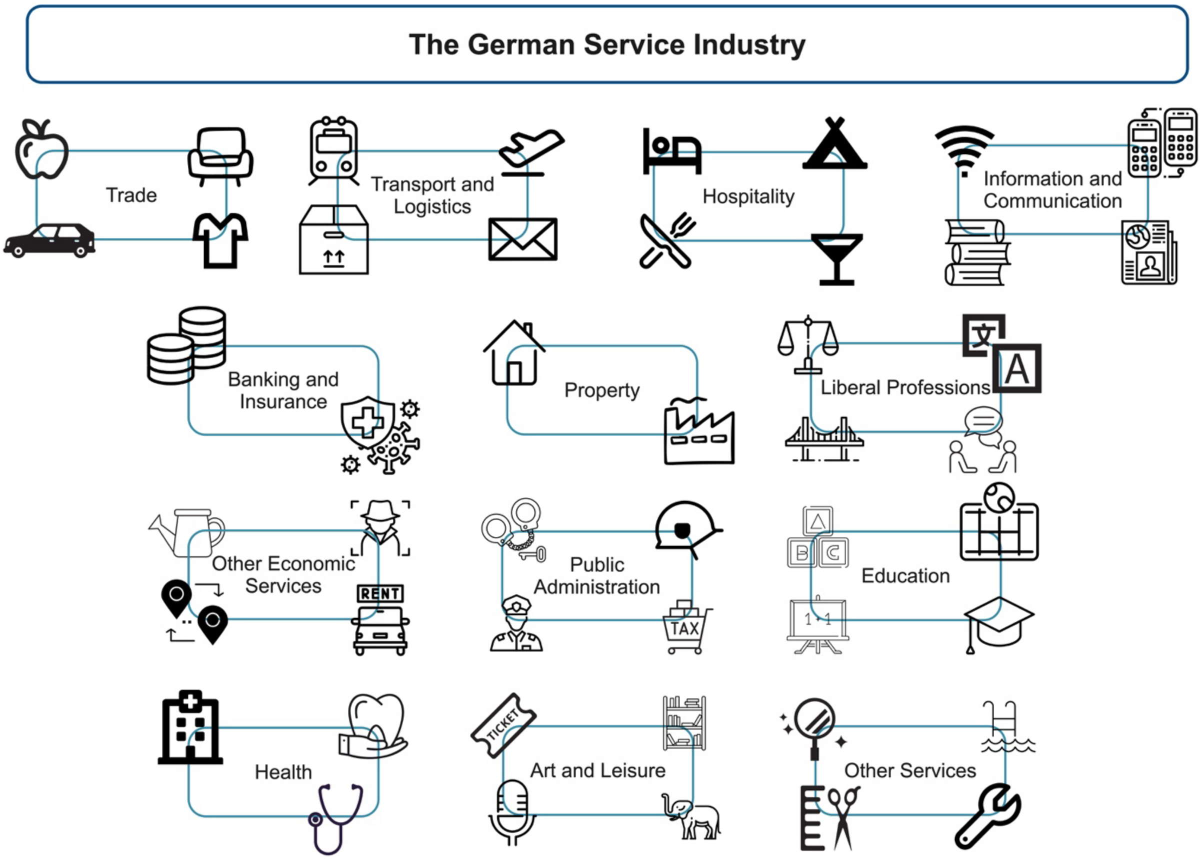
1.6.1 *THE GERMAN SERVICE INDUSTRY*

The service industry is an important sector within the German economy and its labour market. With 33.7 million employees in 2021, the service industry provides jobs for about three-fourths of the German labour force (Bundesagentur für Arbeit, 2021; Statistisches Bundesamt, 2022a). In the same year, 69.5% of the gross domestic product was generated in the service industry, making it the biggest driver of the German economy (Statistisches Bundesamt, 2022b). Similar numbers can be observed in other developed countries, such as Britain, The Netherlands, or Japan, making the industry a relevant research field for post-industrial nations (Fitzsimmons & Fitzsimmons, 2011).

In contrast to the primary and secondary sectors, the tertiary sector contains companies that provide services rather than goods (Bibliographisches Institut, 2016). Fitzsimmons and Fitzsimmons (2011) define “a service [as] a time-perishable, intangible experience performed for a customer acting in the role of co-production” (p. 4). Due to the diversity of services available, the service industry is structured into sub-industries. This thesis uses the classification provided by Statistisches Bundesamt (2008, 2021) as it includes a comprehensive list of services, companies can clearly be allocated to one category, and it, therefore, provides a viable basis for sampling. As displayed in Figure 2, this categorization system distinguishes 13 sub-industries.

Figure 2

The German Service Industry – an Overview



Note. Other services consist of personal services (such as hairdressers or cosmetic studios), repair services, and trade unions. Based on “Klassifikation der Wirtschaftszweige mit Erläuterungen,” by Statistisches Bundesamt, 2008. Copyright includes permission to reprint.

Due to the growing relevance and heterogeneity in the service industry, the tertiary sector has been further subdivided. The system provided by Haller (2017) is most appropriate as the sub-sector classifications are at the same level and instructions about allocation are given. Haller (2017) proposes three sub-sectors, and the resulting allocation is displayed in Figure 3:

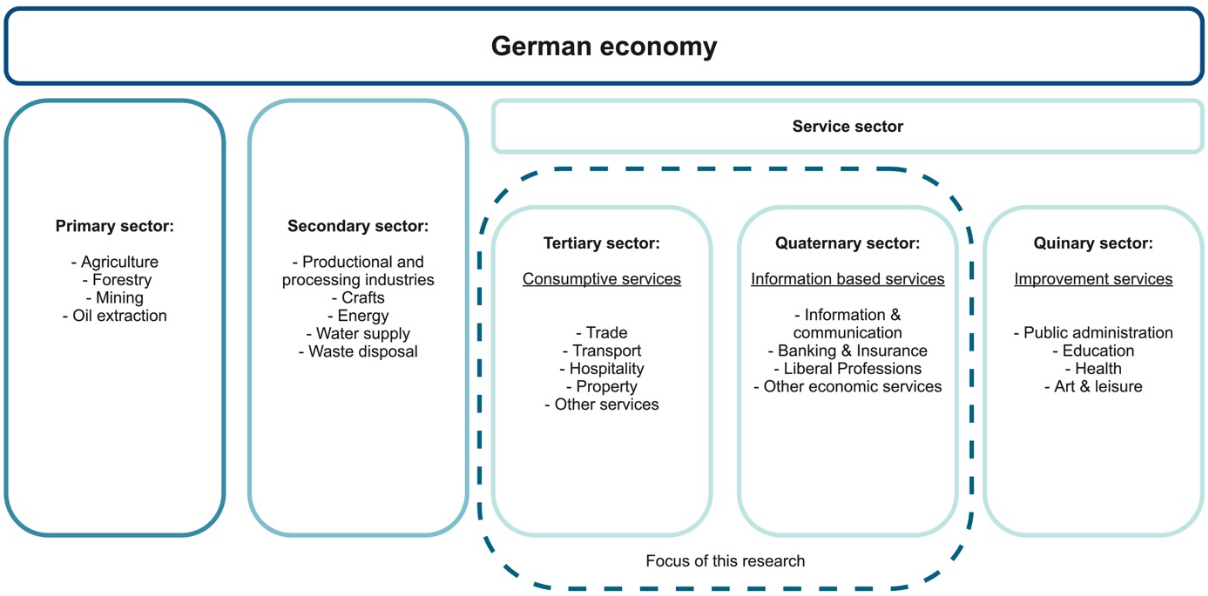
Tertiary sector – consumptive services are services characterized by providing a service used over a timeframe. The service provided mainly refers to goods and experiences. For example, customers eat a meal in a restaurant, get their hair cut, or travel between two destinations.

Quaternary sector –information-based services are services that provide specialist knowledge. Information-based services require trust as evaluating the service is harder for the customer than with consumptive services.

Quinary sector – improvement services aim to induce change and improve a situation or person. The primary goal is the common good, while profit is secondary.

Figure 3

The Pillars of the German Economy with the Sub-Sectors of the Service Industry



The quinary sector differs from the tertiary and the quaternary sector in several aspects. Firstly, ‘customer’ is an unsuitable term for service recipients in the quinary sector. While banking and retail work with customers, the beneficiaries of the service in education are children or students, health workers mainly work with patients and employees in public administration often refer to citizens rather than customers. Secondly, the primary goal in the quinary sector is not profit. While customers and clients imply an intent to realize a profit, the terms ‘patient’, ‘student’, and ‘citizen’ shift the focus to the primary goal of the greater good. As the quinary sector differs from the other two sectors, only the business-related service industry sectors, the tertiary, and the quaternary sector will be included in this study.

Companies in the service industry also differ regarding their size. Several institutions define differing limits for small, medium, and large companies, using the number of employees, the annual turnover, and sometimes the balance sheet total as indicators. As examples, the definitions provided by the European Union (EU) and the Institute for Mittelstand Research (IfM) are compared in Table 1 (Institut für Mittelstandsforschung, 2022; The Commission of the European Communities, 2003). The IfM has adjusted most of its definitions to the European guidelines but insists on seeing companies up to 499 employees as medium enterprises as the Mittelstand is immanent to the German economy and requires a definition tailored to its peculiarities (Institut für Mittelstandsforschung, 2022). As general definitions of SMEs cannot be transferred to the system of German Mittelstand without excluding companies that have similar structures but more employees, the definition provided by the IfM will be adopted for this research (Pahnke et al., 2023).

Table 1

Comparison of Definitions for Company Sizes by the EU and the IfM

	Number of employees		Annual turnover	
	EU	IfM	EU	IfM
Microenterprise	> 10	> 10	> 2 million €	> 2 million €
Small enterprise	10 to 49	10 to 49	> 10 million €	> 10 million €
Medium enterprise	50 to 249	50 to 499	> 50 million €	> 50 million €
Large enterprise	< 250	< 500	< 50 million €	< 50 million €

Note. Adapted from *SME definition of the IfM Bonn* by Institut für Mittelstandsforschung, 2022, (https://www.ifm-bonn.org/en/definitions/sme-definition-of-the-ifm-bonn) and *Commission Recommendation of 6 May 2003 Concerning the Definition of Micro, Small, and Medium-Sized Enterprises* by The Commission of the European Communities, 2003.

Jobs in the service industry can be divided into back-office and front-line functions (Haller, 2017). Front-line jobs include direct contact with the customer, while back-office employees are often not visible to clients (Kearney et al., 2017). Both functions must work together to achieve customer satisfaction. Front-line employees are the organizational face, and their interaction with the customer happens on a personal level (Rupp et al., 2007). Examples are receptionists in hotels or salespeople in retail. Back-office employees indirectly contribute to the customer experience and are closer to tasks also relevant to the secondary sector (Haller, 2017; Zomerdijk & Voss, 2009). Examples are case workers in banks, authors in publishing companies, buyers in retail and all general functions, such as accountants, HR, and information technology departments.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the service industry was strongly affected by the restrictions implemented to avoid spreading the virus. In April 2020, 665,700 employees in the hospitality industry were affected by short-term work (ifo Institute for Economic Research, 2022). Many employees who used to work in hospitality changed jobs during the pandemic and are now employed in retail or transport or switched to the manufacturing industry (Jansen & Risius, 2022). The importance of the industry for the economy and hence for the employees, makes the service industry an interesting research field (Haller, 2017).

Furthermore, I have gained work experience in different organizations in the service sector and, therefore, understand the industry and have access to potential participants. For these reasons, the tertiary and quaternary sectors of Germany's service industry are used as the research context.

1.6.2 *GERMAN NATIONAL CULTURE*

This research is conducted in Germany. Hofstede et al. (2010) define culture as "*collective programming*", referencing a shared belief system "*that distinguishes the member of one group or category of people from others*" (p. 6). This collective programming is learned during one's upbringing and influenced by the belief system surrounding young humans. While national cultural descriptions do not encompass all individuals living in a country, and do not intend to do so, they still offer an overview of the general setting of the study and provide a cultural context, as individuals are influenced in their norms, thinking, and behaviour by their surrounding culture through socialization processes in families, schools, and other social contexts (Hofstede et al., 2010; Minkov, 2017). In organizational contexts, culture also plays a significant role, as the belief systems people learn in their respective cultures are brought into the work setting and influence behaviour (House et al., 2014). Birukou et al. (2012) state that globalization and the resulting decrease in the importance of geographic boundaries reduce the appropriateness of clustering cultures according to nations, as proposed by Hofstede et al. (2010). Nevertheless, the significance of culture in the context of followership has been noted by several authors (e.g. Medcof, 2012; Suyono et al., 2020; Urbach et al., 2020).

Cultural differences have been of interest to researchers from various research disciplines and several approaches are available, such as Hall's (1976) cultural model of dimension, context, and time, Hofstede's model of national culture (2010), Trompenaar's (1993) seven dimensions of national culture, or Schwartz (2006) theory of cultural value orientations. A theoretical framework used in many research papers is Hofstede's (2010) model of culture, which consists of six dimensions. Some criticize that Hofstede uses national territories to draw the boundaries between cultures, that sub-cultures are not considered, that the model was developed based on data collection in a single company, namely IBM, and that the findings need to be reviewed in a post-war timely setting (Khalid et al., 2011; McSweeny, 2002; Olie, 1995). The GLOBE (Global Leadership and Organizational Behaviour Effectiveness) study integrates Hofstede's model of national culture, implicit leadership theories, and structural contingency theory and presents a cultural model aimed at informing leadership research (House, 2004). Based on Hofstede's groundwork, the GLOBE study developed a framework with nine dimensions and eleven regional clusters (Anglo, Germanic Europe, Latin Europe, Eastern Europe, Nordic Europe, Sub-Sahara Africa, Southern Africa, Middle East, Confucian Asia, Southern Asia, and Latin America). Germany belongs to the Germanic European cluster, along with Austria, German-speaking Switzerland, and the Netherlands (House et al., 2014). The GLOBE study has itself been criticized for implementing too many, not sufficiently distinctive, dimensions (Smith, 2006). As this model focuses on cultural impacts on leadership and, subsequently, followership, the GLOBE study is used to differentiate cultures for this research, but its possible limitations and criticism are acknowledged.

As described above, the German economy is shaped by the 'Mittelstand' that comprises middle-sized companies highly specialized and innovative in their respective field but at the same time unknown to the general public as they are based in the business-to-business (B2B) domain (Pahnke et al., 2023). While performance is important, social responsibility is part of business and is often enforced through trade union negotiations (Parella & Hernandéz, 2018). The vocational training system, which was introduced in the 1970s, shapes the nation's educational system. Employers are part of the vocational training process and gain well-trained employees with the required qualifications (Krebs et al., 2021). As academization is a megatrend in the Western world (Spicksley, 2022), the system is changing to integrate more possibilities to achieve higher education degrees (Graf, 2013).

In the German language, hierarchical differences are regularly conveyed through the use of formal 'Sie' or more informal 'Du'. The formal 'Sie' is considered more respectful and communicates a distance often related to power. At the same time, the informal 'Du' conveys communication at eye level but can also be interpreted as a downgrading of one's status (Wolf, 2023). Based on a general value shift in society that influences the workplace, the function of work is shifting from merely providing a livelihood to the requirement of additionally providing purposeful tasks, joy, and self-fulfilment (Rump & Eilers, 2013). This becomes visible in everyday language. Most employees are on a first name basis with their colleagues. In 2019, 25% of the employees between 35 and 44 stated that they use the informal 'Du' with colleagues, superiors, and customers (Nier, 2019).

In summary, German culture has significant impact on behaviours in organizations. Therefore, the findings of this research must be considered in light of its cultural context and are subject to moderatum generalization, leading to the need for additional research in other cultural contexts.

1.7 CONCLUSION

This study is based on the recognition that leadership and followership research is imbalanced and that the notion of social construction in followership is underexplored. In addition, several problems in the research field were identified. Firstly, both leadership and followership research are highly influenced by quantitative research methods rooted in a realist worldview, creating a one-sided stance within the research domain, which in turn limits the possible knowledge gains. Secondly, current research term delineation is insufficient, which leads to inconsistent use and, therefore, an inadequate consideration of the conceptual complexities. This results in a third problem area, which concerns the relevance of the research for practice. Due to the lack of breadth in methods applied, as well as insufficiently defined terms, the possible application of research outcomes is constrained, and its potential utility is questionable. This research, therefore, starts to address these problems by exploring practitioners' lived experiences of FB and juxtaposing them with the current use of the term in academic publications. In doing so, this work contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of the conceptualization of FB. In the next chapter, a narrative literature review is conducted to provide an overview of the terms 'followership' and ‘behaviour’. It also further explores the absence of concept demarcation and generates an understanding that platforms this study.

2 NARRATIVE LITERATURE REVIEW OF FOLLOWERSHIP AND BEHAVIOUR

“Certain things should never be taken for granted, among them your spouse, your mother, ... and the precise meaning of words that are at the heart of your profession.”

(Angier, 2009).

This section explains the theoretical foundations for this thesis whilst taking Natalie Angier’s sage advice on the centrality of meaning into account.

2.1 FOLLOWERSHIP AND ITS CONTEXT

2.1.1 *THE ORIGINS OF TODAY’S PERCEPTION OF FOLLOWERSHIP*

Shamir’s (2007) introductory chapter to the book “Follower-Centered Perspectives on Leadership” is considered the birth of the contemporary general understanding of followership. Shamir influenced the research area of charismatic leadership, driven by the questions ‘How can people influence other people?’ and ‘How do leaders lead?’ directing them to the broader topic of followership (Eilam-Shamir et al., 2017).

Criticism about leader centricity in leadership research has been voiced regularly, but few counter proposals were established (Bennis, 1999; Collinson & Grint, 2005; Lord & Brown, 2004). An attempt to generate a different stance was made by Meindl et al. (1985), who previously criticized leader-centric leadership research, introducing the thesis of the “romance of leadership”, in which they state that power and control, and subsequently, outcomes (especially desirable ones) in organizations are incorrectly attributed to leaders through biased perceptions. However, according to their theory, organizational outcomes are determined by followers, not leaders and the adoption of a follower-centric approach is recommended (Meindl, 1990).

In contrast to the criticism voiced by Meindl and colleagues (1985), Shamir (2007) argues that neither leaders nor followers can design leadership processes alone, but both roles are needed. Shamir (2007) summarizes: “while ultimately our approach to the study of leadership should be neither leader-centered nor follower-centered, at this stage, the study of leadership would benefit from a more follower-centered perspective” (p. xxi), seeing a balanced model of leadership and followership as the goal the research community should pursue. They, therefore, call to 'reverse the lens' so both equally important contributors to the leadership process, followers and leaders, are represented. Researchers have frequently quoted the appeal to reverse the lens, which can be found in many research paper introductions (e.g. Baker et al., 2016; Kim, 2021; Oc et al., 2023). However, the notion to include both views in leadership research is not as popular, and it is to be feared that only part of the research community is aware of this implication when basing their research on Shamir's influential chapter. Shamir's (2007) call for a balanced view on leadership and followership is, therefore, still largely unanswered and the research field has not unlocked its full potential. Hence, this study begins to address this need.

Some of the researchers Shamir worked with on followership are still prominent in the research field. To name a few, Ronald E. Riggio, Mary Uhl-Bien, Melissa K. Carsten, Michelle C. Bligh, and Robert G. Lord have regularly published in the domain, often referring to Shamir's argumentation as the basic understanding of followership as part of the leadership process (e.g. Carsten et al., 2010). Even though Shamir's introductory chapter is not highly cited, some of the papers based on it have substantially influenced the research community (e.g. Avolio et al., 2009; Uhl-Bien et al., 2014). This demonstrates its significance and intellectual legacy.

Shamir's writing also reflects a respect for different opinions. Even though they disagreed with Meindl et al.'s (1985) proposition of a fully follower-centred approach, their critique is based on arguments that aim at inclusiveness in relation to both followership and leadership. This becomes visible in their appeal to focus on the possibility of researchers learning from each other rather than on the reasons that set their work apart (Shamir, 2007).

Interestingly, Shamir did not include authors such as Kelley (1988) or Chaleff (1995), who had presented research on followership in the preceding twenty years. While they criticize authors, including Bass (1985) or Hersey and Blanchard (1982) for treating followers as either "recipients of leader influence" (p. xii) or "moderators of leader impact" (p. xiii), the work by Kelley and others does not appear in their analysis, leading to the impression of a fragmented research field at the time. From a contemporary perspective, Kelley (1988, 1992) is attributed as having developed the foundational theory that solely focuses on followership and Chaleff (1995) can be described as one of the early adopters of the concept (Riggio, 2020). The importance of their contribution is supported by followership measures that are operationalized based on their conceptualizations (e.g. McAuley, 2019; Shen & Abe, 2023). Therefore, both authors significantly influenced the development of the research field and, thus, need to be acknowledged. Despite the value of their earlier contributions, Shamir was the first to propel action and motivated a group of researchers to follow their call rather than debate the necessity of this research stream. Even though Shamir did not include such earlier influential scholars in their analysis, their remarks on followership can be seen as a turning point in the research field.

2.1.2 *THE RESEARCH FIELD TODAY*

Followership can, therefore, be understood as a research field embedded in, or linked to, leadership. However, despite efforts to formulate a general theory of leadership, the field has been criticized for its lack of an accepted definition and theoretical framework (Sorenson et al., 2011). This issue might also be related to the roots of leadership theory in different research areas. This is evidenced by where the research on leadership is published as it mainly resides in management (e.g., Academy of Management Journal) or psychology journals (e.g., Applied Psychology). However, there are also publications in biology (e.g. Bastardoz & Van Vugt, 2019), politics (e.g. Haslam et al., 2023), behavioural sciences (e.g. Popper & Castelnovo, 2019) and HR management (e.g. Chung & Chung, 2021), making leadership a multidisciplinary field (Riggio, 2011). Hence, leadership studies are described as “a lost and orphaned stepchild” (Riggio, 2011, p. 16), as they do not seem to belong to any research field. However, Riggio’s claim that leadership research is, in itself, a research field is supported by the existence of journals such as *The Leadership Quarterly* or *Leadership*, and handbooks on research in the field (e.g. Klenke, 2016; Schyns et al., 2019). Conversely, leadership research could be located in organizational studies. Examples of this allocation can be found in research handbooks on organizational research methods that include chapters on leadership research (Mumford et al., 2009) and journals such as the *Journal of Leadership & Organizational Studies*, which emphasizes the connection in the journal title.

Herein, leadership research is understood as an independent research discipline distinguishable from other disciplines including psychology or management given its focus on a specific role. In 2013, Riggio called leadership studies an “emerging discipline” (p. 10). Even though leadership research has developed substantially in the last decade, this research acknowledges that leadership studies are a multidisciplinary field, associated with numerous distinct research fields and influenced by several others (e.g. management, psychology, social psychology, human resource management, or organizational studies). This provides a plurality of perspectives, and these are just as likely to be evident in followership research.

When considering followership, there is, however, debate if it belongs to the research discipline of leadership. Role-based approaches to leadership suggest that leadership and followership are part of an influencing process, which makes them inseparable (Linville & Rennaker, 2022). As leadership and followership are seen as one construct in this study, followership is construed as part of the leadership research discipline, hence equally making it multidisciplinary (Ensari et al., 2011).

Another significant and ongoing debate in the field of leadership research is concerned with the focus on quantitative methods and deductive reasoning with realist epistemological and ontological assumptions. In their analysis of 353 articles published between 2000 and 2009, Gardner et al. (2010) found that 55% contained empirical studies, 42% were theoretical, and 3% dealt with methods. They also classified the articles according to the research design used in the study. It is striking that in their analysis, quantitative research designs have been split up into eight different approaches. In contrast, qualitative designs are combined with content analysis and case studies, emphasizing the awareness for, and dominance of, quantitative methods and deductive reasoning in the field. Compared to Lowe and Gardner’s (2000) analysis of the publications from 1990 to 1999, there was a shift in the proportional allocation of quantitative and qualitative studies in favour of quantitative methods. Therefore, quantitative research designs with underlying realist assumptions can be considered the major philosophy in leadership research. This statement is supported by the observation that the *Handbook of Methods in Leadership Research* dedicates six chapters with 175 pages to quantitative research methods and two chapters with 54 pages to qualitative methods (Schyns et al., 2019). This imbalance gives researchers the impression that a larger variety of quantitative methods is available, making qualitative research less attractive. Overall, the leadership research methodology literature conveys the impression that deductive reasoning is the preferred approach to gaining knowledge in the domain.

This position is perhaps unsurprising, as leadership research primarily originates from management studies which, by tradition, are mainly embedded in a positivist research paradigm (Ford, 2019). The influence of this set of beliefs rooted within this specific worldview is evident in the opening statement presented in the journal *The Leadership Quarterly,* in which Atwater et al. (2014) claim that authors contributing to the journal “believe that leadership and leader performance are not a matter of opinion but rather a matter of fact” (p 1174). Even though the journal editors do not explicitly say so in the aims and scope section, the editorial favours studies conducted in a postpositivist fashion (Spoelstra et al., 2016). It is also surprising that despite concerns about the appropriateness of quantitative measures in leadership, researchers still use them (Spoelstra et al., 2021) even though scholars such as Alvesson (2020) suggest guidelines for approaching the concept through diverse perspectives.

As followership research has only emerged in the last 35 years, and qualitative research has become more accepted in social sciences more generally (Brinkmann et al., 2020), it could be assumed that the research field adopted different philosophical and methodological paths and is not affected by the issues discussed above. However, the opposite is the case and whilst leadership enquiries have various issues regarding their research practices, the same can also be said of methods used in followership research.

Banks et al. (2021) criticize that both leader and follower research claim to investigate leader and follower behaviour but use proxies, such as attitudes, intentions, and feelings, to describe and often measure these behaviours. The authors explicitly mention follower research illustrating that followership researchers use the same methods as leadership scholars. Camps et al. (2018) even adapted a scale measuring abusive supervision developed by Tepper (2000) to measure abusive followership by exchanging “my boss” with “my colleagues”. By doing so, they applied a simplified substitution logic based on a conceptualization of followership that they do not further elaborate. Such a simplistic approach is problematic and embeds the criticisms levelled at leadership research into the followership domain, rather than developing the field.

Additionally, as papers on followership are published in the same journals, they, therefore, compete with leadership articles. It can, thus, be assumed that a comparable study to the one conducted by Spoelstra et al. (2021) could be undertaken within followership, and would yield similar results – followership researchers, as with leadership researchers, are aware of the flaws of a one-sided epistemological and ontological view but remain in their ‘academic comfort zone’ presumably to increase the chances of their papers being published. This creates both reinforcement of dominant patterns and simultaneously silences alternative positions, creating a considerable deficiency in work that addresses either leadership or followership, or both. Such problems are similarly evident in the language used to denote followership research.

2.1.3 *THE LANGUAGE OF FOLLOWERSHIP*

“My general research topic is follower behaviour.” When I present this summary to a non-academic but interested audience, the response often is: “Interesting, you are a researcher in social media!” Due to the connotation of the term ‘follower’ with the field of social media, I adjusted the wording to ‘followership in organizational contexts.’ This reaction shows that the concept of followership is not unique to the leadership process in the business context, but rather that it can be found in several areas of life.

In ballroom dancing, a couple assumes leader and follower roles. Situational factors such as music and rhythm have an impact on the movements the couple makes. Even though one person is the leader, this individual is not the centre of attention, but the task is to be a good leader by positioning the follower in a positive light. While ballroom dancing might appear to be a gender stereotypical activity from an observer’s perspective, it is based on a complex non-verbal communication process from the couple’s perspective. The assigned leader (typically the male dancer) invites the follower (typically the female dancer) to engage in certain movements and figures, while the follower has the opportunity to perform them or not. Dancing is thus a co-constructed process in which the leader invites a move, the follower interprets the invitation, and reacts to it. Furthermore, the follower can be pro-active and communicate suggestions. Therefore, ballroom dancing is an example for a non-hierarchical setting despite formal roles. With ballroom dancers, the terms ‘leader’ and ‘follower’ have equally positive and negative connotations because it is widely accepted that both partners similarly contribute to success or failure (Matzdorf & Sen, 2015). This example demonstrates that the social context determines how roles are evaluated. This can be transferred to organizational culture, it being one of the factors influencing if the follower role is as accepted and positively interpreted as that of the leader.

A leader within a team can also be found in orchestras, which can be seen as a specific organizational form. Conductors lead in a particular situation, as no verbal communication is possible during the performance. In a study by Atik (1994), two forms of followership could be found: one in which the orchestra did what they were told and one in which “there was room for individual expression” (p. 24). Through the distinction between an active and a passive form of followership, the role of the follower in the orchestra as a contributor or a receiver of instructions is defined. Chung and Chung (2007) emphasize the importance of listening to each other in several ways, as a performance appreciated by the audience is only possible if all parts of the orchestra, including the conductor, work well together, be it with or without the scope for individual expression. Transferring these findings to the broader organizational context, followership can be seen as an important aspect in achieving customer satisfaction and acknowledging each employee's contribution.

Another context in which followers play an important role is social media. Instagram, X (formerly known as Twitter), and Tik-Tok are currently the most important platforms that allow individuals to follow an individual or business account and accept the influence of the content presented by the accounts they follow (Dhanesh & Duthler, 2019). Instagram has been implemented as a private communication platform focused on pictures and was quickly discovered by companies that now use it as a communication channel in their marketing approach (Balan, 2017; Chu et al., 2015). As in the leadership context, engagement with followers aims to influence their behaviours, for example their buying (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017), health (Pilgrim & Bohnet-Joschko, 2019), and waste prevention behaviour (Teoh et al., 2022). While similarities between literature in the business contexts can be found, e.g. discussing the authenticity of leaders and influencers respectively (Lee & Eastin, 2021; Liu et al., 2018), differences are also evident. While researchers in the social media community often discuss the number of followers (De Vries, 2019; Moon & Yoo, 2022), researchers in leadership instead focus on the quality of the relationship (Badawy et al., 2019). Matthews et al. (2022) bring the two research fields together and review the use of social media by business leaders who expand their influence beyond the limits of their company through social media.

Followership in the business context is often said to have negative connotations (e.g. Aarons et al., 2017; Hoption et al., 2012). Rost (2008) developed a critical view on the term 'follower' through discussions with practitioners who stated:

> The word *followers* are a very industrial term connoting subordination, submissiveness, passivity, lacking responsible judgement, and willingness to allow others to control their lives and activities. ... The word *followers* will never work in the post-industrial view of leadership because it comes with too much baggage, most of which contradicts the idea of collaboration in any meaningful sense. (p. 89)

Rost then changed the term to ‘collaborators’. Kelley (2008) questions using the terms ‘leader’ and ‘follower’ altogether and initiates a discussion on alternative nomenclatures. Riggio (2020) describes their experience at a conference on followership, during which the term ‘follower(ship)’ was discussed at great length. Their statement on potential alternatives shows that there was no other term the discussion group could agree on: “a number of alternative terms – ‘constituent’ (too political), ‘partner’ (too relationship-py), ‘collaborator’ (too World War II-ish), ‘member (as in Leader-Member Exchange)” (p. 15). The discussion was resumed by Plachy and Smung (2022), who disagree with the explanation that ‘partner’ refers overly to relationships. It becomes clear, that the nomenclatorial discussion is ongoing, and a consensus is yet to be reached.

More positive connotations can be seen, considering the examples derived from dancing, music, and social media. Ballroom dancing can be described as a co-production of leadership and followership, orchestras follow a common goal, and influencers in social media depend on their followers, attributing high levels of power with the follower group. However, leadership is still associated with career progression, success, and higher salaries (Linville & Rennaker, 2022), which might be one reason why followership in this context is less desirable than in others.

This research faces additional language challenges. Language has been found to influence how meaning is conveyed in organizational contexts by providing the means to express thoughts and opinions (Holden & Tansley, 2008). While Anglo-American literature distinguishes leadership and management, the German language does offer the terms ‘Führen’, which is the closest translation to ‘managing’, and ‘Leiten’, which resonates with ‘leading’. At the same time, the distinction is not reflected in the term ‘Führungskraft’ used in everyday language. The formal role of a ‘Führungskraft’ includes both aspects, managing and leading. It has become common to use the English terms ‘manager’ and ‘leader’, but the distinction of meaning lacks clarity, even more than in Anglo-American usage (Holden, 2008). A term for follower does not exist. Gesang and Süß (2021) state: “We used the term employee because in German everyday language there is no commonly used equivalent to the term ‘follower’. Closest to ‘follower’ would be ‘led employee’ or ‘guided employee’, terms that are unusual” (p. 3). This approach works well for their formal role-based approach but does not reflect the potential informality of the role. Krummaker (2019) translates ‘follower’ with ‘Geführte’, which means ‘those being led’, which foregrounds the ‘leading’ and diminishes the focus on the follower’s volitional action. A reflection on the impact of language on the results of this research is discussed in section 4.3 (see p. 136 et seq.), particularly in relation to the translation process.

2.1.4 *CATEGORIZATION OF FOLLOWERSHIP DEFINITIONS*

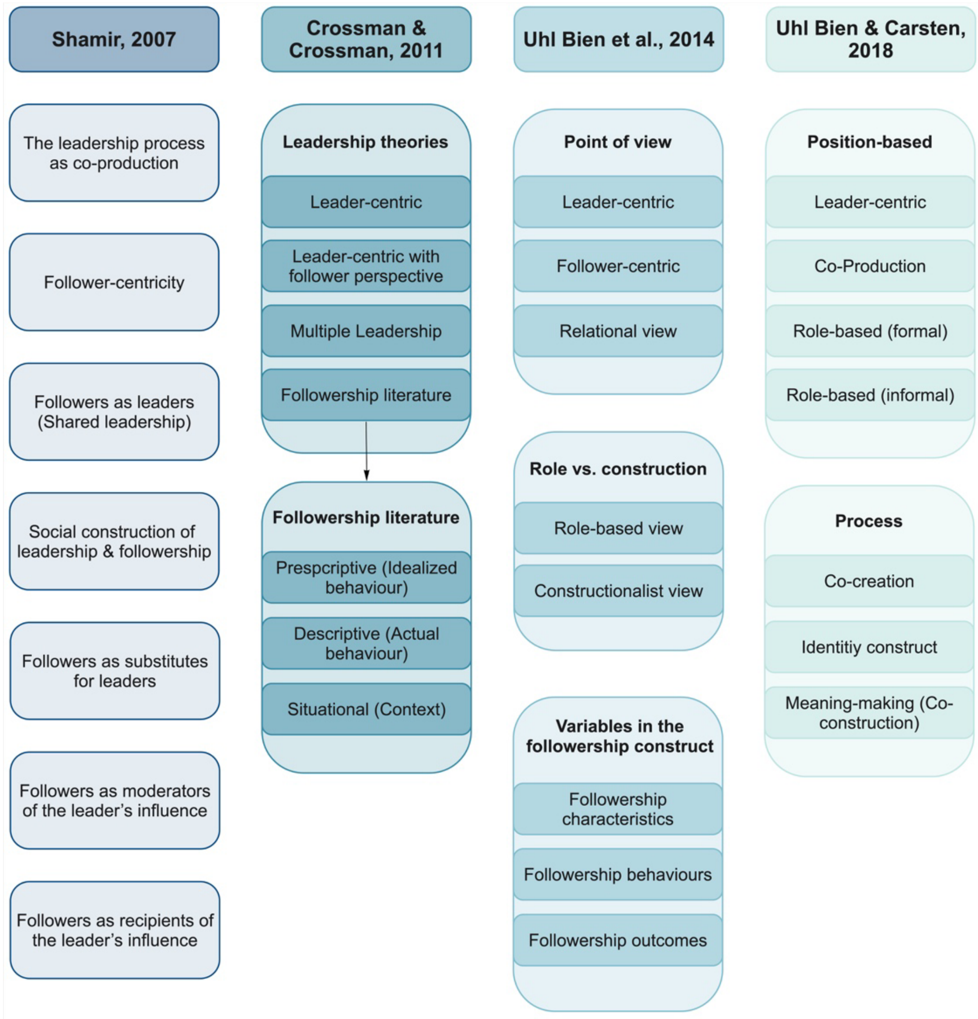
Only a few authors define followership as thoroughly as leadership has been defined in previous research. Crossman and Crossman (2011) reviewed 30 articles and book chapters on followership and found that 25 did not define ‘follower’ or ‘followership’ in their work. It could be argued that followership is self-explanatory, given that it originates from leadership research. However, it becomes clear that without an explicit definition, authors variously use the term to refer to hierarchical structures, the activity of being influenced by another person, a role, or the conceptual counterpart of leadership (Atchinson, 2004; Baker et al., 2014; Hodgkinson, 1983; Koonce, 2016; Seteroff, 2003). How followership is defined depends on the relationship between leadership and followership attributed to this social construct by the authors, leading to a wide array of different expectations (Crossman & Crossman, 2011). Therefore, different definitions of followership are analysed in this section to determine their adequacy for this research.

Crossman and Crossman (2011), Shamir (2007), Uhl-Bien et al. (2014), and Uhl-Bien and Carsten (2018) provide thoughtful discussions surrounding their views of the structures in followership research and an overview of their categorization systems is presented in Figure 4. The structures generally include leader-centred and follower-centred views. In a leader-centred view, followers are perceived as “recipients of leaders’ influence” (p. xii), while follower-centred views “view followers’ characteristics and behaviors as the ‘independent variables’ and leader characteristics and behaviors as the ‘dependent variables.’” (Shamir, 2007, p. xxi). Crossman and Crossman (2011) propose a categorization for followership literature, including: (a) descriptive theories, that contain typologies such as Kelley's (1988, 2008) followership model, (b) descriptive theories, that contain idealized behaviours and evaluation of behaviours, and (c) situational theories, that describe contextual factors such as national or organizational contexts. While categories (a) and (b) do not seem to be sufficiently distinguishable, Crossman and Crossman (2011) contribute the necessity to include context factors. By categorizing existing followership research, Uhl-Bien et al. (2014) suggest a distinction between role-based and constructionist views. The role-based view seeks to answer the question: “What is the proper mix of follower characteristics and follower behavior to promote desired outcomes?” (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995, p. 223). Constructionist views, on the other hand, “investigate how people interact and engage together in social and relational contexts to construct (or not construct) leadership and followership” (Uhl-Bien et al., 2014, p. 94). The role-based view is, therefore, based on the concept of organizational hierarchy, while the constructionist view enables the potential for followership in a broader context, independent of formal roles, but focuses on the process of the emergence of leadership and followership, rather than on its informality. In their most recent publication containing a structure of followership, Uhl-Bien and Carsten (2018) address this issue and develop their categorization further, distinguishing formal and informal role-based, and process views.

It becomes clear that the view of followership as a role, a relationship, a process, or a belief system is not a choice the researcher needs to make, but rather that all four aspects exist simultaneously in this multidimensional concept. Researchers merely make decisions which of these aspects their research addresses. Therefore, it is helpful to consider each of them in turn to better appreciate the potential positions that research can adopt.

Figure 4

Overview of Categorization Attempts of Followership Literature



Followership as a role: Followership can be understood as roles that individuals assume. Baker et al. (2014) "define the follower role as an active, participative role in which a person willingly supports the teachings or views of a leader and consciously and deliberately works toward goals held in common with the leader and/or organization" (p. 77). Organizations are, thus, systems of roles, including those of leaders and followers (Katz & Kahn, 1966). Leaders and followers hold follower role orientations that contain definitions of a follower's role and the individual notion of how a role is successfully executed, which then influences the behaviour shown by the person (Carsten et al., 2018; Carsten et al., 2010; Parker, 2007). Seers and Chopin (2012) state that leadership and followership are based on the necessity of each individual accepting their role, which is supported by the notion of claiming and granting the leader role (DeRue & Ashford, 2010).

Uhl-Bien and Carsten (2018) distinguish between formal and informal role-based perspectives. The formal view, which Linville and Rennaker (2022) call rank-based, equates followership and subordination. Therefore, followers acquire the role through their formal rank. “Followers are formally designated, as in organizational hierarchies in which those at the bottom and the middle are clearly subordinate to those higher up” (Kellerman, 2008, p. xix). The formal view includes research on implicit leadership and followership theories (Junker & van Dick, 2014; Sy, 2010), role orientation and identity (Carsten et al., 2018; Epitropaki et al., 2017), which is based on the assumption that the follower role is inseparable from the employee role. Conversely, the informal role-based view treats leader and follower roles as non-static and states that leading and following behaviours can be performed by every individual regardless of their formal status and position (Uhl-Bien & Carsten, 2018). This approach towards the follower role comprises leader-follower switching (Linville & Rennaker, 2022; Sy & McCoy, 2014), and research about the similarity of effective leader and follower behaviour (Baker et al., 2014). Hence, Uhl-Bien and Carsten’s (2018) suggestion to distinguish formal and informal role-based views appears sensible, as they can be clearly separated through their formal or informal origin and examples for both approaches can be found. Therefore, followership is seen as based on either formal or informal roles and the existence of those two different approaches is acknowledged.

Followership as a relationship: Carsten et al. (2014) see followership as part of co-construction. Constructionist views, also called relational views (Crossman & Crossman, 2011), “investigate how people interact and engage together in social and relational contexts to construct (or not construct) leadership and followership” (Uhl-Bien et al., 2014, p. 94). These definitions propose that leadership is based on a relationship, which refers to the interaction between followers and leaders. This perspective stresses that followers influence leadership and its outcome (Li et al., 2020), adding to the importance of the construct of followership *in relation to* leadership. Leader-follower dyad relationships have been investigated through theories such as leader-member exchange (LMX) or vertical dyad linkage (Dinh et al., 2014; Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995; Kim et al., 2020). Overall, relational perspectives on leadership and followership have been acknowledged but research investigating its operationalization is limited.

Followership as a process: By stating that “the study of followership involves an investigation of the nature and impact of followers and following in the leadership process,” Uhl-Bien et al. (2014, p. 89) emphasize that followership is a necessary component of the leadership process. Baker et al. (2014) understand followership as a process through which individuals adopt of the follower role. Linville and Rennaker (2022) define followership as “the process by which one accepts influences but also proactively engages with others towards common purpose” (p. 24). Kelley (2010) defines the proactive engagement further as "helping an organization or a cause succeed while exercising independent, critical judgement of goals, tasks, potential problems, and methods" (p. 181). Interestingly, Kelley only mentions leaders in the proceeding sentence, therefore, concentrating on the organization or the cause, which is also evident in Linville and Rennaker’s definition. From a similar position, DeRue and Ashford (2010) describe a process of claiming and granting in which leader and follower roles are negotiated. These definitions show that seeing followership as a process is often connected to defining followership as a role and focuses on adopting and executing it. Furthermore, the definitions discussed comprise an understanding of followership that goes beyond formal roles, as the wider focus of followership can be the organization or a purpose. These definitions, therefore, add to the notion of informal roles discussed by Uhl-Bien and Carsten (2018).

Followership as a belief system: Carsten and Uhl-Bien (2015) define followership “as the beliefs, characteristics, and behaviors that followers bring to the leadership relationship and how they affect leadership and organizational outcomes.” (‘Abstract’). Leaders’ beliefs, characteristics, and behaviours have been studied in various research (e.g. Gazza & Sterrett, 2011; Langford et al., 2017), and parallels to leadership research can be drawn. Research on Implicit Followership Theories (IFT) focuses on “individual’s personal assumptions about the traits and behaviors that characterize followers" (Sy, 2010, p. 74). McGregor (1960) presented a first approach to these assumptions, introducing theory X and Y, which contain basic assumptions about human beings in the work context. IFT literature has extended these assumptions and focuses on the follower role. Derler and Weibler (2014) criticize that prototypes of followers can often not be distinguished from other roles as generic descriptions such as 'hard-working' are used. This criticism adds to the necessity to demarcate follower and employee roles, as current research does not explain the boundaries of these roles sufficiently (Learmonth & Morrell, 2016).

Early research on followership dealt with the IFTs of leaders without calling it that. Kelley (1988) and Chaleff (1995) developed prototypes of followers and rated them as desirable or not desirable. Even though Kelley and Chaleff were to first to investigate the follower perspective thoroughly, both researchers were criticized because their typologies were developed out of theoretical considerations rather than empirical research (Baker, 2007). Based on Chaleff's (1995) work on the courageous follower, several studies were conducted, developing measurements for the concept (Collinson, 2006; Dixon & Westbrook, 2003; Johnson, 2007).

While these first investigations into the assumptions about the traits and behaviours of followers were based on theoretical considerations from organizational or leader perspectives, it was later recognized that followers also have IFTs about their own role and that context factors play a function (Derler & Weibler, 2014). Carsten et al. (2010) explored how followers define followership, laying the foundations for further research on followers' IFTs (Goswami et al., 2022; Yang et al., 2020). Overall, followership as a belief system has been researched extensively, compared to other perspectives such as the relational aspects of followership.

2.1.5 *FOLLOWERSHIP IN RELATION TO LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT*

Before looking at potential definitions further, it needs to be noted that researchers disagree if a definition of the term 'leadership' is effective and desirable. Some researchers, such as Wren (2006), argue that discussing the definitions in leadership research is vital to keeping the research field alive. Alternatively, Ladkin (2010) claims that leadership is a construct that cannot be defined but needs to be explored in its variety.

Definition of leadership: Even though researchers cannot agree on a common definition for leadership, the definition presented by Northouse (2010) is frequently used, stating that “leadership is a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal” (p. 3). Kotter (2012) specifies the term ‘influence’ and proposes that “leadership defines what the future should look like, aligns people with that vision, and inspires them to make it happen despite the obstacles” (p. 25). Through these definitions, a leader-centred approach is taken and followers, who are not explicitly mentioned, are the recipients of the influence of the leader. They are also based on the assumption, that employees “need or desire leadership” (Hunter et al., 2007, p. 436), adding to the notion of helplessness in those being led. Such definitions have guided most researchers in the past (Koivunen, 2007), manifesting in approaches including charismatic leadership (House, 1977), transformational, or transactional leadership (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Burns, 1978). In regards of the classification of followership theories (see section 2.1.4, p. 31 et seq.), such definitions constitute leader-centred research that sees followers as the recipient of leadership. It is, therefore, incompatible with an informal perspective on followership.

In contrast, definitions stating that “leadership is an activity, not a position” (Ashford & Sitkin, 2019, p. 456) have emerged. Blom and Alvesson (2015) state that “leadership is a sense-making activity that entails symbolic actions and processes that generate meaning” (p. 271) and thereby include a form of influence based on meaning, contrasting it from leader-centred approaches. Shared leadership refers to “a form of social interaction in which the whole team or group shares the responsibility of the process itself” (Fletcher & Käufer, 2003, p. 38), while lateral leadership conceptualizes influence without formal power (Kühl et al., 2005). Hence, the focus of such definitions can vary, but they are united in the approach to differentiate formal position and leadership.

Furthermore, Middlebrooks et al. (2023) highlight the necessity to differentiate the person (leader), the process of influencing (leadership), and the activity (leading), hence, they provide a multifaceted view on leadership. Thereby, a link to the different perspectives on followership presented in section 2.1.4 (see p. 33 et seq.) and parallels in the approaches can be found, as both consider leadership and followership a process, including activities conducted by individuals, highlighting the complexity of the concept.

It becomes evident, that the discussion around defining leadership is far from resolved and the matter is aggravated as academic publications on the topic often refrain from providing a definition, potentially due to its lack of clarity (Alvesson & Blom, 2022). To explore the understanding of leadership adopted in this research further, the demarcation of leadership and management is elaborated next.

Demarcation of leadership and management: Scholars disagree if management and leadership are distinct constructs to be studied separately or if they form a unity that can only be studied together (Nienaber, 2010). Even though the debate about the relationship between leadership and management has been ongoing for several decades, some recent publications demand more precise definitions of the roles managers and leaders adopt in organizations (Plachy & Smung, 2022). Conversely, some scholars take stances that unite leadership and management (Neelam et al., 2017). By adopting such a position, the discussion led by Learmonth and Morrell (2016) regarding the demarcation of employees and followers would be reduced to absurdity, as they would then clearly be synonyms. Hence, a clarification of the standpoint of this research is necessary to provide definitional clarity and the conceptualization of leadership and management is discussed next.

More generally, Bedeian and Hunt (2006) see three perspectives on the relationship between the terms ‘leadership’ and ‘management’: (a) leadership and management are fundamentally different constructs. While leadership has the goal to induce change, management is aiming for stability (Zaleznik, 1981), (b) leadership and management are complementary processes as their contributions are both necessary for the success of the organization (Kotter, 1990), (c) leadership and management are interlinked and inseparable functions, both belonging to the managerial role (Drucker, 1988). In the evaluation of these perspectives, it is essential to acknowledge that the same people adopt the roles of managers and leaders in practice (Alvesson & Blom, 2019). Therefore, the roles seem to be distinguishable theoretically, as proposed in perspective (a), but the people adopting the roles cannot, supporting perspective (c), indicating a discrepancy between the practical understanding and the theoretical definition.

An additional argument for perspective (c) is provided by Plachy and Smung (2022) who "define managership as the way an organization's vision, goals, processes, and resources are planned, organized, and deployed" (p. 402) and leadership as "the way a manager initiates conversation to establish and accomplish vision, goals, and processes" (p. 402). They, therefore, see leadership as a sub-role of management, which needs to be implemented whenever communication is needed to achieve organizational outcomes and follow Drucker's argument that management and leadership cannot be separated. Their definition of leadership involves a high proportion of communicative aspects, requiring time managers often do not have besides their own tasks such as budgets and reporting. Leadership also requires skills different from those required for being a good manager. Therefore, only some people in a management position in a hierarchical setting are equipped with the personal skills and resources needed to be a 'good' leader simultaneously (Alvesson & Blom, 2019). Plachy and Smung (2022) link both leadership and management to the formally attributed role, while Alvesson and Blom (2019) separate leadership and management as they require distinct skills. Therefore, not all managers can automatically be labelled as leaders, due to differences in resources needed.

While it has been clarified that not all managers are leaders, the question arises if all leaders are managers. Concepts such as lateral leadership (e.g. Kühl et al., 2005), emergent leadership (e.g. Yoo & Alavi, 2004), and the connected notion of claiming and granting of leader and follower roles (DeRue & Ashford, 2010) indicate that leadership and management are distinct concepts, as the leadership theories mentioned above assume that leader roles are not bound to the formal manager role. Consequently, parallels can be drawn to Uhl-Bien and Carsten's (2018) categorization of formal and informal followership, adapting the categorization to formal and informal leadership. In this research, leadership and management are, therefore, seen as two roles that can be distinguished through their formal or informal nature, and are often but not exclusively adopted by the same individuals. Thereby, this research follows the approach taken by Blom and Alvesson (2015), who state that the "distinction [between leadership and management] is vague and difficult but it is worth to maintain it in order to understand the social constructions and identity issues around followership in its different forms" (p. 272).

Integration of followership and employeeship: While a parallel between the categorization in terms of formal and informal roles in leadership/management and followership/employeeship has already been indicated, the relation needs to be explored further, to clarify the link between the four terms. As described in section 2.1.3 (see p. 27 et seq.), some followership definitions rely on formal roles and use the terms 'subordinate' and 'follower' synonymously. Hierarchical definitions such as "subordinates who have less power, authority, and influence than do their superiors and who therefore usually, but not invariably, fall into line" (Kellerman, 2008, p. xix) and terms including 'direct report' (Yukl, 2006) support that notion. Bjugstad et al. (2006) take a strongly hierarchical view by stating that "followership may be defined as the ability to effectively follow the directives and support the efforts of a leader to maximize a structured organization" (p. 304). Research has also been conducted on defining an effective follower (e.g. Chaleff, 1995; Jaussi & Randel, 2014; Miller et al., 2004). The definition limits acceptable behaviours according to the hierarchical position an individual has been assigned to. Kellerman (2019) states that "followers cannot have authority. But they can and increasingly they do have power and influence" (p. 42). Using the terms authority, power, and influence, they indicate that followership occurs in a hierarchical setting in which leaders are given authority due to their formal role. Giving followers a more active part in power distribution, Smircich and Morgan (1982) see followers as individuals who "implicitly or explicitly surrender their power" (p. 258). Hence, these approaches to followership are based on formal role views, connecting them to the formal role of management.

In contrast, other authors (e.g. Baker et al., 2014; Uhl-Bien & Carsten, 2018) suggest that different behaviours are possible within a formal role. Blom and Lundgren (2020) elaborate that “from a formalistic perspective, it may not appear problematic to sort people into leaders and followers where subordinates are equated with followers and superiors with leaders. However, leadership and followership cannot just be reduced to formal positions” (p. 166). In a constructionist, informal role-based, view, the role performed does not necessarily need to be consistent with the role assigned to a person. Formal leaders are not always respected as leaders and individuals without formal leadership assignment emerge as informal leaders (Bedeian & Hunt, 2006; Charan et al., 2000). In contrast to the formal role-based view discussed above, this informal role-based view considers leadership and followership as roles distinct from management and employeeship, as they can be adopted regardless of formal roles. Furthermore, Blom and Alvesson (2015) distinguish management and employees from leaders and followers based on the origin of their influence. For them, employees and managers are defined through contracts, while followers and employees are socially negotiated roles. Blom and Alvesson (2015) illustrate this demarcation in an example: “A manager can order people to smile and be polite to customers, but he or she cannot instruct people to endorse the meaning of ‘customer orientation’” (p. 271), emphasizing the formal power exerted by managers and the informal influence of leadership. Generally, the informal role-based view distinguishes leadership and followership from management and employeeship through informality and, therefore, the possibility to adopt the role regardless of an individual’s formal role.

Synthesis: Having discussed the distinction between leadership and management and their relationship with followership, it becomes evident that a clear demarcation is exacerbated as several of these roles can be adopted by the same organizational members (Alvesson & Blom, 2019). Therefore, a theoretical demarcation is provided, acknowledging that organizational reality is more complex in terms of role definition and clarity. For this research, leadership and followership are defined as informal roles, while management and employeeship are formal roles. The differentiation clarifies the formality of manager and employee roles, which are attributed by the organization through work contracts or job descriptions, while the roles of leaders and followers are informal, adopted through social processes, regardless of the formal roles held by the individuals involved. This perspective also begins to add to the importance of voluntariness for followers.

2.1.6 *VOLUNTARINESS IN FOLLOWERSHIP*

Bastardoz and Van Vugt (2019) “define followers as individuals who adopt the leader’s goals temporally ... or structurally ... and freely accept the influence of leaders” (p. 2). This definition adapts the ideas of influence and common goals from the definition of leadership. Furthermore, an additional aspect surfaces: the free will of the follower and, therefore, the possibility not to follow. Consequently, the question arises if this definition also simultaneously defines a leader by their attempt to gain followers – specifically because it allows potential followers to decide not to follow. Following Hollander’s (1993) statement that “without followers, there are plainly no leaders or leadership” (p. 29), the potential leader would then not be a leader if they had no followers. As follower and employee roles, in the same way as leader and manager roles, are often adopted by the same organization members, the question arises how these roles can be demarcated. Andersen (2019) criticizes the lack of such a demarcation and the synonymous use of the terms in current research. One potential characteristic to distinguish the two roles is based on the notion of voluntariness (Blom & Lundgren, 2020). While scholars including Collinson (2017), who take a formal role perspective on followership, disagree that voluntariness is a necessary aspect of followership, a debate in favour of investigating the relevance of the notion of voluntariness in followership has evolved (Learmonth & Morrell, 2016). A discussion around the concept of voluntariness has been ongoing in philosophical and legal research fields, which offers a useful basis for further investigation of voluntariness in followership (Alvarez, 2016; Colburn, 2008; Hyman, 2013, 2016; Sharon, 2016).

Based on Nicomachean ethics introduced by Aristotle (Meyer, 2006), Blom and Lundgren (2020) link voluntariness with responsibility and demarcate it from subordination, coercive power, and manipulation. They state, however, that followership is not always purely voluntary, and the level of voluntariness depends on the context, the degree of social pressure, and the options available to the potential follower. They conclude that voluntariness in followership can occur to different extents: fully voluntary, moderately voluntary, and minimally voluntary. Fully voluntary followership is “an acceptance of a follower position that is intentional and not something one is obliged or forced to do” (Blom & Lundgren, 2020, p. 171). They go on to state that they do not expect researchers to find this form of voluntariness regularly in business settings as these are typically characterized by the presence of hierarchies.

Moderately voluntary behaviour is defined as “the acceptance of a follower position but with some elements of ignorance, obligation and/or compulsion” (Blom & Lundgren, 2020, p. 172). Compulsion comprises some degree of power exerted over the person. Compulsion is not necessarily the formal exertion of power but can also be rooted in the need for belonging and the fear of being socially excluded. “*Obligation* is compared to compulsion more self-imposed and arising out of a sense of duty resulting from e.g. organizational hierarchy, interpretation of a job description ..., tradition, culture” (Blom & Lundgren, 2020, p. 170). The pressure is imposed on oneself and originates in the individual, influenced by one’s values and culture, rather than being imposed from the outside and would lead to shame or other negative feelings that individuals try to avoid (Blom & Lundgren, 2020). “*Ignorance* concerns acts done either out of lack of relevant knowledge or out of beliefs which are disturbed or false regarding particularities of the act or the predicted outcome” (Blom & Lundgren, 2020, p. 170). Moderately voluntary behaviour acknowledges the power dynamics present in organizations due to mainly hierarchical settings in the business world. Therefore, they could be expected to appear regularly. While Blom and Lundgren (2020) provide examples for the origin of obligations and compulsion, the application of ignorance to the organizational context remains unclear.

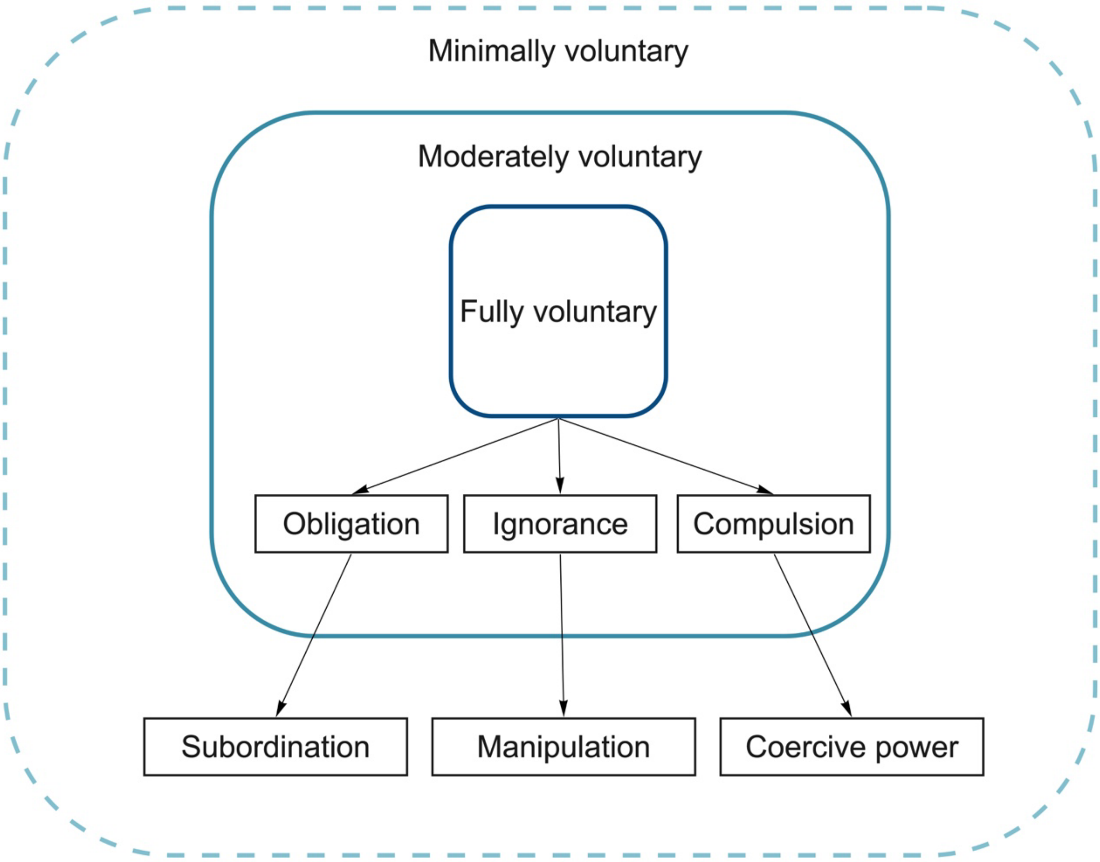
Minimally voluntary followership is defined as “the acceptance of a follower position ... significantly affected by elements of ignorance, obligation and/or compulsion” (Blom & Lundgren, 2020, p. 173). Behaviours that are forced on individuals by abusive strategies including bullying or undermining, do not leave the individual with a broad range of choice in organizational and non-organizational contexts (Vigoda-Gadot, 2006).

Fully voluntary and moderately voluntary decisions can be defined as followership, while minimally voluntary decisions are questionable in their fit with the concept of followership. While Blom and Lundgren (2020) discuss that minimally voluntary behaviour may be on the boundary of what followership is, they do not precisely determine if minimally voluntary followership is still part of the followership concept. However, they remind researchers of "the importance to actually drawing a line" (p. 174). This research will, therefore, proceed under the assumption that fully voluntary and moderately voluntary decisions are components of followership. In contrast, minimally voluntary decisions demarcate the concept of followership from other concepts including subordination, particularly in an organizational setting.

Figure 5 displays a visualization of the concept proposed by Blom and Lundgren (2020). The inner layer shows fully voluntary followership, independent of formal roles and provides the potential follower with a choice free of internal and external urges. The middle layer shows moderately voluntary behaviour. It is assumed that this, to some degree, takes place inside the formality of manager and employee roles, which are discussed in section 2.1.3 (see p. 27 et seq.), and is influenced by feelings of obligation or compulsion. The outer layer, based on domination, leaves little choice to potential followers, and describes minimal voluntariness. Therefore, minimally voluntary behaviour needs to be attributed to a different role, potentially that of the employee.

Figure 5

Levels of Voluntariness Influenced by the Context



Note. Adapted from "The (in)voluntary follower," by M. Blom and M. Lundgren, 2020, *Leadership, 16*(2), p. 172 (https://doi.org/10.1177/1742715019888078). Copyright 2020 by SAGE Publications Ltd. Journals. Adapted with permission.

2.1.7 *SYNTHESIS: DEFINITION*

Based on the review of followership definitions and adjoining concepts, it becomes clear that definitions of followership are almost as plentiful as definitions of leadership. While there are attempts to create a commonly accepted framework for followership research, the 'commonly accepted' part currently seems to be out of reach. Just as Ladkin (2010) proposes for leadership, the richness of followership might have to lead to acceptance that there is no possible clarity of definition. It also needs to be discussed if the different approaches taken to followership exclude each other or if they can co-exist.

Followership refers to different layers, such as a belief system, a relationship, a role, or a process. The views on the term show different perspectives but these are not mutually exclusive. For example, followership can be seen as a role with beliefs attached to it, which are then put into action in a process. Researchers' perspective on followership is considerably more about their focus on a complex construct than inherently excluding the other parts of the concept. This research, therefore, provides a comprehensive definition of followership, acknowledging that its complexity cannot be addressed in one piece of research. The definition provided is, hence, a framework in which researchers can set priorities and investigate the chosen research area in detail.

The following definition of the term 'followership' has been developed within this doctoral work based on the literature previously presented and will be used in this thesis:

> *Followership is a role that individuals can adopt and perform in an organizational context. Followership can occur in hierarchical settings but is distinguished from subordination, manipulation, and domination by moderate or full voluntariness and the option not to follow. Following and not following results in behaviours that support, or do not support, the leader's or the organization's goals and are subsequently evaluated by the parties involved in the influencing process based on the individual expectations linked to the role.*

Furthermore, it is acknowledged that individuals take on various roles, including leader, manager, follower, and employee. For this research, the terms 'manager' and 'employee' are used when an individual's formal, hierarchical role is implied. The terms 'leader' and 'follower' are used when an informal role is referenced.

2.2 BEHAVIOUR

2.2.1 *DEFINITIONS OF BEHAVIOUR ACROSS RESEARCH DISCIPLINES*

“Behaviour is a mirror in which everyone shows his image.” (Johann Wolfgang von Goethe)

While Goethe looked at behaviour from a poetic, philosophical perspective, this section aims to review academic definitions and discussions regarding the term ‘behaviour’. Several research areas are interested in behaviour. The journal *Behavioral Sciences* names psychiatry, psychology, psychobiology, neurosciences, behavioural genetics, sociology, applied anthropology, management science, operations research, and organizational behaviour as their subject areas (MDPI, 2023). However, few authors define how they use the term ‘behaviour’ (Coverdale, 2011). Researchers are generally more likely to use implicitly accepted definitions in their research field (Calhoun & El Hady, 2021), leading to potential differences in approach and limited comparability as a result. The following sections present an overview of the discussions in biology, psychology, and organizational research to illuminate the possible issues, and provide a means of locating the definition to be applied in this research.

Perspective – Biology: Levitis et al. (2009) discuss the question of defining ‘behaviour’ in the light of biological research. They state that “for many biologists, the meaning is simply and clearly intuitive” (p. 103). This might also be true for other research areas and explain the absence of definitions in many papers. Levitis et al. (2009) surveyed 181 experts on behaviour in the biological field and found that more than 50% of the respondents contradicted themselves in their answers – which is perhaps surprising given its centrality to much of the experts’ work.

Based on their survey and the analysis of current research, Levitis et al. (2009) define behaviour as “the internally coordinated responses (actions or inactions) of whole living organisms (individuals or groups) to internal and/or external stimuli, excluding responses more easily understood as developmental changes” (p. 108). Hiernaux (2019) discusses different reactions of plants in more detail and distinguishes developmental reactions, which are based on physiology and genetics, from behaviour characterized by function and purpose and based on choice, decision, and social or environmental interaction. In contrast, Hogan (2015) defines “behavior as the expression of the activity of the nervous system, which may be manifested as activity in muscles and glands” (p. 105), seeing the cause of current behaviour in internal and external triggers. The consequences then describe the effects of these behaviours. It becomes evident that no agreement on the role of volition in the conceptualization of behaviour exists.

An evolutionary perspective is provided by Baum (2013) who proposes four general principles: “(a) only whole organisms behave; (b) behaviour is purposive; (c) behaviour takes time; and (d) behaviour is choice” (p. 283). In this definition, autonomic actions would not be covered by the term ‘behaviour’, and the question arises if living organisms, such as plants can make choices. Cvrčková et al. (2016) “*propose defining behavior as ‘observable consequences of the choices a living entity makes in response to external or internal stimuli’*” (p. 3). They explicitly state that the word ‘choice’ only refers to different reactions and does not “imply involvement of a mind or consciousness” (p. 3). Therefore, it includes plants in the list of entities that can show behaviours. Going back to Levitis et al.’s (2009) definition, plants’ reactions to outside stimuli focused on selection advantages would lead to an exclusion from the term ‘behaviour’. The ongoing discussion about aspects of choice and purpose underlines the complexity of defining behaviour. While this debate is relevant to define if all complex life forms are capable of behaviour, it also provides indications for the definition of human behaviour, as it discusses the necessity of volition and purpose in its demarcation from non-behaviour.

Biologists have evidently provided several definitions for the term ‘behaviour’. Most definitions agree that behaviour is based on internal or external stimuli. The form of apparent responses to these stimuli ranges from bodily activities (Hogan, 2015) over observable reactions (Cvrčková et al., 2016) to not-observable decisions not to act (Baum, 2013). The capability to behave is generally attributed to human beings and often to animals but discussed for other life forms such as plants (Cvrčková et al., 2016; Hiernaux, 2019; Levitis et al., 2009). This affirms its relative ubiquity in relation to living organisms and its centrality to their existential being.

Perspective – Psychology: The definition of the term ‘behaviour’ in psychology is of particular interest as textbooks in the field state that psychology is “the scientific study of behaviour” (Martin et al., 2013, p. 2). Myers and DeWall (2016) differentiate behaviour from mental processes through the orientation of their appearance. Behaviours can be observed, recorded, and measured and, therefore, are visible from the outside. On the other hand, mental processes take place without visible actions and are subjectively experienced by the individual. Sensations, dreams, thoughts, and feelings are examples. Murrell et al. (2008) define behaviour as “the organism’s interaction with the environment in which there is a change in the environment due to an overt or covert action of the organism” (p. 227). Overt behaviour is directly observable, while covert behaviour describes all forms of internal, cognitive processes (Hupp et al., 2008). Hupp's definition sees both, visible and cognitive actions as behaviour. It becomes evident, that no agreement regarding the inclusion of internal cognitive processes exists.

Ossorio (2006) discussed the difference between behaviour in persons, animals, and objects, picking up the discussion of the ability to behave from biologists. They claim that behaviour must be distinguished according to the acting entity, and the behaviour of persons differs from that of other life forms due to their capacity for language. Bergner (2011) base their perception of behaviour on Ossorio’s call for Descriptive Psychology and claims that behaviour results from identity, motivation, cognitive evaluation, know-how, performance, achievement, personal characteristics, and significance. By stating the antecedents of behaviour, a distinction of these terms from the term ‘behaviour’ is made as they cannot be both behaviour and its antecedent simultaneously, but no distinct definition is provided.

Uher (2016) defines behaviour “as the *‘external changes of activities of living organisms that are functionally mediated by other external phenomena in the present moment’*” (p. 490). They discuss if language is behaviour and give a nuanced answer. The aspect of the present moment is crucial in their definition, and they claim that language is behaviour if it has a functional purpose aimed at the present. In the case of content aimed at the past or the future, the relevance for current activities is not given, and language cannot be classified as behaviour.

As in the field of biology, the question of the capability to behave is discussed in psychology (Henriques & Michalski, 2020). The focus lies more on human behaviour than animal behaviour, and aspects as whether a language is a behaviour and the inclusion of mental processes, such as thinking are discussed.

Perspective – Organizational Psychology: Organizational or occupational psychology is a sub-field of the vast research field of psychology (Martin et al., 2013). It deals with the “behaviour of groups and individuals in the workplace” (Martin et al., 2013, p. 4). Moorhead and Griffin (1995) define organizational behaviour as “the study of human behaviour in organizational settings, the interface between human behaviour and the organization, and the organization itself” (p. 4). The definition provided by Martin et al. contains living human beings, but Moorhead and Griffin also include the organization itself – both as setting and ‘entity’. While some titles of papers such as “When do organizations behave opportunistically?” (Sungmin et al., 2012) implicate that the organization acts as an entity, the authors are writing about collectivistic behaviour rather than the organization acting by itself. Adapting the definitions provided by biologists, the antecedent of being a living organism to be able to show behaviour can again be found in this discussion.

The term ‘organizational behaviour’ is used primarily as the description of a research field rather than the definition of what behaviour means in organizational or occupational contexts. While psychologists discussing general definitions of behaviour are often concerned with the question of differences and similarities in various life forms, such as plants, animals, and human beings (Henriques & Michalski, 2020; Ossorio, 2006), organizational research is focused on the behaviour of people in a specific context, the workplace. As authors in organizational psychology often do not define behaviour but rather use the term to delineate their research field, it becomes clear that the object of study, namely groups and individuals in the workplace and, in some definitions, also the organization itself, is predetermined by the field. Therefore, some of the discussions in other fields, such as biology, are of less relevance for organizational psychologists.

Definitions of behaviour in publications in the field of organizational psychology are seldom found. Ajzen (2022) states that “behaviour is the manifest, observable response in a given situation with respect to a given target”. Interestingly, behaviour has not been defined in the various papers published by Ajzen and colleagues (Ajzen, 1991, 2020; Ajzen & Fishbein, 1977, 1980) and the definition presented above can only be found on their website. Even though researchers regularly use the term ‘behaviour’ without definition, some authors do define the specific behaviour investigated in their research. For example, Verschuren et al. (2021) studied negative work behaviour. They defined it as “exposure to ongoing negative and unwanted behavior by superiors or colleagues ... which is harmful to employees and the organization” (p. 1). While the definition does not specify what behaviour is, it clearly outlines the effects of the behaviour and its differentiation from other behaviours. The notion of demarcation is not only evident here but is also present in a wider consideration.

2.2.2 *DEMARCATION FROM OTHER CONCEPTS*

In this section, the term ‘behaviour’ is demarcated from other terms related to the concept. Banks et al. (2021) applied the definition provided by Levitis et al. (2009) to their SLR on leader and follower behaviour and report that only 3% out of 2,338 variables measured were behavioural. Therefore, a distinct definition of the terms is necessary.

Intentions: Intentions are seen as a preliminary stage of behaviour. They are defined as “motivational factors that influence a behaviour; they are indicators of how hard people are willing to try, of how much of an effort they are planning to exert, in order to perform the behavior.” (Ajzen, 1991, p. 181). A higher intention is assumed to result in a higher likeliness to manifest the behaviour the intention is aimed at (Ajzen, 1991). Heckhausen and Heckhausen (2018) explain the origin and the process of intentions through the Rubicon model and state that the interaction of a person and situation leads to different behavioural options available in a specific situation. Which of these is preferred depends on personal motivation. While intentions can be present, they only lead to behaviour when planning and actional volition occur. The result of the actions is then evaluated.

Organizational behaviour research has been criticized for measuring intentions, such as turnover intention, as proxies of behaviour and relying on self-evaluation or other-evaluation (Banks et al., 2021). However, what is evident is that intention is part of the organizational behaviour lexicon and is often utilized.

Perceptions: Perceptions can be used to explain different evaluations of and reactions to the same stimuli. Robbins and Judge (2018) see perception as a process that describes how individuals “organize and interpret sensory impressions in order to give meaning to their environment” (p. 415). A commonly implemented theory dealing with different perceptions is attribution theory which approaches different ways of judging behaviours according to the meaning attributed to that perceived behaviour (Harvey et al., 2014). It becomes clear that perceptions are mainly relevant for judging behaviour and potential reactions.

Attitudes: Attitudes have been defined as the “overall evaluation of an object that is based on cognitive, affective, and behavioral information” (Maio et al., 2019, p. 4). The objective in the definition can be a “person, object, or issue” (Petty & Cacioppo, 1981, p. 7). Attitudes contain an evaluation and are often linked to a positive or negative connotation (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993; Petty & Cacioppo, 1981). Job attitudes include job satisfaction, organizational commitment, perceived organizational support, and employee engagement (Robbins & Judge, 2018) and are often considered in research in the field.

Beliefs: Connors and Halligan (2014) define beliefs as "*enduring, unquestioned ontological representations of the world* and comprise *primary convictions about events, causes, agency, and objects that subjects use and accept as veridical*" (p. 2). The beliefs, which determine the indirect influences on behaviour, depend on the situational context and the person and are therefore highly individual (Ajzen & Fishbein, 2005). Beliefs can concern oneself, which contains the concept of self-efficacy. Self-efficacy defines “people‘s judgements of their capabilities to organize and execute courses of action required to attain designated types of performance" (Bandura, 1986), hence describing a person's beliefs about their ability to succeed. Perceived self-efficacy is influenced by the experience of mastery, meaning the successful completion of a similar task in the past by vicarious experience (Bandura, 1977).

Norms and values: Norms are shared standards of behaviour accepted within a group. Norms define what is considered acceptable, and as group members agree on that definition, they act accordingly without formal control mechanisms (Ehrhart & Naumann, 2004). Values are described as "abstract ideals (e.g., freedom, helpfulness) that function as important guiding principles" (Maio et al., 2003, p. 284). While norms depend on the current group context, values are rooted in the individual and projected to one's own and others' behaviour (Rokeach, 1973).

Motivation: Motivation has been described as a "multidimensional abstract concept that refers to the drive to cause some actions" (Furnham, 2017, p. 318). While multidimensionality is not described in detail, this definition sees motivation as the antecedent of starting an action. "Work motivation is a set of energetic forces that originate both within as well as beyond an individual's being, to initiate work-related behaviour, and to determine its form, direction, intensity, and duration" (Pinder, 2008, p. 11). This definition contains two precepts. First, the origin of the motivation can be intrinsic or extrinsic. Second, motivation is a process that contains the goal (direction), the invested energy (intensity) and the persistence (duration) with which something is done.

Personality: Personality refers to "fundamental traits or characteristics of the person (or of people generally) that endure over time and that account for consistent patterns of response to everyday situations" (Furnham, 2017, p. 318). Personality is mainly approached in categories of traits, and several concepts with measures exist. Personality traits are considered relatively stable over time (Roberts & Mroczek, 2008) and have, therefore, regularly been investigated as antecedents of behaviour and its outcomes (Alam et al., 2020; Lee et al., 2014). Examples are the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, popular in practical implementation (Kennedy & Kennedy, 2004) and the Big Five or OCEAN model, which is one of the most investigated and supported models in social science research (McCrae et al., 2004; Zare & Flinchbaugh, 2018).

Self-concept and identity: The term 'self-concept' refers to the outcome of personal reflection (Gecas, 1982). It is defined by Rosenberg (1979) as "the totality of an individual's thoughts and feelings having reference to himself as an object" (p.7). Role identity concepts also determine how individuals identify themselves in an organizational context and how they construct the meaning of their roles, such as managers or entrepreneurs (Caza et al., 2018; Epitropaki et al., 2017). Self-concept theory is explored further in section 2.2.4.2 (see p. 59 et seq.) as it also serves as explanatory theories.

Affect, emotions, and mood: Affect is the umbrella term for emotions and moods, containing a broader range of feelings. "Emotions are focused on a specific target or cause ... relatively intense and very short-lived" (Barsade & Gibson, 2007, p. 38), such as joy, or fear, while moods are more enduring and more general, such as being cheerful or feeling bad.

Knowledge and skills: Knowledge and skills are strongly related concepts, and either can be defined as containing the other (Pavese, 2016). Knowledge on an individual level is defined as "what people bring to practical situations that enables them to think and perform" (Eraut et al., 2000, p. 233). While knowledge focuses on the thinking aspect and, therefore, on information available to the person, skills are more practical. Examples of skills are problem-solving and time management (Chan et al., 2017).

Results: Heckhausen and Heckhausen (2018) see results and consequences as part of the behavioural process. The perceived value of these results and consequences determines if behaviour is shown. After the action, the results related to the task (e.g. finishing a task on time), lead to extrinsic consequences (e.g. a bonus). These results and consequences are then evaluated.

2.2.3 *DISCUSSION AND DEFINITION*

Even though behaviour might seem to be a self-explanatory term, it becomes clear that, on closer examination, this is not the case. While some researchers have provided definitions, their practical application is only partially viable, partly due to the diversity of situations in which the term is applied. Calhoun and El Hady (2021) state that a definition valid for all behaviour-related research is unnecessary, but researchers need to define how they use the term in their studies. However, even such a specific positional definition is sought, two significant general discussions on individual human behaviour are prominent in the field of behaviour research: (a) Are mental processes behaviour?, and (b) Is communication behaviour? These questions must be discussed before stating a definition of behaviour for this thesis.

First: Are mental processes behaviour? Hupp et al. (2008) examine behaviour from a cognitive-behavioural theory perspective. They differentiate overt (visible) and covert (cognitive) processes as both are actions that influence each other but are different in nature. Murrell et al. (2008) include both forms of action in their definition, labelling them as behaviour. For this research, cognitive processes, also called covert behaviour, are seen as antecedents of behaviour, as they are linked to intentions rather than behaviours and, therefore, need to be demarcated from behaviour itself.

Second: Is communication behaviour? Communication has been defined as “the simultaneous sharing and creating of meaning through human symbolic interaction” (Chase & Wayne, 2013, p. 7) and “involves transmission of verbal and non-verbal messages. It consists of a sender, a receiver and a channel of communication” (Munodawafa, 2008, p. 369). It has been found that communication serves several functions in organizations: (a) management (e.g. communicating expectations regarding work performance), (b) feedback (e.g. praising for achievements), (c) emotional sharing (e.g. talking about feelings and needs), (d) persuasion (e.g. provide reasons to commit to corporate social responsibility measures), and (d) information exchange (e.g. communicate a decision) (Wijn & van den Bos, 2010). As discussed from the psychological perspective, Uher (2016) claims that communication needs to have a function in the present to be called behaviour. While the content of the communication might aim at the past (e.g. feedback) or the future (e.g.

communicating goals), the functions presented by Wijn and van den Bos (2010) are relevant in the present. Communication can therefore be defined as behaviour in the realm of FB.

After discussing several definitions and contested aspects of behaviour, the following definition was developed and is applied in this research:

> *Behaviour in organizations is a human individual's reaction to internal and/or external stimuli (antecedents), including overt actions and communication that cause a change in the environment or the individual (outcome). Behaviour needs to be demarcated from intentions and their antecedents, such as attitudes, norms and values, beliefs, motivation, personality, affect, individual characteristics, and covert mental processes.*

2.2.4 *EXPLANATORY THEORIES*

2.2.4.1 THEORY OF PLANNED BEHAVIOUR

A theory frequently used to explain behaviour, not only in organizational contexts, is the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB). TPB aims to predict behaviour and sees a complex system of antecedents influencing the actual resulting behaviour (Ajzen, 1991). TPB has been implemented in a wide range of research fields. Outside the organizational context, researchers used it to investigate topics, such as quitting smoking (Gantt, 2001), healthy eating (Fila & Smith, 2006), and social distancing during the COVID-19 crisis (Adiyoso & Wilopo, 2021). Its applicability in the organizational context has been shown in several research projects. These include research on decision-making regarding the employment of workers with disabilities (Fraser et al., 2010), succession planning in family businesses (Sharma et al., 2003), employee performance (Ajzen, 2011), employee turnover (van Breukelen et al., 2004), retail employee's theft behaviour (Bailey & Guthrie, 2006), customers payment behaviour (Ajzen & Driver, 1992), and consumers decision-making regarding the purchase of organic products (Carfora et al., 2019).

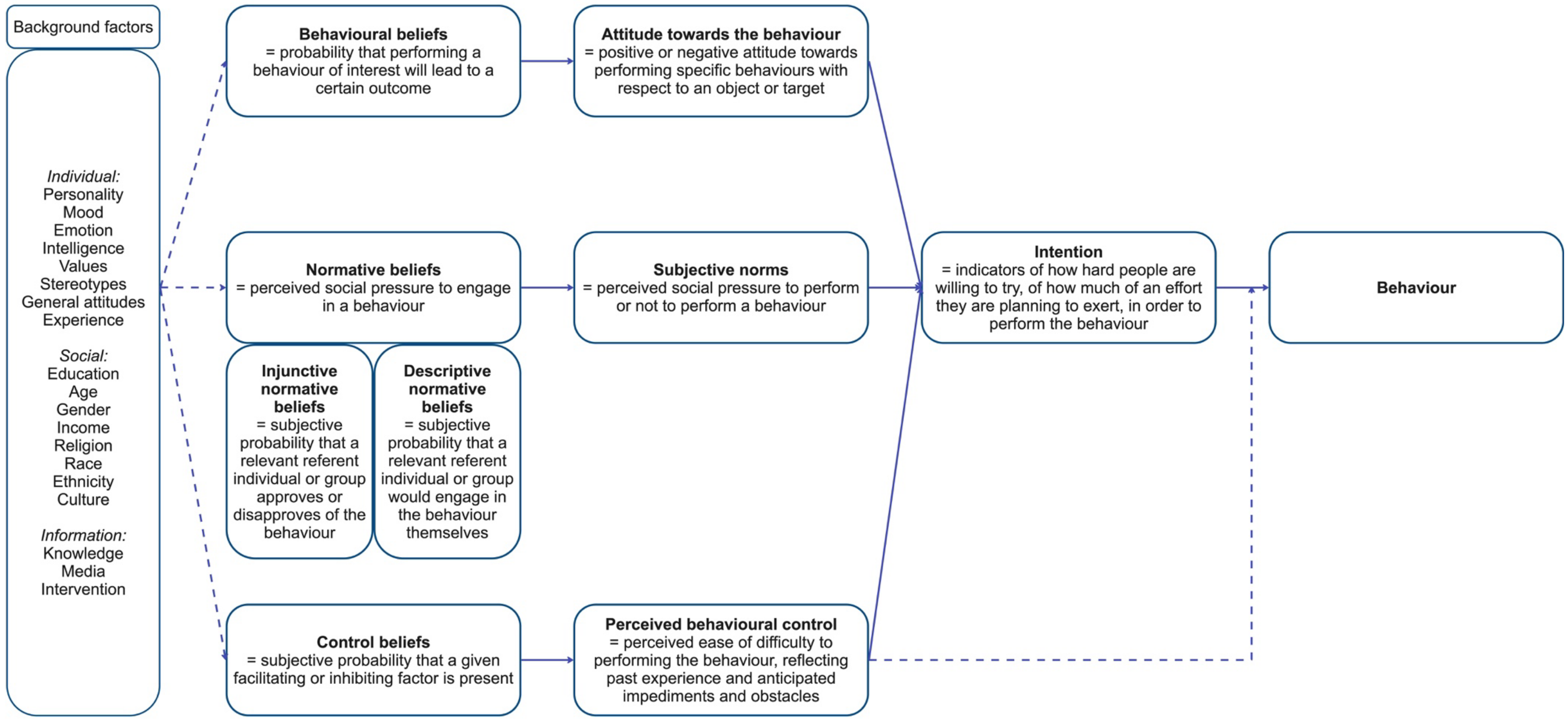
The first version of TPB was published in 1991 and is based on the Theory of Reasoned Action. While the Theory of Reasoned Action sees attitudes and subjective norms as the influencing factors for behavioural intentions, TPB considers perceived behavioural control (Madden et al., 1992). The revised version displayed in Figure 6 is used for this thesis. It was published by Ajzen and Fishbein (2005), the authors of the original version and represents a broader approach, acknowledging that behaviour is a complex process. It is important to note that behaviours also influence beliefs, attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived control in turn. The influence is reciprocal rather than one-way, and the indirect influencing factors are also interrelated (Ajzen & Fishbein, 2005). It becomes clear that the origins of behaviour are complex and precise differentiations, especially between intentions and behaviour, need to be considered. This has been acknowledged by the definitions of concepts that need to be demarcated in section 2.2.2 (see p. 51 et seq.).

While background factors are seen as indirect influences, attitudes towards the behaviour, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control are considered to influence intention directly. Intention, in turn, leads to behaviour. While behavioural intentions sometimes correlate with actual behaviour, individuals do not always act based on it (ElHaffar et al., 2020). Therefore, the intention to behave in a certain way is not the same as behaviour, but the two concepts are directly linked. Heckhausen and Heckhausen (2018) see needs, motives, and goals as part of the person. The situation contains opportunities and incentives. Coming together, internal, and external factors determine which behaviour will be shown. It has been found that intentions over more extended periods of time, e.g. for studying or eating lot-fat, were lower than intentions for behaviours that were shown at a single point in time close to the time the intention was voiced (Albarracín et al., 2001; Conner et al., 2000; Sheeran & Orbell, 1999). Also, the absence of behaviour based on the decision not to show the possible behaviour in the situation has been discussed as a potential outcome (Ajzen & Sheikh, 2013).

TPB informs the analysis phase of this research as the antecedents leading to behaviour, as proposed by TPB, form an initial framework for potential themes in the findings. While the analysis is conducted inductively, the clear definitions provided by the theoretical foundation of TPB enable an allocation of meaning units to themes.

Figure 6

The Theory of Planned Behaviour



Note. Based on “The Influence of Attitudes on Behavior,” by I. Ajzen, and M. Fishbein, 2005, In D. Albarracin, B. T. Johnson & M. P. Zanna (Eds.), *The Handbook of Attitudes* (pp. 173-221). Lawrence, p. 194. Copyright 2005 by Taylor & Francis Group LLC. Adapted with permission.

2.2.4.2 SELF-CONCEPT

The term ‘self-concept’ is defined by Rosenberg (1979) as “the totality of an individual’s thoughts and feelings having reference to himself as an object” (p.7). Scholars broadly agree that it is a multidimensional construct learned and influenced by social interaction (Bochner, 1994; Choi & Choi, 2002; Gecas, 1982). The self-concept is linked to a reflexive process in which individuals monitor themselves and reactions towards them and re-evaluate their self-concept (Elliott, 2020). It has been used to explain behaviours in various research fields. Outside organizational research, it has, for example, been implemented to explain eating behaviour (Khor et al., 2002), mobile phone use in adolescents (Kong et al., 2021), school absenteeism behaviour (Gonzálvez et al., 2019), identification with game characters (Ko & Park, 2020), and health-related behaviour (Crocker et al., 2007). In organizational behaviour, among others, customer behaviour in retail banking (Jamal, 2004), employee after-hour work behaviour (Sinha & Laghate, 2023), the motivation to lead (Chen, 2016), and Organizational citizenship behaviour (OCB) (Mayfield & Taber, 2010; Roney & Soicher, 2022) have been investigated based on the self-concept.

Rogers (1959) breaks the self-concept down into three elements: self-image, self-esteem/self-worth, and ideal self. Self-image describes a person’s view of themselves and answers the question ‘who am I?’. The answers to this question can be physical descriptions, social roles, personal traits, or existential statements (Bailey, 2003). Self-esteem describes the extent to which an individual approves of themself. It is, therefore, a form of self-evaluation of the self-image (Abdel-Khalek, 2016). The theoretical proposition of self-esteem was extended by Argyle (2008), who found that the comparison with others, social roles which carry prestige or stigmas, and identification influence self-esteem. Higgins (1987) distinguishes the ideal self and the ought self. The ideal self describes the attributes a person would aspire to possess as part of the future self-image. The ought self includes the aspects one believes should be part of the self-concept. While the ought self is based on obligations and a sense of duty, the ideal self originates in the individual’s wishes (Bak, 2014; Higgins, 1987). Ought self and ideal self provide two different standards for evaluating one's self-concept (Bak, 2014). Not all aspects of the self-concept are always available to an individual, as memory capacities are limited and different aspects of the self-concept are relevant in certain situations (e.g. the organizational context) (Markus & Wurf, 1987).

While several self-concept-based theories explain behaviour, three approaches are described in this section as relevant to this thesis: self-affirmation, self-regulation, and impression management.

Self-affirmation: First introduced by Steele (1988), self-affirmation theory assumes that individuals aim to maintain self-integrity. They want to avoid damaging their self-esteem, which is the evaluation of their self-image. There are parallels to Festinger's (1957) cognitive dissonance theory. Both theories assume that a feeling of discomfort arises when behaviour and the individual belief system are not aligned. In contrast to cognitive dissonance theory, which is based on an intellectual assessment and justification of certain behaviours, self-affirmation theory assumes that discomfort originates in a threat to self-esteem and behaviours that maintain the current self-image. Therefore, self-esteem-protecting behaviours are chosen (Mummendey, 2006).

While researchers initially focused on maintaining the personal self-image, Sherman and Cohen (2006) extended the concept to maintaining social identities. "Identities are individual's subjective interpretations of who they are, based on their socio-demographic characteristics, roles, personal attributes, and group membership" (Caza et al., 2018, p. 889). While it becomes clear that self-concept and identity are related, this thesis follows Tajfel (1978), who defines social identity as "part of an individual's self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership of a social group" (p. 63). Role identity concepts also determine how individuals identify themselves in an organizational context and how they construct meaning of their roles, such as managers or entrepreneurs (Caza et al., 2018; Epitropaki et al., 2017). Social identity provides a feeling of belonging to a group, and this membership is assigned emotional importance (Hogg & Terry, 2000; Tajfel, 1978). According to Tajfel's definition, social identity is formed by group processes outside the self, which influence the self-concept. These group processes include social categorization, exaggerating group difference perceptions, adoption of group identity, and comparison of in-group and out-group individuals. Even if there is no rational commonality, people tend to act in favour of their in-group peers rather than outsiders (Tajfel, 1970).

Self-affirmation has been found to influence helping behaviour (Lindsay & Creswell, 2014), creativity (Jiang, 2018), and to reduce cheating in the workplace (Spoelma, 2022).

Self-regulation: While self-affirmation aims to protect the current self-image and its evaluation, self-regulation aims at perceived discrepancies between the current self-image and the ideal and ought self (Higgins, 1987). Ideal self and ought self can be summarized under the umbrella term possible selves, as they include potential future versions of the self (Bak, 2014; Hoyle & Sherrill, 2006). While the ideal self is an intrapersonal belief system, the ought self is influenced by social interactions and the communicated expectations from significant others (Bak, 2014; Mummendey, 2006). Possible selves are not always desirable from the viewpoint of the individual. For example, Markus and Nurius (1986) refer to a feared self for undesirable future possible selves. Bak (2014) proposes a concept of self-standards that can be distinguished by the individual’s positive or negative evaluation and the intrapersonal or social origin of the evaluation. A nomenclature parallel to ideal and ought selves is used by calling negatively evaluated possible selves undesired self and forbidden self, with the undesired self containing “attributes that one would not like to possess” (Bak, 2014, p. 158) and the forbidden self, representing the beliefs about attributes that are considered socially unacceptable. It is important to note that those sets of self-standards are not positive and negative reflections of each other but independent evaluations of possible selves (Bak, 2014).

Furthermore, self-awareness, which is “the capacity of becoming the object of one’s own attention” (Morin, 2011, p. 807), is a requirement for self-regulation processes, as discrepancies between the self-image and possible selves need to be detected through reflective processes (Mummendey, 2006). Carver and Schreier (1998) distinguish two approaches to self-regulation: approach and avoidance behaviour. Discrepancies between the ideal or ought self and the self-image lead to approach behaviour, which includes all behaviours that support reaching the ideal or ought self. Avoidance behaviours are shown when undesired or forbidden selves come close to realization.

Self-presentation: Self-presentation is defined as a “goal-directed activity of controlling information to influence the impressions formed by an audience about the self” (Schlenker & Wowra, 2003, p. 871). Self-disclosure, on the other hand, is the communication of self-related information to another person, regardless of the impact on the evaluation by the other person. Self-presentation includes the influence the communicating person takes on the information provided to control the image created about oneself in the mind of the information receiver (Schlosser, 2020). Impression management is a concept that exists simultaneously but refers to the same definition (Goffman, 1959). Impression management and self-presentation literature are used as the differences are marginal.

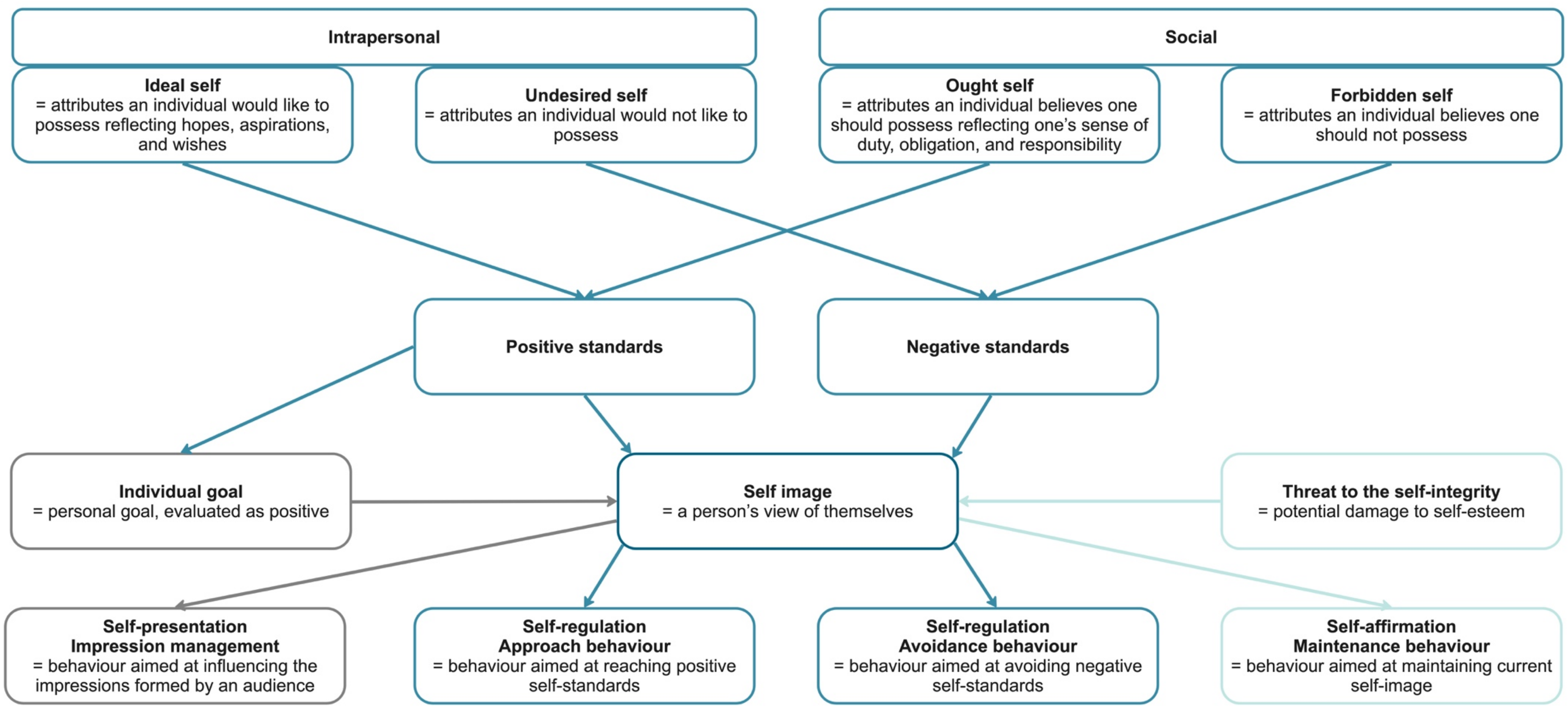
Self-presentation is based on goals an individual sets for themselves. These goals are regularly derived from the ought or ideal self-concept (Silbak, 2009). Vohs et al. (2005) link self-regulation and self-presentation to each other, as they use the same personal resources and only limited effort can be put into each. Based on Lee et al. (1999), two impression management styles can be distinguished: defensive and assertive self-presentation. Defensive self-presentations include excuses, justifications, disclaimers, self-handicapping, and apologies and are used to protect the other person’s current image. Assertive self-presentations include ingratiation, intimidation, supplication, entitlement, enhancement, blasting, and exemplification and are intended to change another person’s image of the individual.

The analysis of this research is informed by self-concept theories. As participants rarely address the self-concept explicitly, data need to be interpreted to identify references made to the concept. Therefore, knowledge about the different aspects of the self-concept and its related concepts is needed to be able to recognize relevant sections during the analysis phase.

Figure 7 provides an overview of the three self-concept approaches and their behavioural outcomes.

Figure 7

Overview of Self-Affirmation, Self-Regulation, and Self-Presentation



Note. Grey indicates self-presentation, dark blue indicates self-regulation, and light blue indicates self-affirmation.

2.2.4.3 PSYCHOLOGICAL CONTRACT

Psychological contract definitions vary regarding the perspective and potential contract partners (Akkermans et al., 2019; George, 2009). One approach locates the contract formation process in the employee (Anderson & Schalk, 1998). It states that the psychological contract is defined as “individual beliefs, shaped by the organization, regarding terms of an exchange agreement between the individual and their organization” (Rousseau, 1995, p. 9). Another definition considers the employer perspective and includes “the perceptions of both parties to the employment relationship, organization and individual, of the obligations implied in the relationship” (Herriot & Pemberton, 1995, p. 45). Both definitions align in their approach that the contract partners are employees and their employer, an organization. These definitions have been criticized for including the organization as a contract partner, which has to be represented by a person to enter psychological contracts (Conway & Pekcan, 2019; Schalk & Rousseau, 2001). HR employees and formal managers regularly adopt this representative function (Guest & Conway, 2002). In a more recent definition, Rousseau et al. (2018) see the psychological contract as “a cognitive schema, or system of beliefs, representing an individual’s perceptions of his or her own and another's obligations, defined as the duties or responsibilities one feels bound to perform” (p 1081). In this definition, the contract partner is not specified and the term ‘another’ leaves room for interpretation. Therefore, the definition is broader and can include contract partners, such as organizational representatives or team members. Current discussions revolve around including collective understandings of mutual expectations (Korczynski, 2022; Laulié & Tekleab, 2016; Schreuder et al., 2019). Akkermans et al. (2019) introduce the horizontal psychological contract based on Gibbard et al. (2017), who see individuals’ beliefs about reciprocal obligations between team members as important. This research, however, generally follows the definition presented by Rousseau et al. (2018), acknowledging the variety of possible psychological contracts, including the team and horizontal levels. It is emphasized that a psychological contract consists of the two perspectives of those individual perceptions, as both contract partners involved are natural rather than legal persons.

While various definitions exist, authors in the field mainly agree that psychological contracts are characterized as reciprocal, implicit, perceptual, and based on expectations (Conway & Pekcan, 2019; George, 2009). Both contract partners are considered when the psychological contract is understood as reciprocal (Schalk & De Ruiter, 2019). The notion of reciprocity includes the individual perception of balance in providing and receiving in the exchange relationship (Coyle-Shapiro & Kessler, 2002). Schalk and De Ruiter (2019) suggest defining reciprocity as the "*degree of balance in the fulfilment of mutual obligations in the psychological contract*" (p. 54). They furthermore see mutuality as the degree to which the contract partners agree on the content of the psychological contract. Ali (2021) points out that reciprocity does not fully reflect power imbalances present in the work context due to hierarchical settings and suggests further investigating the negotiation of psychological contracts.

Psychological contracts are not agreed on in written form. Therefore, they are implicit and often subconscious until a contract breach occurs (George, 2009). They are based on the beliefs and expectations of an individual, which are subjective and influenced by the perception of the respective individual (Kappelides & Jones, 2019). Subjectivity refers to the contract's content, fairness, and time perceptions in contract fulfilment (Griep et al., 2019).

Psychological contracts are further based on mutual expectations. Employee expectations can contain less subjective contents including a competitive salary and job security but mainly focus on highly subjective aspects such as participation in decision-making, autonomy, flexibility, and career guidance (Kickul, 2001). The employer's expectations towards the employee include taking on additional tasks, working overtime, and being service-oriented (Conway & Briner, 2005). A more comprehensive overview is provided in Figure 8. While the contents of psychological contracts have been well-researched, less attention was given to the process underlying the exchange relationship at first (Conway & Briner, 2009). More recently, research focusing on the process was published, investigating the formation of psychological contracts (Rousseau et al., 2018; Sherman & Morley, 2015) and its potential recovery after contract breaches (Bankins, 2015; Solinger et al., 2016).

Two forms of psychological contracts have been identified: transactional and relational contracts (Rousseau & McLean Parks, 1993). Relational psychological contracts are based on a mutual relationship, which includes trust. Reciprocal behaviours need not be returned immediately, but the relational contract is long-term. In contrast, the transactional psychological contract focuses on a short-term exchange of specific behaviours. Less trust is needed, as reciprocal behaviour is manifest in close time proximity (Griep et al., 2019; Rousseau & McLean Parks, 1993). Expectations are less clearly defined in relational contracts than in transactional contracts. However, they are desirable from an employer's perspective, as they have been found to lead to higher work engagement (McLean Parks & Kidder, 1994; Schalk & Roe, 2007).

The contract partners regularly re-evaluate psychological contracts. Perceived contract fulfilment refers to the positive evaluation of the reciprocal exchange relationship (Ahmad & Zafar, 2018). This psychological contract state is also called a stable contract (Solga, 2016). When the reciprocity of psychological contracts is not honoured by meeting the contract partners' expectations, an imbalance is perceived, which leads to a new evaluation of the contract (McLean Parks & Kidder, 1994; Solga, 2016). Two forms of unbalancing the psychological contract are contract breach and contract violation. Sischka et al. (2021) refer to the mutual expectations inherent to psychological contracts and define a contract breach as the "failure to fulfill these promises" (p. 2). Contract breaches are, therefore, based on a cognitive evaluation of contract fulfilment and the trust placed in the consistency of the contract (Bal et al., 2008; Robinson, 1996). It leads to re-evaluating a relational psychological contract that can become a transactional psychological contract (Solga, 2016). Contract violation is the emotional evaluation of a contract breach. If a violation of the contract is perceived and how the emotional reaction towards that breach manifests itself is influenced by the subjective interpretation process of the individual

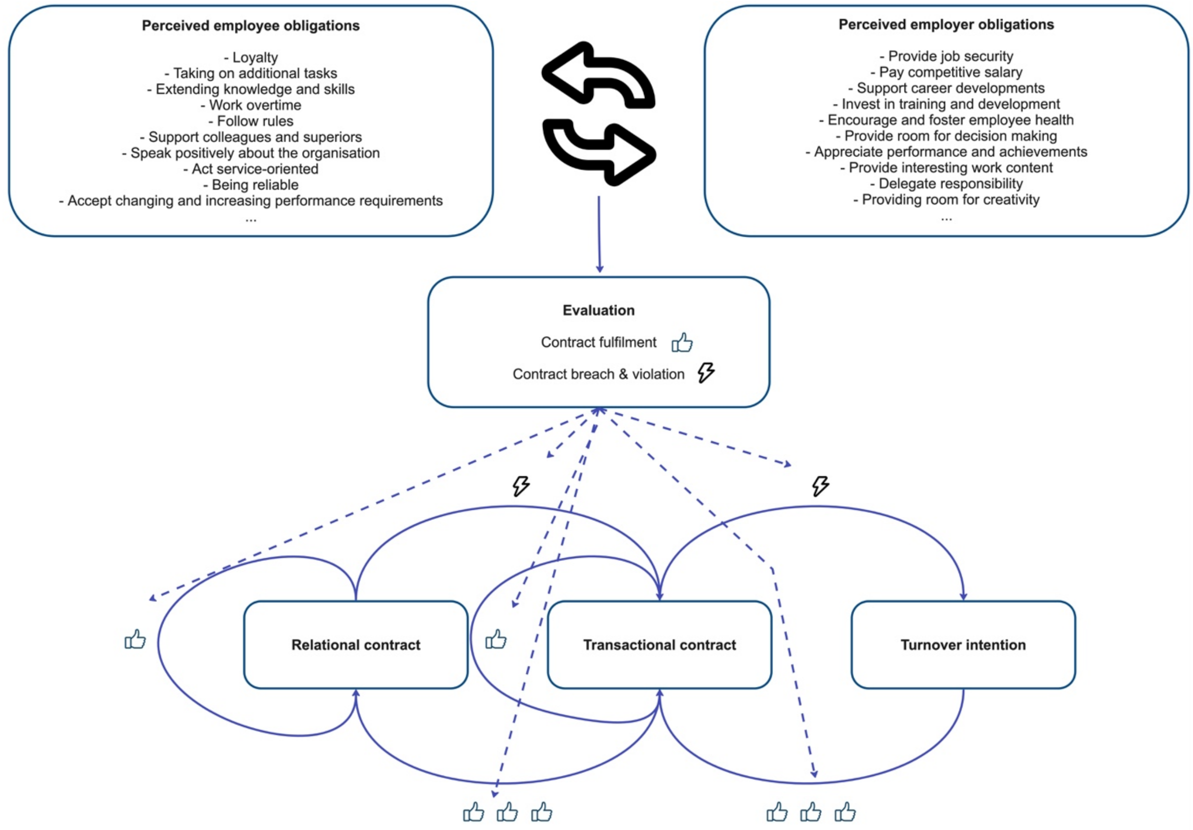
(Robinson & Wolfe Morrison, 2000). Ongoing contract breaches can lead to higher turnover intentions through the perception of multiple contract violations (Bal et al., 2008). Bankins (2015) suggest that individuals react to contract breaches by the implementation of coping actions that either lead to (a) the repair of the breach and the contract, (b) the repair of the contract, but not the breach, or (c) a deterioration of the contract when no repair can be achieved. Improving the quality of the psychological contract is possible based on several evaluations of contract fulfilment (Solga, 2016). These findings characterize psychological contracts as relational concepts that are subject to constant change, especially in volatile contexts, making the interpersonal processes leading to these changes an interesting research topic, due to its high relevance for practice. The processes explored above are illustrated in Figure 8.

The psychological contract has regularly been used to explain behaviour in the organizational context. Several studies in a range of cultural settings found that a stable psychological contract leads to more OCB, and contract breaches have adverse effects on its appearance (Ahmad & Zafar, 2018; Gupta et al., 2016; Gurumoorthi & Venkatesan, 2020; Santos et al., 2023; Tufan & Wendt, 2020). Several studies found that psychological contracts play a role in the occurrence of counterproductive behaviour (Griep et al., 2023; Ma et al., 2019) and several forms of voice behaviour (Ali Arain et al., 2018; Guo, 2017; Lin et al., 2022). These findings support the relevance of research on psychological contracts as they seem to influence important organizational outcomes.

The concept of psychological contracts is unique in a way that they explain behaviour specifically in the organizational context Therefore, it provides potential for data analysis. As described for the self-concept in section 2.2.4.2 (see p. 59 et seq.), participants do not necessarily talk about their psychological contracts explicitly, but interpretation is needed given the concept's potential connectivity to FB.

Figure 8

Content, Process, and Forms of Psychological Contracts



2.3 CONCLUSION

The research field of leadership, with which followership is affiliated, lacks conceptual clarity, does not offer demarcated definitions, and is limited by a predominantly quantitative methodological approach. The debate around these issues is based on the ongoing general discussion surrounding the demarcation, or unity, of management and leadership, in which a consensus is still to be reached. This research follows the approach that management and leadership and, therefore, employeeship and followership, are distinct role concepts from a theoretical perspective that are interconnected in their practical realization, as those roles are regularly adopted by the same individuals in organizational contexts. While management and employee roles are formally assigned through work contracts and job descriptions, leadership and followership are informal roles adopted through interpersonal processes.

Based on this understanding that management/employeeship and leadership/followership are distinct concepts, the question regarding their clear demarcation beyond formal and informal role definition arises. While critical scholars (e.g. Alvesson & Blom, 2019; Andersen, 2019) have problematized this lack of demarcation of followership from other concepts, initial theoretical attempts have been made to provide such a demarcation but an operationalizable approach still needs to be developed. Based on Blom and Lundgren's (2020) notion of voluntariness, this research proposes that followership is distinct from employeeship as it is based on full or moderate voluntariness.

Addressing the second aspect of FB, namely behaviour, a similar issue surfaces. Discussions around the term 'behaviour' can primarily be found in biology and to some extent in (organizational) psychology. As criticized by Banks et al. (2021), the term is regularly used without definition, leading to researchers focusing on proxies or other concepts related to behaviour, but not behaviour itself. Therefore, a definition applicable for this research is provided and other constructs that need to be demarcated are defined.

In conclusion, generally agreed definitions can be found neither for followership, nor for behaviour. Therefore, the research field of FB deals with a twofold potential for insufficient definitional understandings, leading to a lack of concept clarity and prospective inaccurate use of terms in academic publications. By identifying the absent concept clarity in followership and behaviour, this research extends the problematization initially stated in the introduction. Furthermore, few publications disputing the academic understanding of the term 'follower behaviour' can be found. In addition, no systematic approach to explore its definition and use in research has been implemented, leaving scholars with fragmented knowledge of the term. Hence, the academic understanding of the concept needs to be explored to enable the juxtaposition with practitioners' experiences and answer the research question. Therefore, the term 'follower behaviour' and its application in academia, considering the extended problematization elaborated in this chapter, is explored in detail in the next chapter.

3 SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW OF FOLLOWER BEHAVIOUR

Scholars do not agree on a definition, conceptualization, or framework regarding FB. While Gochmann (2018) built a framework categorizing FBs based on a narrative literature review, no systematic approach to defining and conceptualizing FB has been made so far. As this study aims to juxtapose current research on FB with the lived experiences of practitioners, the comprehension of researchers' current conceptualization is a mandatory requisite for achieving the chief aim of this thesis. Therefore, a systematic review aiming to critically review how researchers use the term 'follower behaviour' in their work and how it is approached in empirical studies is conducted. Thereby, this review contributes to knowledge as it is the first SLR on the topic, providing an overview on the research field and its understanding of the studied concept.

3.1 METHOD JUSTIFICATION

A systematic review "seeks to systematically search for, appraise and synthesize research evidence, often adhering to guidelines on the conduct of a review" (Grant & Booth, 2009, p. 95). They are conducted following clear and comprehensible rules and require, on average, six months to two years to be conducted (Khangura et al., 2012). Grant and Booth (2009) suggest 14 different review approaches that differ in methods and goals, illustrating the broad range of reviews available to researchers.

While much of the literature on systematic reviews stems from the field of medicine (Gough & Thomas, 2017), Tranfield et al. (2003) were the first to discuss its applicability to management research. While medicine is a structured research field with little discussion about research philosophy, social sciences are based on various ontological and epistemological assumptions. Therefore, Noblit and Hare (1988) claim that positivist research fields have been more interested in the systematic analysis of the knowledge in their research field as the research paradigm sees the current state of knowledge as an accumulation of past discoveries. Supporting the argument that SLRs are inherently rooted in positivist worldviews, Petticrew (2001) shows that SLRs are used in various research fields but confounds the notion that SLRs must be statistical analyses. In contrast, more recent publications argue that SLRs can be conducted from a variety of philosophical standpoints (Gough et al., 2012; Mendoza de los Santos et al., 2022). While Gough et al. (2012) agree that aggregative reviews, that are “collecting empirical data to describe and test predefined concepts” (p. 3) are indeed rooted in realist philosophies, they suggest that configurative reviews, that aim “to interpret and understand the world” (p. 3) are allocated in relativist worldviews. Therefore, the review question (RVQ) and the aim of the review determine if an SLR is compatible with a worldview or not.

This SLR aims to critically review how researchers use the term ‘follower behaviour’ in their work and how it is approached in empirical research. Thereby, this review does not aim to aggregate the results and findings provided in prior empirical research, but rather it comprehends the publications as representations of the researchers’ concept understandings and treats them as written qualitative data (Flick, 2018). Through the academic dialogue generated by comparing the propositions and discussion within previous publications and using the outcomes to develop the concept further, the use of the term ‘follower behaviour’ can be understood as it is constructed within the academic domain. Therefore, this SLR is a configurative review rooted in social constructionism.

Through an SLR approach, the research question can be answered in greater breadth, as the understanding of the term ‘follower behaviour’ can be analysed more broadly. As an alternative, expert interviews, focus groups, or other methods for primary data generation could be used, inviting researchers to present their perspectives. These approaches would include fewer opinions and views in the analysis. On the other hand, written data does not provide the opportunity to remove ambiguities or probe meaning. The content presented in publications is subject to interpretation without having the capacity to seek clarification. Still, it offers the possibility to explore the meaning of the term ‘follower behaviour’ by including the voices of more authors than might otherwise be feasible. Therefore, this SLR is conducted to create dialogue, rather than implementing primary research.

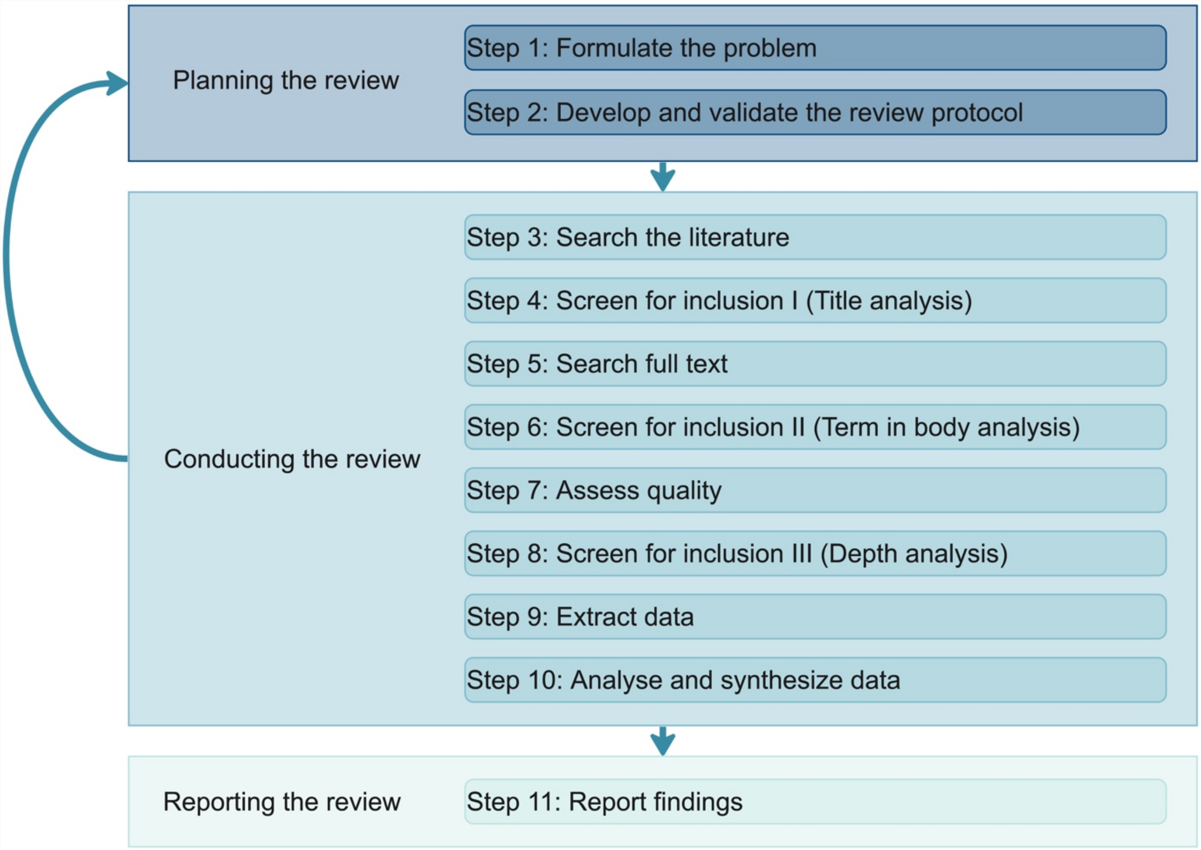
3.2 METHODOLOGY

Several authors provide guidelines for conducting SLRs in a business context. However, only some differences in the proposed procedures can be found and conducting an SLR is generally described in three stages (Brereton et al., 2007; Gough et al., 2017; Linnenluecke et al., 2020). The first stage includes preparation work that aims at clarity, such as formulating the research problem and research questions and designing a review protocol. Organizational planning, such as forming a research team and dividing tasks, should be managed in this stage (Gough et al., 2017; Linnenluecke et al., 2020). As one author conducted this SLR, this step is only partly relevant. The second phase includes the search for relevant literature, a screening for inclusion according to the research protocol, the assessment of the quality and the elimination of publications not meeting the quality criteria, the extraction of the data and the analysis. The last phase then deals with reporting the findings. As Gough et al. (2017) highlight, literature reviews are not conducted for their own sake but should be put to use. This SLR will be juxtaposed with the empirical findings in chapter 5.

Xiao and Watson (2019) propose a methodology for literature reviews in an organizational context. While the process provides a functional framework for conducting a literature review, each RVQ is different, and reviews are based on varying datasets. Therefore, the review process is adapted to the needs of this review. While Xiao and Watson (2019) follow a process of eight steps, a slightly different approach was used in the second phase, and three steps were added to address the particularities of this data set. The steps taken in this review are displayed in Figure 9. The following sections explain in detail the actions taken in each step.

Figure 9

Structure of the Systematic Literature Review



Note. The process suggested in the original paper was adapted to the needs of this review. Adapted from "Guidance on Conducting a Systematic Literature Review," by Y. Xiao and M. Watson, 2019, *Journal of Planning Education and Research, 39*(1), p. 103 (https://doi.org/10.1177/0739456X17723971). Copyright 2019 by SAGE Publications Ltd. Journals. Adapted with permission.

3.3 FORMULATING THE REVIEW PROBLEM

Before conducting an SLR, a RVQ with possible sub-questions should be formulated. This is import as all following steps aim at answering this question. While some authors claim that systematic review questions should not be too broad (Cronin et al., 2008; Xiao & Watson, 2019), Gough and Thomas (2017) state that the RVQ should be aligned with the review aim, which leads to reviews differing in breadth. As this SLR aims to critically review how researchers use the term ‘follower behaviour’ in their work and how it is approached in empirical research, a broader approach is taken to include the perspectives of several researchers rather than those of an elite group. Based on this aim, the following main- and sub-RVQs have been formulated:

Main RVQ:

How do researchers use the term ‘follower behaviour’ in their work and how is it approached in empirical research?

Definitions and approaches towards follower behaviour:

RVQ 1: What definitions for the term ‘follower behaviour’ have been presented to date and how has follower behaviour been demarcated from employee behaviour?

RVQ 2: Which overarching theories have been used to explain follower ‘behaviour’?

Studies conducted in the field of follower behaviour:

RVQ 3: In which context were studies of follower behaviour conducted?

RVQ 4: Which behaviours have been investigated as follower behaviour?

RVQ 5: How has follower behaviour been approached in empirical research?

RVQ 6: Which antecedents were used to explain the occurrence of follower behaviour?

RVQ 7: Which outcomes of follower behaviour have been found?

3.4 REVIEW PLANNING

In step 2, the review is prepared. Inclusion criteria for the search, search strategies, quality assessment criteria, screening procedures, and strategies for data extraction, synthesis, and reporting are defined. Systematic reviews have been criticized for reviewing literature in narrow boundaries (Gough et al., 2017). As the main RVQ here is broad in nature, this review intends to include the broadness of approaches found in search results. Therefore, decisions about inclusion criteria are reviewed in the light of the research question and the goal of creating a broader, rather than narrower, examination.

The validation of the review protocol (see Appendix A1) was ensured through an iterative development process. Each step was initially conducted as a test (with a limited scope) before being added to the review protocol. For example, the literature search was conducted for a specific year during the development of the protocol, which led to technical and processual improvements in the final review protocol. The following paragraphs refer to this test phase as ‘initial search’ or ‘initial analysis’.

Search criteria: The aim of step 3 is to generate a conclusive list of results while simultaneously reducing the effort necessary to eliminate non-relevant results in the following steps.

First, keywords for the search need to be defined. The leading search term is ‘follower behaviour’. To include British and American spelling, ‘follower behavior’ also needs to be considered. Therefore, the search is conducted for the terms ‘follower behaviour’, ‘follower behavior’, ‘followership behaviour’, and ‘followership behavior’.

Next, inclusion and exclusion criteria need to be defined. During the initial search, it became clear that other disciplines use the term ‘follower behavio(u)r’ for different concepts. This review aims to include results that deal with followership in an organizational context. Several results on animal behaviour surfaced (e.g. Al Toufailia et al., 2013; Webster, 2017). Technical automation literature interested in robot technology, and results from social media research dealing with platforms (e.g. Twitter or Instagram) were found (e.g. Dai & Lee, 2012; Saito & Masuda, 2014). There is extensive research on FB in transport and evacuation (e.g. Ji & Gao, 2017), which is also not relevant to this review. As the research is conducted in an organizational context related to business, other forms of organizations, such as churches and sports clubs are not considered relevant in the context of this research. While researchers, such as Meindl et al. (1985), Kelley (1988), or Chaleff (1995) had discussed the concept of followership before the turn of the millennium, Shamir (2007) significantly influenced the definition of followership as it is mainly considered now (see section 2.1.1, p. 22 et seq.). Hence, only search results published in 2007 or later have been considered for the analysis. Searches should, therefore, be conducted with the inclusions and exclusions displayed in Table 2.

Table 2

Exclusion Criteria for Literature Search

Topic	Inclusion	Exclusion
Other research areas		animal, bee, dog, fish, robot, car, vehicle, game, Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, transport, evacuation
Business context	Organization, firm, company, enterprise, corporation	church, sport
Understanding of followership	Articles between 2007 and the date of the search	Articles before 2007

Furthermore, channels for the search need to be defined. Google Scholar currently is the most popular search engine as it provides results from various databases and offers links to Open Access PDFs if available (Norris et al., 2008). While Google Scholar has gained in popularity, a discussion about the quality of its results is ongoing (Sauvayre, 2022; Singh et al., 2022). Sauvayre (2022) found that nearly all data sets retrieved from Google Scholar had at least one error in the data, for example, in the name of the author or the journal. Data obtained through Google Scholar result lists need to be handled with the knowledge that errors in typing can occur or that values including the publication year can be wrong. While discussions about citations indices, transparency of search mechanisms, and output quality favour other databases, the coverage of relevant search results is best with Google Scholar (Gusenbauer, 2018; McNicholas et al., 2022).

WorldCat is a search engine that delivers results from a variety of databases and access is offered to students by the University of Gloucestershire (UoG). While quality is less of a problem with WorldCat than with Google Scholar, researchers have asked for improvements mainly related to usability (Bertot et al., 2012). The search can be limited to titles and abstracts by using Boolean Operators. Therefore, relevant results may be excluded.

While both databases have their advantages and problems, they offer different views on the research field. McNicholas et al. (2022) advise using several databases, as relying on a single database increases the risk of biased results. In an initial search, some overlap between the results of the two databases could be found, but enough variance could be seen in the results to justify a search protocol including both search engines.

An issue with WorldCat and Google Scholar is the extraction of a result list for further use. In an initial search, it was discovered that WorldCat and Google Scholar do not offer exports of the lists of findings and that workarounds must be found for both search engines.

WorldCat allows downloading citation information in formats that can be imported into literature management software. A trial run was conducted to see if an export from WorldCat, an import to EndNote and an export to Excel works. The solution was viable.

The same problem needs to be addressed with a different solution in the case of Google Scholar as it does not offer a direct export tool. “Publish or Perish is a software programme that retrieves and analyses academic citations. It uses Google Scholar to obtain the raw citations, then analyses these and presents a wide range of citation metrics in a user-friendly format” (Harzing & van der Wal, 2008, p. 61). In an initial search with Publish or Perish, the output style was sufficient for further use, even though the information provided was too extensive and the output style differed from the Endnote/Excel solution. In contrast to the option to retrieve results manually, the results are a sound basis even though flaws in the data provided by Google Scholar influence the search outcome. The results of all searches need to be transferred to an Excel file.

Criteria for first screening for inclusion: Step 4 contains the first screening for inclusion, which aims to increase the quality of the result list by eliminating obviously irrelevant results. This step is conducted based on the title and without the full-text PDFs. Two separate lists mark the beginning of this step, one with the results provided by Publish or Perish, searching Google Scholar and one supplied by WorldCat. These need to be treated separately for this step, as the quality of the results is different and must be brought up to the same level before they can be merged.

The first screening for inclusion contains restrictions that could not, or only partly, be incorporated into the search. This is mainly due to missing Boolean operators in the search engines or missing data in the data sets. In the initial search, five main issues in data quality were found that need to be considered: duplicates, year of publication, language, non-research, and other research areas.

Duplicates need to be eliminated. Due to different ways of extracting information on the publications, the results from the Google Scholar search need to be screened for duplicates. In contrast, the results from WorldCat are already free of duplicates because the EndNote export filters them out.

Even though the search includes an operator that excludes results before 2007, there might be incomplete literature data attached to the PDF, which could lead to results published before 2007 being included in the result list. Therefore, results that do not display a year of publication in the results list need to be checked for the publication date.

In terms of languages, Xiao and Watson (2019) state the obvious: “reviewers can only read publications in languages they can understand” (p. 105), leading to an exclusion criterion attached to the language skills of the reviewer. Hence, results in German and English are considered, as I am a native German speaker and proficient in English.

While WorldCat searches academic databases, Google Scholar also searches non-academic content including websites (Norris et al., 2008). Only academic documents should be included in the results as the RVQs aim to understand (academic) researchers, and all non-academic documents must be excluded in this step. In the initial search, lecture notes and calls for papers serve as examples for exclusions.

Despite the extensive use of Boolean operators, the initial search contained results from other research areas, such as finance and marketing. These results are sorted out.

After having conducted these steps for each result list separately, the lists need to be merged and rechecked for duplicates that were derived from both searches.

Full-text search*:* In step 5, available full-text PDFs are downloaded. Several available options to find full-text PDFs are used. This includes access to search engines provided by the University, open access options and uploads supplied by the authors (e.g. on researchgate).

UoG provides access to WorldCat, which is a first source, as it provides reliable and broad access to academic sources. A limited number of interlibrary loans are available to postgraduate researchers, which can be used to obtain publications not included in the university's subscription. In addition, access to EBSCO is provided by a university, where I work as a lecturer. During the initial search, it became clear that the access to SpringerLink is helpful for finding publications by Springer, while access to all other publishers was broader using WorldCat through UoG subscriptions.

Google Scholar complements WorldCat and SpringerLink by displaying open-access options. While these need to be considered carefully regarding quality in step 6, the initial search revealed that more publications can be found using Google Scholar than with any other option. Other websites, such as researchgate offer platforms where authors can upload their content for free download.

These options should be used in the following sequence: (a) WorldCat (UoG), (b) if SpringerLink, (c) Researchgate.com, (d) Proquest.com, (e) interlibrary loan. As cost-free interlibrary loans are limited and the effort for applying and monitoring them is high, only publications that appear highly relevant due to their title containing the term 'follower' or 'followership' should be considered.

Screening for inclusion: content and quality based: In step 6, a second screen for inclusion is conducted. While the search on WorldCat offers the option to search only in title or abstract, the Google Scholar search via Publish or Perish automatically searches the whole document. In the initial search, several documents were screened that did not provide information on FB but used sources that included the term in their title. Consequently, the publications were included in the result list as the term 'follower behavio(u)r' appeared in the bibliography. These results do not contribute to answering the RVQs and, therefore, need to be excluded. The relatively quick process can be conducted by searching the document for 'follower beh*'.

In step 7, the results for which a full-text PDF has been found will be screened for quality. The initial search revealed several quality issues such as bachelor and master dissertations, not peer reviewed items, and journals with questionable quality. While dissertations at bachelor and master levels can contain interesting information and research results, their quality cannot be ensured as lower requirements are in place than for doctoral research. The same applies to conference papers contributed to conferences organized by universities. Therefore, such work is only considered when at doctoral level and providing a. review committee, which usually consists of at least two reviewers.

Especially in the Google Scholar search, uploaded documents cannot be considered published. Some authors only use contributions to the highest quality journals in their reviews or advise to review the quality of the data provided in the article (Brereton et al., 2007; González-Toral et al., 2019). As the retraction scandal in leadership research shows, high rankings make high quality more likely but not certain (Atwater et al., 2014; Spoelstra et al., 2016). The RVQ asks how researchers use the term ‘follower behaviour’. Only using papers published in high-ranking journals would hence deny other scholars that they are researchers. It is the aim of this review to address this question in a manner that does not only include the opinions of a few scholars popular in the field but those of a broader research community. This leads to the dilemma of deciding what is ‘good quality’. For papers published in academic journals or contributions to academic conferences, a review process was designed based on the journal guide provided by the Chartered ABS (2021). Generally, the result is accepted if a detailed review process can be found. If no or only a not sufficient review process is found, the result is excluded. Journals and conference proceedings issued by publishers that also publish high-ranking journals (e.g. Emerald, Elsevier) were found to follow pre-defined review processes that do not contain much variance. Therefore, these journals are also accepted.

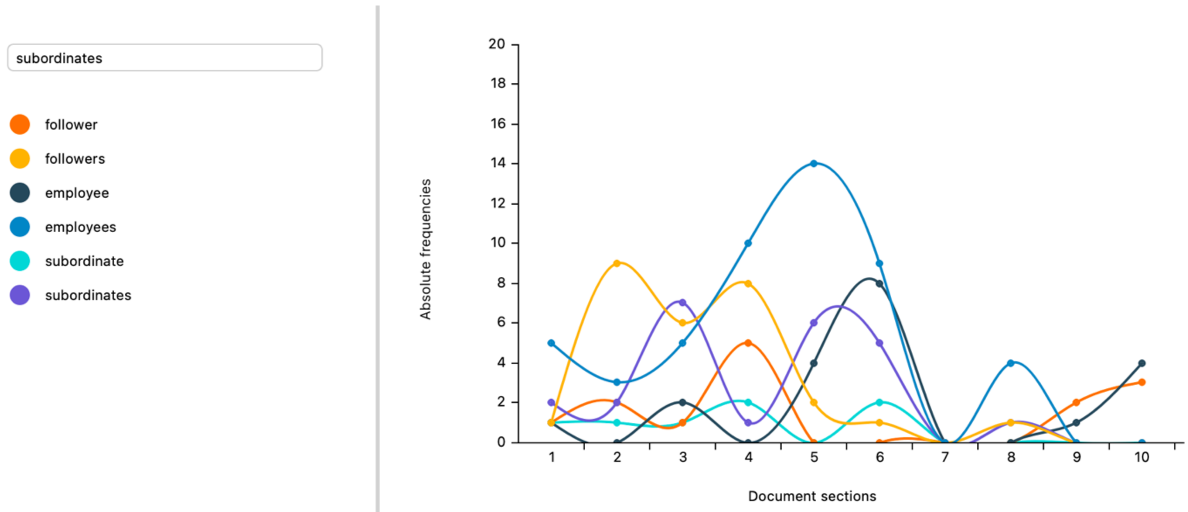
Depth analysis: For step 8 and all further steps, MAXQDA is used as technical support. The software is chosen as I am familiar with its use.

In preparation for data extraction, step 8 reduces the results to those specifically dealing with FB. During the initial search, it was found that some authors use the term ‘follower behaviour’ as a synonym for other terms for purely stylistic reasons or to set the scene for their research. When the term is only used as a synonym, no information relevant to the review can be gained, and the results hence need to be excluded. The same is true for results providing limited information. For example, some researchers use FB in their recommendations for future research but do not discuss or investigate the term in their research.

Relevant results were identified in three stages. The first stage aims to exclude results that do not focus on FB. The decision could mostly be made by reading the sentence that contained the term 'follower behaviour' plus two sentences preceding and following during the initial analysis. These results often have fewer hits when searching for the term 'follower behavio(u)r' (up to five). They regularly contain sentences similar to "follower-behaviour (e.g. OCB)," providing examples but not going into detail. Results that clearly do not focus on FB are excluded. In the second stage, the consistent use of the term 'follower' should be audited. To do so, the word trend function in MAXQDA is used, and the terms 'follower(s)', 'employee(s)', and 'subordinate(s)' are compared according to their quantitative use. Results that indicated a consistent use of the term 'follower' are considered relevant and directly included in the list for results of the analysis. Figure 10 shows an example of a word trend analysis that indicates inconsistent use of the term based on Liu et al. (2018).

Figure 10

Example for Word Trend Analysis Indicating Inconsistent Use of the Term 'Follower'



In a third stage, all results found to use the term ‘follower’ inconsistently are reviewed regarding their approach to followership. Results that use the term interchangeably with the terms ‘employee’ and ‘subordinate’ and do not explain their understanding of followership are excluded. If a section about followership can be found in the document, the result is added to the list of results for data extraction and data analysis.

Data extraction and data analysis: As in qualitative data analysis, the approach chosen for data analysis in SLRs is determined by the RVQs, and several methods for analysing the data exist (Sutcliffe et al., 2017; Thomas et al., 2017).

Qualitative content analysis is commonly used to analyse textual data (Kondracki et al., 2002). It aims “to provide knowledge and understanding of the phenomenon under study” (Downe-Wamboldt, 1992, p. 314). Content analysis can broadly be distinguished by the approach to coding and the level of abstraction in the content found in data (Graneheim et al., 2017; Schreier, 2012; Shannon & Hsieh, 2005).

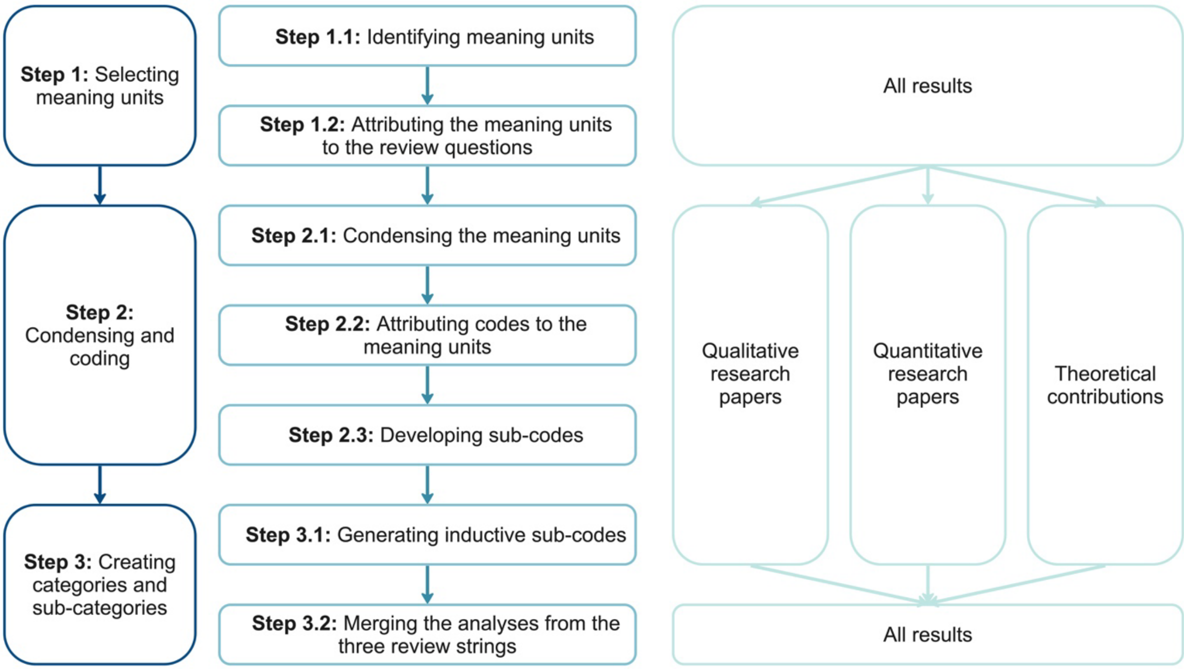
The approach to coding can be inductive, deductive, or abductive (Graneheim et al., 2017). Shannon and Hsieh (2005) call a purely inductive approach to coding conventional content analysis. In contrast, inductive approaches are data-driven (Schreier, 2012). Purely deductive approaches are concept-driven and based on pre-determined codes derived from theoretical knowledge before the coding procedure (Graneheim et al., 2017). Abductive approaches are characterized by combining inductive and deductive coding and aim at a comprehensive understanding of the categories in the data. In the terminology of Shannon and Hsieh (2005), directed content analysis constitutes a primarily deductive approach in which an initial code set is pre-defined and then re-evaluated and complemented inductively throughout the coding process. This analysis is conducted inductively, acknowledging that the analysis is based on substantive knowledge from the narrative literature review, which is regularly the case in inductive analyses. The categories were not pre-determined but were drawn from the analysis results. The knowledge acquired in the narrative literature review was used in labelling the codes, sub-codes, and categories.

Another way to differentiate is the level of abstraction in the content found in data (Graneheim et al., 2017). While manifest content is described as “visible, obvious components” (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004, p. 106), latent content deals with text passages that need interpretation on a level of underlying meaning. The RVQs mainly focus on explicitly voiced understandings. As the analysis aims to address research objective three, a descriptive rather than interpretative answer is needed. Therefore, the analysis is conducted as a directed, manifest content analysis.

Several authors proposed procedures to conduct qualitative content analysis (Bengtsson, 2016; Elo & Kyngäs, 2008; Graneheim & Lundman, 2004; Mayring, 2015). This analysis is based on the procedure displayed by Lindgren et al. (2020). The procedure provides an implementation-oriented approach with examples. The procedure is conducted in three basic steps: selecting meaningful units, condensing and coding, and creating categories. Thomas et al. (2017) suggest that qualitative and quantitative studies should be treated separately before being analysed together due to their different nature. For this review, not only qualitative and quantitative results need to be considered, but also theoretical contributions. Therefore, data extraction and synthesis are conducted in three different strings (qualitative, quantitative, theoretical) and then analysed together. Some results contain several studies not all of which are relevant for this review. To address this issue, studies are treated as individual analysis units and only studies that contribute to answering the RVQs are included. Figure 11 displays the generic procedure on the left, the specified procedure used for data extraction and analysis in this thesis and the differentiation of the analysis strings.

Figure 11

Coding Procedure in the Systematic Review



In *step 1*, meaning units need to be selected. A meaning unit is a "constellation of words or statements that relate to the same central meaning" (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004, p. 106) and the interpretation of the start and end of that constellation lies with the researcher (Lindgren et al., 2020). To reduce complexity, the meaning units are allocated to the RVQs during step 1 (Saldana, 2016). If meaning units contain content for more than one RVQ, they are allocated to both RVQs.

During *step 2*, meaning units are shortened and reduced to the de-contextualized content. In *step 2.1* meaning units are condensed. This is often done by paraphrasing their content (Mayring, 2015). As the form of written text is already free from repetition, paraphrasing the meaning units is unnecessary. By allocating the meaning units to the RVQs, whole paragraphs have been used as meaning units. As not all the content was relevant, meaning units were shortened. In step *2.2*, codes are attributed to the meaning units. Coding is a systematic process that needs to be outlined transparently and requires reflexivity from the researcher (Adu, 2019). Lindgren et al. (2020) do not propose a particular way of coding but leave the implementation of this step to the researcher. A large variety of coding procedures is available to researchers. For example, Saldana (2016) distinguishes 33 different coding forms. Furthermore, coding is often conducted in two phases: first and second cycle (Saldana, 2016). The initial coding stage in this research aims to broadly chart the relevant content without going into too much detail. In this phase, descriptive coding was used. The coding procedure is conducted on a noun basis, meaning that topics or headings are attributed to the meaning units on a general level (Tesch, 1990). Next, the coding strategy of sub-coding was used in *step 2.3*. The sub-codes were generated according to the inductive procedure displayed in Graneheim and Lundman (2004). Meaning units can lead to multiple codes, which is why one meaning unit can appear several times.

Step 3 leads to the development of categories and sub-categories based on an iterative process.

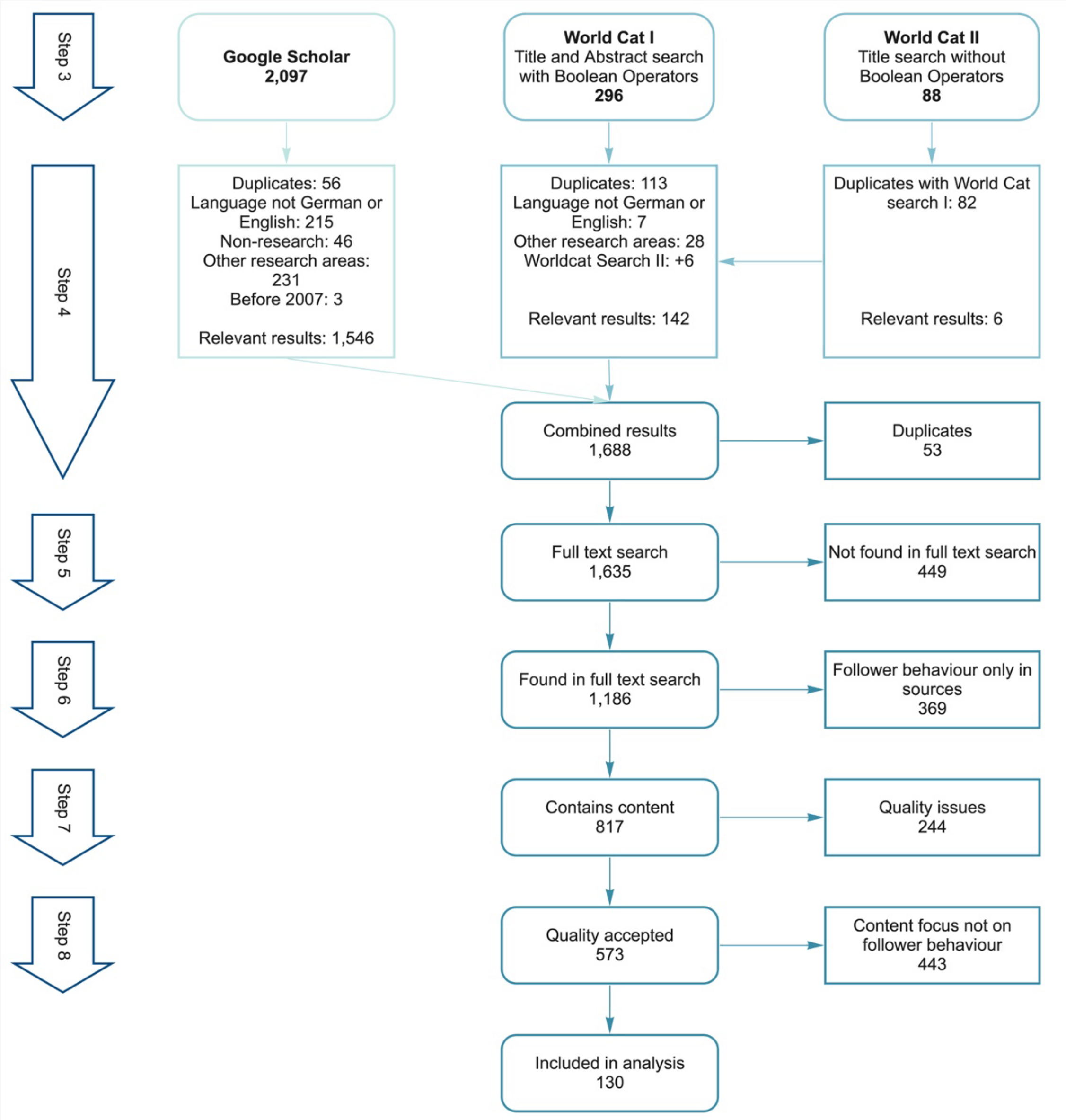
3.5 CONDUCTING THE REVIEW

This section describes how the research protocol was implemented. Figure 12 provides an overview of the process that will be explained step by step in the following paragraphs.

Search the literature: The searches on Google Scholar (through Publish or Perish) and WorldCat were initially conducted on January 25th, 2021. Two more searches were conducted on August 6th, 2022, and June 22nd, 2023, to include papers published since the first search. The literature review, therefore, represents the knowledge as of mid-2023.
On Google Scholar, 2,097 results were found. The WorldCat searches led to 384 hits. The high number of results on Google Scholar is because Publish or Perish searches the whole document and a restriction to the title or abstract is not possible.

Figure 12

Overview of the Implementation of the Systematic Research Protocol



Note. Round shapes indicate inclusion, squared shapes indicate exclusion.

Screen for inclusion: Duplicates and publications in languages other than English or German were eliminated. While the Google Scholar searches only contained 56 duplicates, the WorldCat search produced 113 duplicates, potentially due to a broad number of databases. Overall, 222 results (215 in the Google Scholar searches and seven in the WorldCat search) were published in languages other than German or English. In the Google

Scholar search results, 46 non-research documents were found, containing descriptions of journals, articles from practitioner literature, lecture notes, and calls for papers. Both searches contained content from other research areas. Results from banking, finance, or engineering were the most common. School settings had to be investigated in more detail. If the focus was on the students' achievements, it was not considered an organizational context. For some papers, the focus did not become apparent in the title. As this only happened with eight papers, the PDFs were looked up, and a decision was made based on a quick screening process.

The result lists were merged, and a combined list of 1,688 results was found, containing 53 additional duplicates. The remaining 1,635 results were used as a basis for the full-text search.

Search for full text: In total, 449 articles could not be found, and 1,186 publications were acquired. Twenty-four articles or chapters were requested through interlibrary loans and could be provided.

Content-based screen for inclusion*:* A second screen for inclusion was conducted with the full-text PDFs available. As the Publish or Perish search could not be limited to abstracts and titles, the chance that irrelevant results were still included was high. Therefore, the PDFs were screened. Results (369) that only used FB in the sources were excluded.

Quality assessment: In the next step, the quality of the articles was assessed. The inclusion/exclusion list generated during the process can be consulted in Appendix A2.

During the quality assessment, 244 results were excluded. Of these excluded results, 107 results were dissertations at bachelor or baster level, and one result was a doctoral thesis that did not provide a review committee. Regarding conferences, 16 results were excluded because the information about the conference could either not be found or there was insufficient information on the peer review process. Another nine results were excluded as universities organized the conferences for students at bachelor or baster level. One conference paper result was excluded as the authors state that citation of this paper requires explicit permission. Two results could not be found due to incorrect data provided. Considering academic journals, 92 results were excluded due to quality issues in the journal (excluded according to the journal assessment scheme in Appendix A2), two articles had been retracted, and fourteen results contained working papers uploaded by the authors which have not been peer reviewed and published.

Depth analysis: This step aims to identify the results included based on a review of the content. Only results with a focus on FB are considered relevant. The remaining results were screened using the three steps described in section 3.4 (see p. 80 et seq.).

First, the results were searched for ‘follower beh*’ and ‘followership beh*’. As some results only contained a sentence that provided insight into the meaning of the term for the respective researcher(s), and others gave more insights without focusing the paper on FB, 387 results were excluded. The research protocol asks the reviewer to search for the terms ‘follower’ and ‘behavio*’ separately in unclear cases. While few results require that procedure in the initial search, more reading was necessary, with a higher number than expected before deciding the allocation. This was particularly noticeable with results that contained terms such as ‘follower upward behaviour’, hence hiding the relevant information while using the entire search term. As a result, 196 results were considered for further analysis.

Second, those results focused on FB were screened for consistency using the term. Results that indicated a consistent use of the term ‘follower’ were considered relevant and directly included in the list for results of the analysis. Due to the consistent use of FB, 91 results were approved for the final analysis. The remaining 78 results were evaluated in the next step. Another 22 results stated their approach to followership and were therefore included in the analysis. The term was used synonymously with employee or subordinate and did not clarify their notion of followership in 56 results, which were excluded. Additionally, three results were excluded as they contained methodological discussions about measuring and approaching FB, which is relevant for the research field but does not contribute to answering the RVQs.

Data extraction: The PDFs of the remaining 130 results, marked with an asterisk in the reference list, were analysed. The findings are presented in the following section.

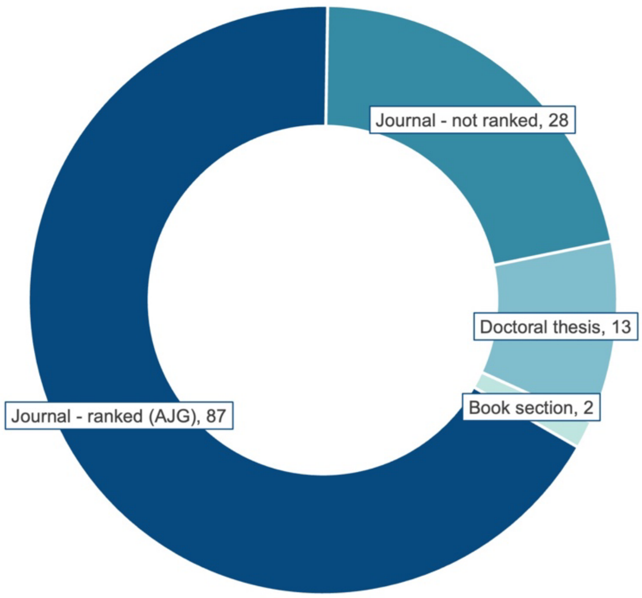
3.6 FINDINGS

3.6.1 *NATURE OF THE ARTICLES INCLUDED*

Different types of literature, ranging from top-level journals to doctoral theses and not-ranked journals, were used (see Figure 13). Most sources are published in journals comprised in the AJG ranking (87). Another 28 articles published in less prestigious journals were included. It also becomes clear that the topic interests early career researchers as 13 relevant doctoral theses could be identified. It was also noted that several doctoral theses were excluded because the findings were published in journal articles included in the analysis. Book sections contribute to two publications.

Figure 13

Sources of Publications Included in the Analysis

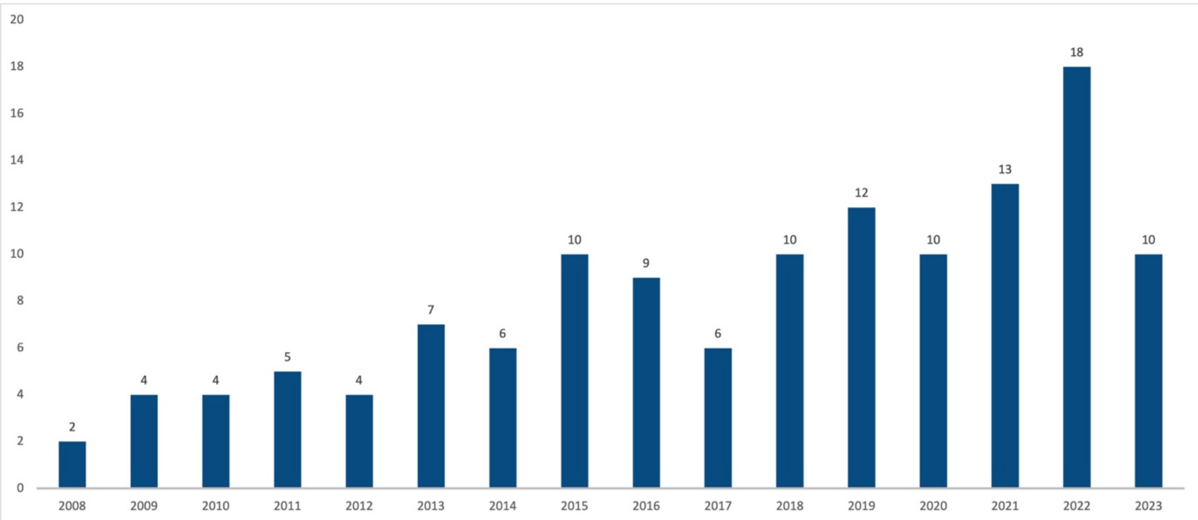


A detailed analysis of the journals shows that 63 journals are represented in the analysis. Fifteen journals have published several articles. The Leadership Quarterly (17 articles included) and the Journal of Business Ethics (12 articles included) regularly publish articles on followership. The Journal of Business and Psychology (7 articles included) and the Journal of Leadership & Organizational Studies (5 articles included) also contain more relevant articles. Interestingly, the journal *Leadership*, which actively encourages authors to think out of the box and lists organizational behaviours first in their list of disciplines, only contributes three articles (Leadership, 2022).

Second, the year of publication was reviewed. As Figure 14 shows, a growing number of articles relevant to this review was published, with its peak in 2022. For 2023 publications until June are included, and not all relevant results of that year could be retrieved due to limited access to recent articles in online libraries. Hence, the trend for an increase in publications on FB is expected to perpetuate.

Figure 14

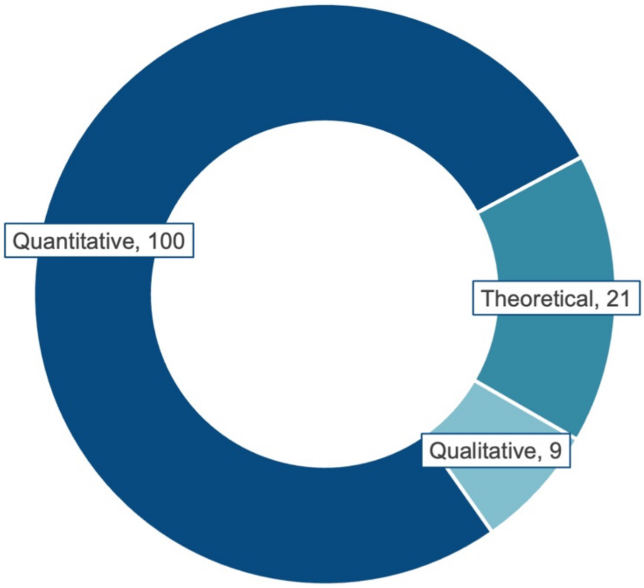
Distribution of Publication Years



Next, the approach taken in the articles is reviewed. The majority of the articles included are empirical. As displayed in Figure 15, 21 articles are theoretical, containing meta-analyses and literature reviews (four results) and theoretical reflections on FB. Purely methodological papers were excluded as they did not contribute to answering the RVQs. As a result, 109 empirical papers are included in the analysis. More than 80% of these papers contain quantitative studies. The research field is, therefore, mainly influenced by a post-positivist worldview that becomes visible in the use of predominantly quantitative measures.

Figure 15

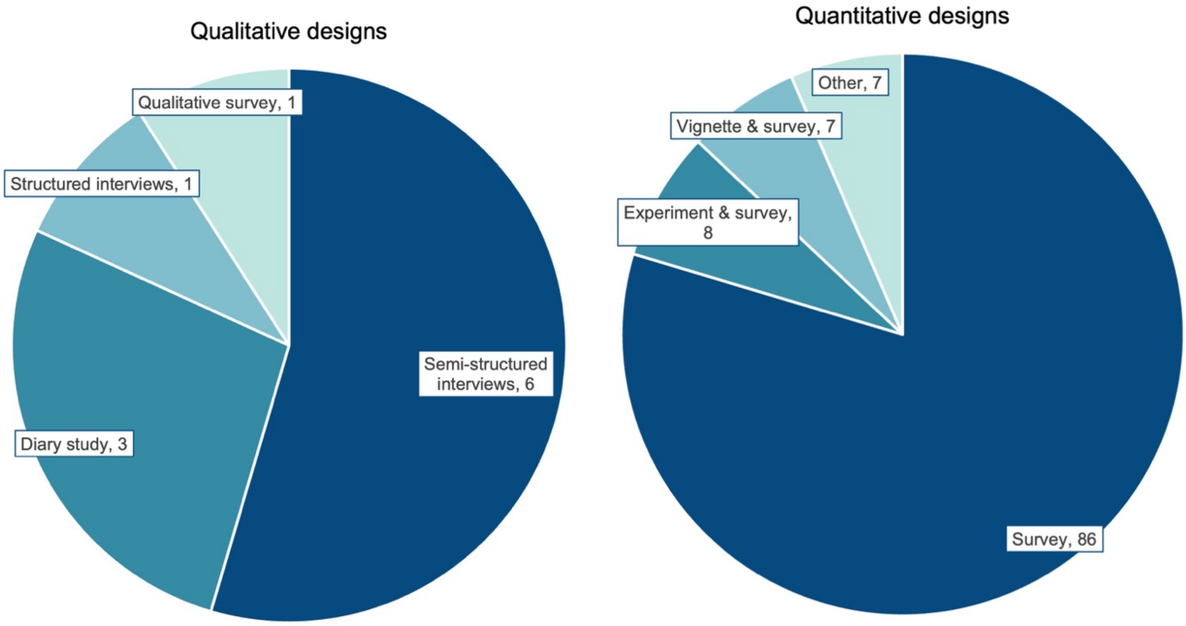
Distribution of Publication Types



As explained in section 3.4 (see p. 83), each study was treated as one finding, leading to 119 studies included in the analysis. Figure 16 shows the distribution of data generation methods in different research designs. Qualitative studies were mainly conducted through semi-structured interviews and it becomes clear that FB has mainly been researched using quantitative surveys (86 studies).

Figure 16

Approaches to Data Generation in Qualitative and Quantitative Research Designs



3.6.2 *DEFINITIONS AND DEMARCATION*

This section answers RVQ one: “What definitions for the term ‘follower’ behaviour have been presented to date and how has follower behaviour been demarcated from employee behaviour?” The definitions found in the SLR were categorized according to their content and are discussed below. Table 3 shows the author(s) of the publication in which a definition of the term ‘follower behaviour’ was presented and the respective definition. The first two columns display the differentiation criteria, as the definitions can be categorized according to their role understanding (informal or formal) and the attributed focus of the behaviour (organization or leader).

Table 3

Definitions of 'Follower Behaviour' Presented in Existing Publications

Differentiation criteria			
Role understanding	Focus	Publication	Definition
Formal role	Leader	Carsten et al. (2010), p. 545	Followership behaviors differ in that they do not address independent activities of those occupying "subordinate" positions but behaviors of individuals acting in relation to a leader(s). In other words, followership behaviors are not about how individuals interact relative to their work (e.g., self-management and self-leadership) or other coworkers (e.g., shared leadership) but relative to those with higher status—with respect to leaders.
		Gatti et al (2017), p. 1	followership behaviors—that is, "behaviors of individuals acting in relation to a leader(s)" ([5], p. 545)
		Pilla (2011), p. 35	the scholarly work on follower perspectives "did not address independent activities of those occupying 'subordinate' positions, but only addressed the behaviors of individuals acting in relation to a leader(s). In other words, followership behaviors are not about how individuals interact relative to their work (e.g., self-management and self-leadership) or other coworkers (e.g., shared leadership) but relative to those with higher status—with respect to leaders (Carsten et al., 2010, p. 545).
		Shen & Abe (2022), p. 3	"Furthermore, followership behaviors focus on how employees interact with their leaders rather than with their work (e.g., work engagement), which is highly associated with leader-follower relationships (Carsten et al., 2010)."
		Ribbat et al (2021), p. 1	Followership can be defined as "behaviors of individuals acting in relation to a leader(s)" (Carsten et al., 2010, p. 545), including the way followers take responsibility relative to their leader, the way they communicate, or the way they try to solve problems with their leader.
		Suyono et al (2020), p. 185	In the followership context, follower's behaviour reflects a willingness to obey others in certain ways (Uhl-Bien et al., 2014).
		Gochmann (2018), p. 105	Followership refers to the nature and impact of followers' characteristics and behaviors in the leadership process. Importantly, the definition does not include every behavior of a subordinate but only those concerning the leadership process (Uhl-Bien et al., 2014).
		Jia et al. (2018), p. 314	Followership behaviors represent the subordinates' willingness to defer to their leader in some way... . Followership behavior is shaped during their interaction with leaders (Burak and Bashshur 2013).
	Organization & leader	Drexler (2019), p. 9	Follower behaviour describes an action a clinician engages in to fulfil their role and enact change within the organization. A clinician's behaviour may be affected by the actual behaviour of the leader, or based on an anticipation of what future leader behaviour may be.
		S. Xu et al. (2019), p. 2	Followership behavior is defined as a multi-dimensional behavior in which followers interact with leadership and organizational context by certain motivation-oriented approach... . This study inquires the antecedents and consequences of employees' followership behavior in China.
	Not stated	Bonner (2018), p. 7	For this study, follower behaviors provide a framework for understanding follower behaviors displayed by employees in the workplace.
Informal role	Leader	Uhl-Bien et al. (2014), p.83 & 96	Following behaviors represent a willingness to defer to another in some way... . This approach allows us to recognize that managers are not always leading - they also defer to subordinates, which means they also engage in "following behaviors" (Fairhurst & Hamlett, 2003; Larsson & Lundholm, 2013)... . Followership behaviors: behaviors enacted from the standpoint of a follower role or in the act of following. (Examples include the multiple expressions of overt followership including obeying, deferring, voicing, resisting, advising, etc.)
		Alegbeleye & Kaufman (2020), p. 8-9	Leader-follower roles are flexible: one can operate as a leader as well as a follower at the same time .... Baker (2007) suggested the leadership and followership behaviors needed to perform leader-follower roles are distinct yet overlapping.
Not stated	Organization	Jin et al. (2017), p. 102	Those who value public service highly can be expected to engage in active followership behaviour that serves the goals and missions of the organizations with which they are affiliated.
		Baker et al (2014), p. 77	We consider true followership to encompass those behaviors that are most helpful to achieving organizational goals.

The definitions presented in Table 3 differ regarding their role understanding and the target of FB. The role understanding can be linked to or detached from the formal role of employees. The target of FB can be the person of the leader or an organization with its associated goals.

Carsten et al. (2010) provide a definition that focuses FB on the relationship with the formal leader. By stating that “followership behaviors are not about how individuals interact relative to their work ... or coworkers ... but relative to those with higher status – with respect to leaders” (p. 545), they provide a clear definition, adopting a formal role approach towards followership. The definition was adopted by several other authors (Gatti et al., 2017; Pilla, 2011; Ribbat et al., 2021; Shen & Abe, 2023). Drexler (2019) and S. Xu et al. (2019) include both aspects, the interaction with the leader and organizational goals, in their definitions based on a formal role understanding. This distinction seems essential because personal goals are sometimes different from organizational goals. Drexler (2019) focuses on change processes in organizations and sees leaders with their behaviours and expectations as the antecedents of engagement in change. S. Xu et al. (2019) provide a broader definition that explicitly covers a range of behaviours that include interaction with the leader and occur in an organizational context. They also acknowledge that motives play a role in enacting FBs. Bonner’s (2018) definition indicates that FBs are enacted in a formal role by stating that they are “displayed by employees in the workplace” (p. 7) but does not state the focus of their definition.

Uhl-Bien et al. (2014) state that followership behaviours are those “enacted from the standpoint of a follower role or in the act of following. (Examples include the multiple expressions of overt followership including obeying, deferring, voicing, resisting, advising, etc.)” (p. 96). While this definition seems very broad, the informal role understanding is elaborated elsewhere in the publication. Based on a constructionist approach, they state, “this approach allows us to recognize that managers are not always leading – they also defer to subordinates, which means they also engage in ‘following behaviors’” (p. 89). In this definition, FB is not tied to the formal employee role but is seen as an informal role that can be adopted by all organizational members regardless of their formal function. Gochmann (2018) bases their definition on Uhl-Bien et al. (2014) and makes a distinction between follower and employee behaviour by stating that followership "does not include every behavior of a subordinate but only those concerning the leadership process" (Gochmann, 2018, p. 135). This statement clarifies that FB is seen as a sub-set of employee behaviour. They further state, "the boundaries might be blurred and are not intensely investigated yet" (Gochmann, 2018, p. 135). In this definition, it becomes evident that employee and follower behaviour needs to be distinguished, but no approach is provided. Even though the definition is based on the informal approach supposed by Uhl-Bien et al. (2014), this definition is a formal role definition as only subordinates can show both employee and follower behaviour. Alegbeleye and Kaufman (2020) clearly express their informal perspective on FB and state that "leader-follower roles are flexible: one can operate as a leader as well as a follower at the same time" (p. 8). They also incorporate their informal role perspective in their methodology by investigating the perspective of middle managers, who hold both formal and informal roles. Therefore, Alegbeleye and Kaufman (2020) are the only authors taking an informal role approach in an empirical study while providing a clear definition.

The definitions provided by Jin et al. (2017), Baker et al. (2014) and Jia et al. (2018) do not state if the role is defined as formal or informal but concentrate on the organizational or person-based focus of FB. Jin et al. (2017) see FB as focused on achieving an organizational goal. While the definition provided by Baker et al. (2014) solely aims at organizational goals, Jin et al. (2017) suggest that followers who aim to reach organizational goals often also "tend to identify with leaders in terms of shared goals and mission" (p. 102). The term '*tend*' indicates that this is not always the case. The authors do not provide explanations. Jia et al. (2018) also use an intention to describe FB. Following Banks et al. (2021)'s call for a clear distinction between intentions, behaviours, and outcomes, the "willingness to defer to their leader" (Jia et al, 2018, p. 314) cannot be accepted as a definition for FB.

In summary, definitions of FB can be characterized by two aspects: (a) its formal or informal character, and (b) its focus on the person of the leader or the organization. Most definitions provide a leader-centred, formal definition of FB. A demarcation from employee behaviour could not be found.

3.6.3 *OVERARCHING THEORIES IN THE FIELD OF FOLLOWER BEHAVIOUR*

To answer RVQ two, 90 meaning units were labelled with the code '*Overarching Theory'*, and 62 authors stated which overarching theorie(s) their papers are based on.

As presented in Table 4, the overarching theories used to explain FB can be interpersonal or intrapersonal. Interpersonal theories contain theories that have a social or relational factor, while intrapersonal theories provide explanations for behaviour that are rooted in a person. The categories displayed in Table 4 are the main categories and sub-categories. Some of the sub-categories contain additional segmentations. For example, morality theories consist of moral foundations theory, moral licensing theory, entity morality theory, and the moral balance model. Most theories can have interpersonal and intrapersonal aspects. Others such as value theories are purely intrapersonal.

Table 4

Overarching Theories Used to Explain Follower Behaviour

Main category	Sub-category	Interpersonal theories	Intrapersonal theories	Total
Expectation theories		46	11	57
	Social exchange theory	16		16
	Social learning theory	11		11
	Role theory	4	4	8
	Resource theory	4	1	5
	Attribution theory	2	3	5
	Signalling theory	3		3
	Social information processing	2		2
	Paradox theory	2		2
	Justice theory	1		1
	Path-goal theory	1		1
	Cognitive dissonance theory		1	1
	Valence-instrumentality-expectance theory		1	1
	Performance theory		1	1
Self-concept, Identity & Personality theories		4	8	12
	Self-concept theory		4	4
	(Social) Identity theory	3	2	5
	Power approach theory		1	1
	Trait theory		1	1
	Threatened egotism theory	1		1
Motivation theories		2	8	10
	Self-determination theory		4	4
	Regulatory-focus theory		4	4
	Impression management theory	2		2
Affect-theories		4	1	5
	Attachment theory	1		1
	Interpersonal emotion theories	3		3
	Defeat-entrapment theory		1	1
Value theories			5	5
	General values theory		1	1
	Morality theories		4	4
	Total	56	33	89

Expectation theories: Those dealing with expectations were the most common explanatory theories. Social exchange theory (SET) was used 16 times. SET assumes that leaders and followers who expect a reward that outweighs the costs will tend to invest more in the relationship (Blau, 1964; Lapierre et al., 2012). SET research has also focused on the importance of trust and support in the exchange relationship (Bush et al., 2021; Shahzadi et al., 2017) and includes the notion of reciprocity (A. J. Xu et al., 2023). The expected reward can be tangible or immaterial (Baker et al., 2014; Homans, 1958) and receiving a reward implicitly leads to the generation of an expectation to reciprocally return the behaviour to balance the exchange relationship (Decoster et al., 2014). Resource theory provides examples for the exchange situations (Gracey, 2019; A. J. Xu et al., 2023).

Social learning theory is the communication theory used most often to explain FB. Social learning refers to adapting behaviours shown by role models (Bandura, 1986). Researchers assume that followers emulate behaviours displayed by leaders (e.g. Hannah et al., 2011; Hattke & Hattke, 2019; Uppal & Bansal, 2023). Signalling theory explains that leaders who non-verbally show a behaviour communicate to followers at different levels of strength and reliability, which behaviours are perceived as acceptable and should, therefore, be emulated (Stock et al., 2022). Social information processing describes that social learning happens over time and in a social context, leading to an adaption of values and norms that influence behaviour (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978; Zheng et al., 2021). Behavioural integrity theory describes that followers who perceive consistent signals are more likely to perceive the leader as a role model and adapt their behaviour accordingly (Ete et al., 2021; Simons, 2002). Social learning theory and SET are clearly connected, as expectations are characterized in SET, while their communication is described through social learning theory. Hence, researchers sometimes combine both theories (e.g. Bedi et al., 2016; Kalshoven et al., 2016), indicating different perspectives on the role of expectations are explored.

Role theory contains interpersonal and intrapersonal aspects. Interpersonal role theory deals with the role-making process of social roles in an organizational context (Baker et al., 2014; Gesang & Süß, 2021; Kim et al., 2018). Intrapersonal role theory, on the other hand, is concerned with individual role orientations and beliefs about the role and the related behaviours (e.g. Carsten, 2017; Gesang, 2022; Inderjeet & Scheepers, 2022; Suyono et al., 2020). These beliefs associated with the role are then assumed to lead to behaviour.

Drawing on attribution theory, leaders and followers make sense of the behaviours of others, and the appropriateness of behaviours can be evaluated using role theory (e.g. Baker et al., 2014; Seele & Eberl, 2020; Zhang et al., 2022). Paradox theory deals with behavioural choices in situations with contradicting external demands (Smith & Lewis, 2011), which can originate from followers, or need to be handled by them (Boemelburg et al., 2023; Jia et al., 2018). Justice theory is related to SET and describes situations in which followers do not perceive the leader's action as fair, leading to a disturbance of the exchange relationship (Greenberg, 1990; Simons et al., 2015).

In intrapersonal expectation theories, three theories were used once: cognitive dissonance theory (Festinger, 1957), Valence-instrumentality-expectance theory (Vroom, 1964), and Performance theory (Campbell, 2000). Cognitive dissonance theory sees follower attitudes as outcomes of FB, as attitudes are regularly changed to match the behaviour shown (Blanchard et al., 2009). Valence-instrumentality-expectance theory assumes that FB is displayed when an outcome perceived as attractive is expected afterwards (Gracey, 2019). Performance theory explains why FB is rated positively or negatively and contains the leader's expectations (Fuller et al., 2015).

In summary, the category of overarching theories most used are expectation theories. Therefore, researchers seem to interpret FB as part of an exchange process between leaders and followers. Hence, researchers using such an approach are interested in how these mutual expectations are defined, communicated, and evaluated. Interestingly, researchers have investigated the current status of expectations at a certain point of time but have shown less interest in the development, construction, and potential changes over time. This statement is supported by a review (Hemshorn de Sanchez et al., 2022), focusing on the temporal scope in leader-follower interactions. They found that researchers regularly do not clarify their perspective on time in leadership and followership, but mostly focus on short-term views on the concept. Accordingly, expectations and as a consequence, FB, has been explored as a static concept instead of understanding the processes around it. Therefore, researchers acknowledge the role expectations play in FB but do not consider their potential volatility.

Self-concept, identity, and personality theories: Self-concept and identity theories are mainly intrapersonal as they describe how individuals see and make sense of themselves (Bonner, 2018). While there are different forms of self-concepts, Groves (2020) focuses on the approach motivation of reaching a state of ideal self, and Gerpott et al. (2019) investigate the leader's influence on moral behaviours through the follower's moral identity. When power is part of one's identity, a person is more likely to take a risk to achieve a goal, while people with lower power identities limit their risky actions (MacMillan et al., 2020). Identity theory is, therefore, related to regulatory focus theory as avoidance and approach behaviour is influenced by the identity in both examples. Social identity theory refers to the perceived belongingness to a group or person (Tajfel, 1978). This sense of belongingness impacts FB (Ete et al., 2021). The form of social identification (person or organization) determines which kind of behaviour is shown (Ete et al., 2021; Kalshoven et al., 2016). In addition, trait theory (O'Connor et al., 2022) has been suggested regarding the leader's influence on the process.

In conclusion, researchers acknowledge the role of leaders' and followers' individual differences regarding their self-concept, identity, and personality traits but do so to a much lesser extent than they recognize the role of social expectations. Furthermore, leaders' characteristics seem to be of more relevance to researchers in explaining FB than that of the follower. Hence, an imbalance in the investigation of leaders' and followers' characteristics becomes evident. Therefore, it appears plausible that further research into the role of the followers' self-concept, identity, and personality could deliver new insights.

Motivation theories: Motivation theories investigate the origin of the willingness to perform behaviours. By applying self-determination theory, researchers analyse motivation that influences FB in relation to the use of power by the leader (Deci et al., 2017). Motivation to show FBs is expected to decrease with reduced autonomy and locus of control (Hattke & Hattke, 2019), leading to lower perceived autonomy (Young et al., 2021). Self-determination theory also implies a generally positive attitude towards "active employees with inherent growth tendencies" (Shen & Abe, 2023, p. 2).

Individuals are generally motivated to avoid adverse outcomes and approach positive outcomes (Elliot & Covington, 2001). Approach-avoidance theory constitutes the basic assumption for regulatory focus theory (MacMillan et al., 2020; Naidoo, 2016). The theory is related to social learning theory, which provides the basis for evaluating if a behaviour will potentially lead to a positive or negative outcome. Based on the knowledge about expected behaviour, followers self-regulate their behaviour by aiming for preferred outcomes (Groves & LaRocca, 2011; Johnson & Wallace, 2011).

Impression management (see section 2.2.4.2, p. 62) is an interpersonal motivation theory. The behaviours aim to be perceived positively and receive increased performance appraisals (Bowler et al., 2010; Gesang & Süß, 2021).

In summary, motivation has been identified as a relevant factor that can contribute to explaining the exhibition of FB. Even though fewer researchers have adopted such theories, the outcomes broaden the understanding of the concept, adding other influencing factors, and widening the scope to more than leaders and followers. Therefore, this explanatory approach to FB seems to promise further interesting interpretations and could be extended.

Affect theories: The mainly interpersonal category of affect theories is based on the Emotions as Social Information model (van Kleef, 2009). It states that one person's display of emotion triggers an affective reaction which, in turn, leads to a behaviour (Schwarzmüller et al., 2017). Emotional contagion theory is used as a possible explanation for FB by stating that emotions expressed by the leader influence follower emotion, which in turn influences FBs (Hatfield et al., 1994; Wang & Seibert, 2015). Interpersonal emotion management strategies use emotional contagion theory and state that leaders intend to regulate followers' emotions by changing situations or showing behaviours (e.g. helping the follower) to change cognition of the situation (Little et al., 2016; Williams, 2007).

Attachment theory interrogates emotional bonds (Bowlby, 1982). Bharanitharan et al. (2019) argue that leaders can supply a perception of security and trust leading to more explorational FB, which is often connected to the risk of failing. Defeat-entrapment theory argues that people can get entrapped in an organizational context when goals perceived as important cannot be achieved (Wrosch et al., 2003).

Overall, affect theories have been adopted to a small extent. While only five studies investigated the role of affect in FB, they present an interpersonal approach to the concept going beyond cognitive processes such as expectations and offer a deeper psychological explanation. Therefore, affect theories might add to understanding behaviours that seem illogical from expectational or motivational viewpoints and are, therefore, worth investigating further.

Value theories: Theories on values examine the preferences of individuals (Groves, 2020; Schwartz, 1992). Morality was the value interrogated most often. Zhu et al. (2015) describe entity morality theory as focusing on "people's beliefs about ethics, ethical people, and structures" (p. 705), and Fehr et al. (2015) implement moral foundations theory to describe moral values. Moral licensing theory (Effron & Conway, 2015) states that moral beliefs are not stable but represent a range of morally acceptable behaviours (Lorsch et al., 2021). This notion is linked to cognitive dissonance theory, as evaluations of behaviours regarding their morality influence ethical behavioural choices (Ahmad et al., 2020).

Hence, value theories, comparable to affect theories, have only been investigated in a small number of studies. Nevertheless, such theories offer insights into the limitation of behaviours that can be exhibited by an individual. As such, these approaches might be suitable to explore the withholding of FB to a greater extent in the future.

Interim conclusion: It becomes evident that researchers adopt a variety of overarching theories to explain FB. Most of these schemas are rooted in psychology, while few are based in business studies. This indicates a one-sided approach to investigating the concept. Overall, the breadth of explanatory approaches used can be interpreted in two ways. The first is that FB is seen as a multi-facetted concept that needs to be explored from different perspectives. The second indicates a lack of concept clarity and hence, different approaches are implemented to explore the notion and find suitable explanations. Probably, a mixture of both explanations maps the research field best.

All explanatory theories have been found to contribute to the understanding of the concept of FB but only fragments can be explored through a single approach. Therefore, different perspectives are necessary to explore the complexity of the construct. Simultaneously, the absence of a followership framework linking the studies and approaches to each other becomes apparent. Currently, the impression arises that researchers merely use the terminology without having a common basic concept understanding and, therefore, lacking the ability to place their work in a larger construct. This creates a fragmented rather than an overall picture of the research field. To address this issue, an overview on the processes leading to, and emerging from, FB needs to be established. This research contributes to this attempt by taking a step back and exploring the understanding of FB processes and their interrelationships.

3.6.4 *STUDY CONTEXTS*

Cultural contexts are assumed to impact the performance and evaluation of FB (Suyono et al., 2020; Urbach et al., 2020). The industries studied were analysed to provide a contextual setting, as discussed in the introduction (see section 1.6., page 13 et seq.).

Figure 17 shows the cultural contexts in which the studies were conducted. Clusters were attributed to the studies, according to the GLOBE study (House et al., 2004). The Anglo cluster is highly represented, with 36 studies conducted in the United States. The studies in Western Europe contain a range of countries, with Germany (15 studies included) and the Netherlands (8 studies included) as the focus countries. China has been the centre of attention in Confucian Asia (20 studies included), probably due to its growing economy and impact on world markets. It becomes evident, that western cultural backgrounds dominate followership research. Other cultural clusters, including Latin Europe, Latin America, Nordic Europe, and the Middle East, are underrepresented. Therefore, the current conceptualization of FB offers a partial understanding, excluding some cultural settings.

Figure 17

Cultural Contexts of Studies Included

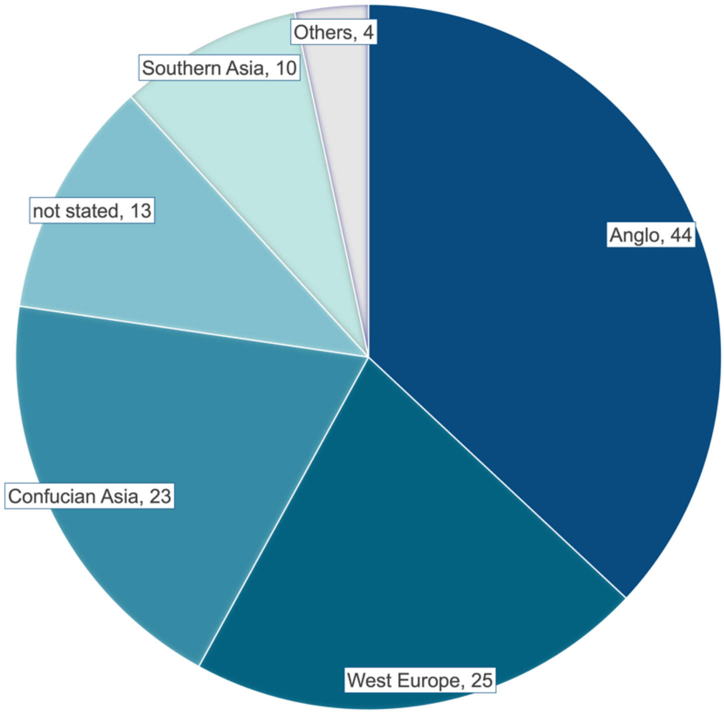
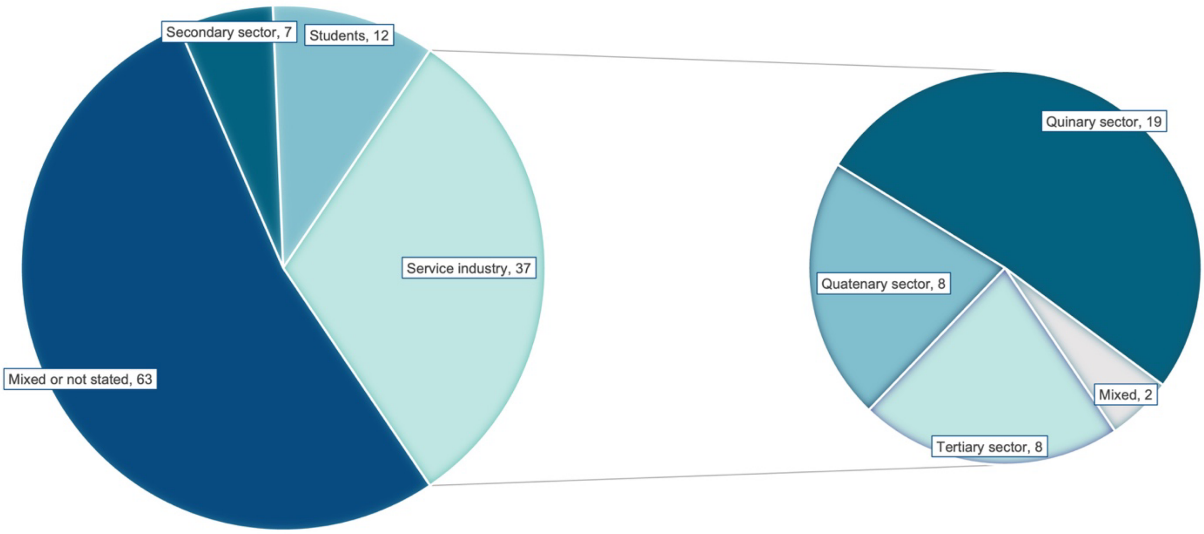


Figure 18 shows the industry contexts of the studies. Nearly half of the studies (51) investigated mixed samples. Eleven studies had students as participants. The remaining 44 studies focused on an industry sector. The importance of the service sector is highlighted as 37 studies focused on that sector, while only seven focused on the secondary sector (manufacturing and utility). It is noticeable that most studies in the service sector were conducted in the quinary sector, mainly concentrating on public administration and higher education (19 studies included). The tertiary and quaternary sectors are represented by 16 studies combined. More than 60% of the studies did not discuss the relevance of the industry context or based their research on student participants. To what extent these studies can be transferred to the service industry remains unclear.

Figure 18

Industry Context of Studies Included



3.6.5 *CONSTRUCTS INVESTIGATED AS FOLLOWER BEHAVIOUR*

3.6.5.1 STRUCTURES OF FOLLOWER BEHAVIOUR

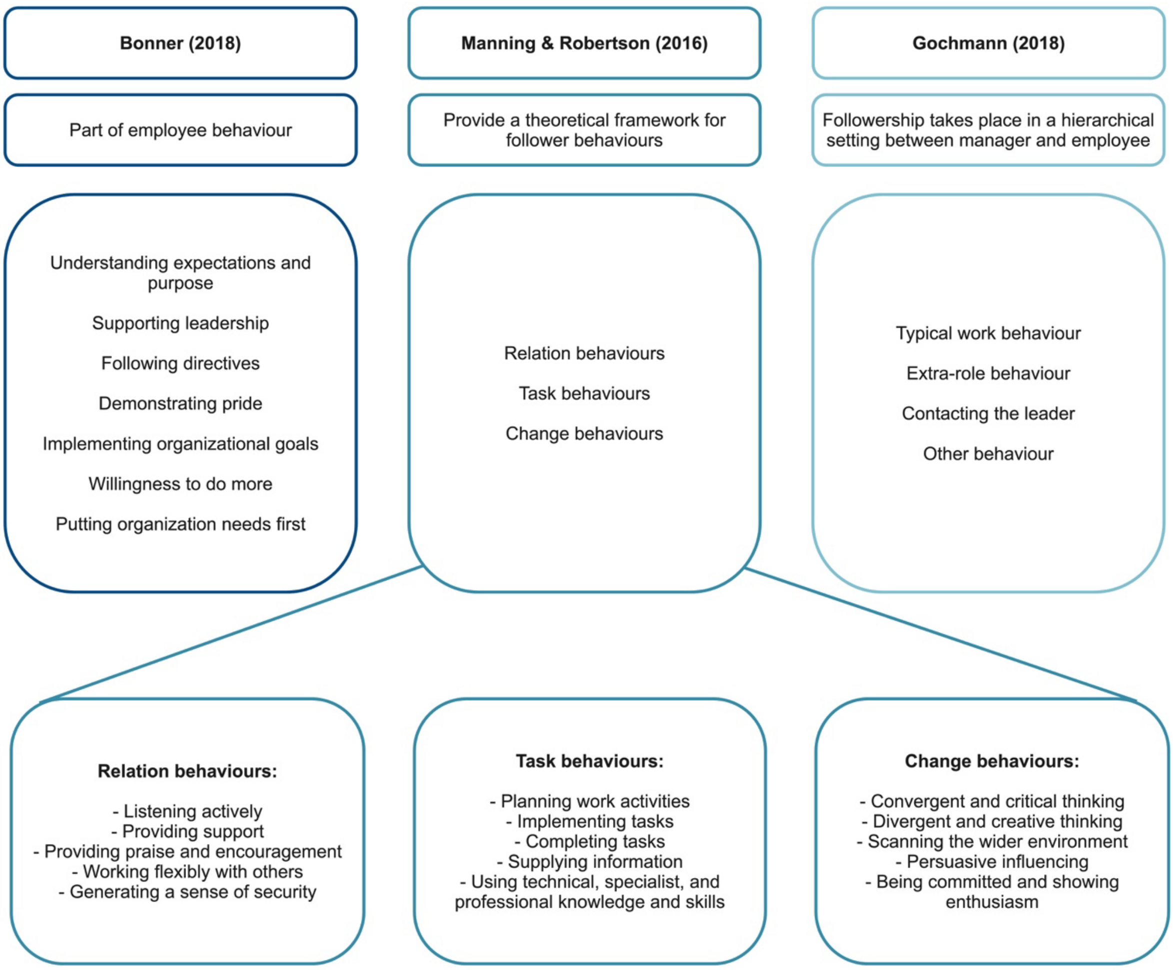
Three structures of FB could be identified, which are displayed in Figure 19. Based on a qualitative study in higher education, Bonner (2018) proposes several seven FB categories. In this structure, it becomes clear that attitudes are included, which need to be demarcated from behaviour (Banks et al., 2021). It also needs more coherence (see follower directives as category and sub-category).

Gochmann (2018) developed a structure based on a narrative literature review and a qualitative diary study. This structure focuses on behaviours and differentiates them from other concepts including attitudes or intentions. In the definition provided in the thesis, Gochmann (2018) reminds the reader that “it is important to keep in mind that follower behaviors are behaviors which affect the leadership process and do not include all behaviors of employees” (p. 135). The question arises if concepts such as OCB can be defined as FB within the framework of this definition, as some of the behaviours are aimed at colleagues rather than the manager. The category *Other behaviours* contains several behaviours that do not follow an internal logic. For example, counterproductive work behaviour has a negative connotation, while receiving feedback is more neutral, focusing on communication.

Manning and Robertson (2016) present a structure of FBs divided into relation, task, and change behaviours. While most of the behaviours listed are actual behaviours, some attitudes, personality aspects, and emotions can be found (e.g. being good-humoured). In contrast to other structures, this one does not include constructs that contain multiple behaviours (e.g. OCB) but focuses on the level of distinct behaviours.

Figure 19

Structures of Follower Behaviour



It is evident that no generally accepted and applicable structure of FB exists. While many researchers label something FB without further explanation, the three authors presented above have gone a step further and developed structures for the concept they investigate. All three can be critiqued, but they acknowledge that FB is a multifaceted construct, and the generation of a comprehensive structure needs to incorporate different layers. FB could be sorted according to the focus (relation, task, change) as proposed by Manning and Robertson (2016), the intention (e.g. pro-social, pro-individual, pro-organizational) (Fehr et al., 2015), the evaluation from an individual or organizational perspective (e.g. Fuller et al., 2015; Gesang & Süß, 2021), the attribution as in-role or extra-role behaviour (Gochmann, 2018) as well as proactive or passive behaviour (Carsten et al., 2010), or the situation, such as an ambidextrous context, in which the behaviour takes place (e.g. Gerlach, 2019). As no comprehensive structure could be found in the literature, FB categories are derived inductively from the content of the analysed publications and the knowledge from the narrative literature review.

3.6.5.2 IDENTIFIED FOLLOWER BEHAVIOURS

Each empirical study was analysed and inductively coded according to the behaviours that are approached or measured as FB. Several authors (e.g. Alegbeleye & Kaufman, 2020; Jin et al., 2017; Shahzadi et al., 2017) refer to followership typologies and the respective measures. Followership styles do not contain behaviours directly and need to be interpreted to contribute to this analysis. An overview of the followership styles that need to be interpreted is provided in Table 5.

Table 5

Followership Styles in Need of Interpretation for Follower Behaviour Attribution

Main category	Sub-category	Quantitative studies	Qualitative studies
Followership styles		19	6
	Effective followership	8	
	Courageous followership	6	
	Proactive & passive followership	3	1
	Good followership	2	
	Followership prototypes		1
	Positive & negative followership		
	Structures of follower behaviour		4

Effective (Kelley, 1992; Rosenbach et al., 1997), courageous (Dixon, 2009; Dixon & Westbrook, 2003), proactive and passive (Carsten et al., 2008), good (Brumm & Drury, 2013), positive and negative followership (Drexler, 2019) and followership prototypes (Sy, 2010) could be identified being labelled as FB. As Blanchard et al. (2009) point out, the attribution of the label behaviour needs to be carefully reviewed, as Kelley's survey instrument does not only include behaviours but also attitudes. Not all publications included how they measured or approached FB, or the foundational publications could not be found. Therefore, positive and negative followership, as well as active and passive followership were excluded from the analysis. The precise analysis of the remaining follower typologies can be found in the following appendices: Effective followership, according to Kelley (1992) in Appendix B2, courageous followership, according to Dixon (2009) in Appendix B3, and good followership, according to Brumm and Drury (2013) in Appendix B4.

Furthermore, OCB is a construct that contains several behaviours. Similar to followership styles, OCB had to be analysed regarding its behaviours. One of the most frequently used scales to measure OCB (Lee & Allen, 2002) was used for the analysis in Appendix B5.

Table 6 displays the final overview of behaviours measured or labelled as FB.

Table 6

Constructs Labelled or Measured as Follower Behaviour

Main category	Sub-category I	Sub-category II	In Quantitative studies	In Qualitative studies
Extra-role behaviour			161	12
	Organizational citizenship behaviour		139	8
		OCB-I - Helping	*38*	*1*
		OCB-I - Caring	*25*	*2*
		OCB-I - Protecting	*6*	*1*
		OCB-O - Protecting the organization	*22*	*1*
		OCB-O Representing the organization	*16*	*1*
		OCB-O Gathering information	*16*	*1*
		OCB-O - Voicing ideas	*16*	*1*
	Taking charge/Proactivity		22	4
Task-related behaviour			76	9
	Performance		23	3
	Effort		19	2
	Support ideas and goals		15	2
	Innovation		9	1
	Creativity		5	1
	Ambidexterity		5	
Communi-cation			62	6
	Voice & silence		37	4
	In-Team communication		18	1
	Upward communication		7	1
Other behaviours			69	7
	(Un)Ethical behaviour		16	
		Ethical behaviour	*8*	
		Unethical behaviour	*8*	
	Personal development		15	
	Compliance & resistance		14	2
		Compliance	*7*	*1*
		Resistance	*7*	*1*
	Deviance		11	4
	Cover behaviour		7	
	Role modelling		6	
	Taking on leadership tasks			1

3.6.6 *MEASURES AND APPROACHES*

3.6.6.1 MEASURES AND APPROACHES IN QUANTITATIVE STUDIES

One hundred outputs were included in the analysis of quantitative studies, and a total of 150 measures of FB were identified. Table 7 displays which constructs were used as FB and how these were measured. In some cases, sub-categories on a second level were formed. For example, performance was sometimes measured as task or job performance. OCB is the construct measured most often (29 times). While some authors measured OCB as a whole construct (Anand et al., 2018; Kahya & Şahin, 2018; Khan et al., 2023; Tran et al., 2020), others measured sub-concepts such as OCB-I (Organizational Citizenship Behaviour – Individual) (Hunter et al., 2013; Little et al., 2016), OCB-O (Organizational Citizenship Behaviour – Organizational) (Bush et al., 2021; Ete et al., 2021), or selected sub-items (Gesang, 2022; Kalshoven et al., 2013; Zhu et al., 2013). Thirteen different measures were used to assess OCB. While Lee and Allen (2002) were the authors cited most, this provides an example of the diversity in the research field. Different behavioural concepts are labelled as FB, and an even broader range of measures is used. Based on this analysis, the research field presents itself as fragmented, and there seem to be no protocols guiding research in the field.

Table 7

Measures Used in Quantitative Studies

Main category	Sub-category 1	Sub-category 2	Measure developed by	No. used	Used by
Extra-role behaviour					
	OCB		Lee and Allen (2002)	8	Avey et al. (2011); Newman et al. (2014); Decoster et al. (2014); Guay and Choi (2015); Little et al. (2016); Eva et al. (2020); Ete et al. (2021)
			Dalal et al. (2009)	5	Ahmad et al. (2020); Bush et al. (2021); Lorsch et al. (2021); Wang et al. (2023); Khan et al. (2023)
			Williams and Anderson (1991)	2	Gerpott et al. (2019); Bowler et al. (2019)
			Podsakoff et al. (1990)	2	Hoption et al. (2012); Wherry (2012)
			Smith et al. (1983)	2	Tonkin (2013); Kahya and Şahin (2018)
			Setton and Mossholder (2002)	2	Hunter et al. (2013)
			Coleman and Borman (2000)	1	Chen et al. (2022)
			Farh et al. (1997)	1	Zhu et al. (2013)
			MacKenzie et al. (1991)	1	Kalshoven et al. (2013)
			Moorman and Blakely (1992)	1	Anand et al. (2018)
			Organ (1998)	1	Tran et al. (2020)
			Staufenbiel and Hartz (2000)	1	Gesang (2022)
			Self-developed	1	Hannah et al. (2011)
	Taking charge	Taking charge	Morrison and Phelps (1999)	4	van Dierendonck and Nuijten (2011); Fuller et al. (2015); Gracey (2019); A. J. Xu et al. (2019)
			Secondary data	1	Somers (2022)

Main category	Sub-category 1	Sub-category 2	Measure developed by	No. used	Used by
		Initiative	Frese et al. (1997)	1	Gesang (2022)
		Proactive behaviour	Griffin et al. (2007)	1	Velez and Neves (2016)
			Secondary data	1	Somers (2022)
	Pro-social extra-role behaviour		Self-developed	1	Hoption et al. (2012)
Task-related behaviour					
	Performance	Task performance	Williams and Anderson (1991)	3	Lapierre et al. (2012); Kim et al. (2018); Kahya and Şahin (2018)
			Hoffman et al. (2008)	1	Hannah et al. (2016)
			Turnley et al. (2003)	1	Wang and Seibert (2015)
			Hertel et al. (2003)	1	Damen et al. (2008)
		Job performance	Walumbwa et al. (2008)	1	Zhu et al. (2015)
			Heilman et al. (1992)	2	Zhu et al. (2013); Eva et al. (2020)
			Lam et al. (2002)	1	Eva et al. (2020)
			Ashford et al. (1989)	1	van Gils (2012)
			Mayfield J. (2010)	1	Kock et al. (2019)
			Shih et al. (2013)	1	Tran et al. (2020)
			Griffins et al. (2017)	1	O'Connor et al. (2022)
		Contribution to group result	Observation	1	Stock et al. (2022)
	Effort	Work effort	Brockner et al. (1992)	1	Schwarzmüller et al. (2017)
			Brown and Leigh (1996)	1	Schwarzmüller et al. (2017)
		Work engagement	Rich et al. (2010)	1	Yam et al. (2018)
			Schaufeli et al. (2006)	1	Carnevale et al. (2022)
		Extra effort	Luque et al. (2008)	1	Groves (2020)

Main category	Sub-category 1	Sub-category 2	Measure developed by	No. used	Used by
		Sales behaviour	Self-developed	1	Hunter et al. (2013)
	Ambidexterity		Miller et al. (2007)	1	Gerlach (2019)
			Mom et al. (2007)	1	Gerlach (2019)
			Mom et al. (2009)	2	Klonek et al. (2020); Boemelburg et al. (2023)
			Zacher et al. (2016)	1	Klonek et al. (2020)
	Creativity & Innovation	Creativity	Zhou and George (2001)	2	Huang et al. (2016); Asghar et al. (2022)
			Kleysen and Street (2001)	1	O'Connor et al. (2022)
			Observation	1	Naidoo (2016)
		Creative process engagement	Zhang and Bartol (2010)	1	Huang et al. (2016)
		Innovation	Mayfield M. (2004)	1	Kock et al. (2019)
Followership styles					
	Effective followership		Kelley (1992)	5	Blanchard et al. (2009); Gatti et al. (2017); Jin et al. (2017); McAuley (2019); Shen and Abe (2023)
			Rosenbach et al. (1997)	1	Baker et al. (2016)
			Rosenbach et al. (1996)	1	Alegbeleye and Kaufman (2020)
	Courageous followership		Dixon (2003)	3	Rich (2008); Smith (2009); Dixon (2013)
			Dixon (2008)	1	McClure (2009)
			Zhou et al. (2015)	1	Jia et al. (2018)
	Proactive & Passive following		Carsten et al. (2008)	3	Shahzadi et al. (2017); Shahzadi et al. (2022); Velez and Neves (2022)
	Good followership		Self-developed	1	Brumm and Drury (2013)

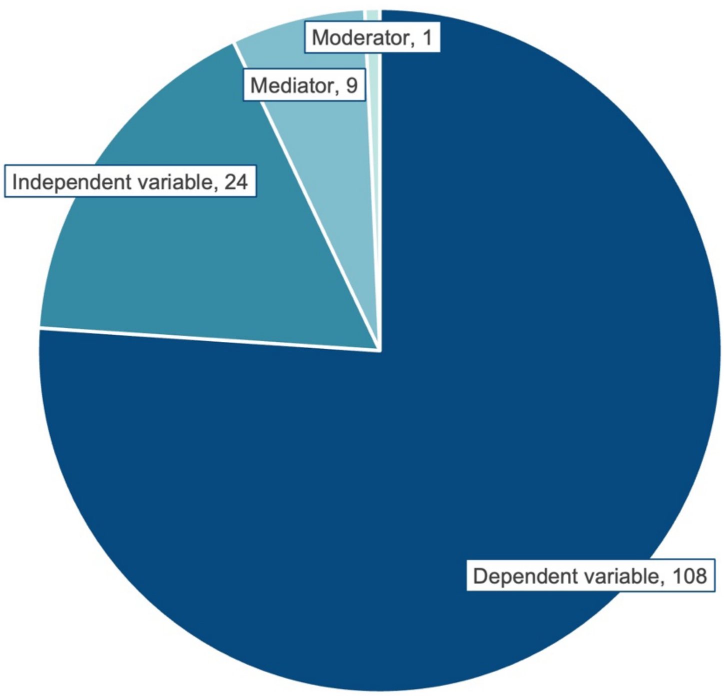
Main category	Sub-category 1	Sub-category 2	Measure developed by	No. used	Used by
Communication	Voice & Silence	Voice	Van Dyne and LePine (1998)	6	Velez and Neves (2016); Carsten (2017); Thompson and Klotz (2022); Velez and Neves (2022); Inderjeet and Scheepers (2022); Chen et al. (2023)
			Liu et al. (2010)	2	Zhu et al. (2015); Gesang (2022)
		Constructive voice	Maynes and Podsakoff (2014)	4	Carnevale et al. (2022); A. J. Xu et al. (2023)
		Promotive & prohibitive voice	Liang et al. (2012)	1	Zhu and Wu (2023)
			Vignette	1	MacMillan et al. (2020)
		Challenging voice	Burris (2012)	1	Bharanitharan et al. (2019)
		Defensive voice	Maynes and Podsakoff (2014)	1	Bharanitharan et al. (2019)
		Ethical voice	Zheng et al. (2019)	1	Zheng et al. (2022)
		Silence	Knoll and van Dick (2013)	1	Zill et al. (2020)
	Upward communication	Positive emotional reactions	Bono et al. (2007)	1	Nisar et al. (2018)
			Van Kleef et al. (2009)	1	Nisar et al. (2018)
		Feedback seeking	Ashford (1986)	1	Moss et al. (2020)
		Feedback avoiding	Moss et al. (2003)	1	Moss et al. (2020)
		Upward delegation	Carsten et al. (2017)	2	Carsten (2017); Inderjeet and Scheepers (2022)
		Making demands	Dormann and Zapf (2004)	1	Zheng et al. (2021)
		Peer transgressions	Schaubrock et al. (2012)	1	Hannah et al. (2016)
	In-Team communication	Collectivistic & individualistic Conflict behaviours	DeChurch et al (2013)	1	Fletcher and Brannick (2022)
		Counterproductive & solution-focused communication	observation	1	Lehmann-Willenbrock et al. (2015)

Main category	Sub-category 1	Sub-category 2	Measure developed by	No. used	Used by
Other behaviours					
	Deviance		Bennett and Robinson (2000)	8	van Gils (2012); van Gils et al. (2015); Gatling et al. (2017); van Gils et al. (2015) Yam et al. (2018); Gauglitz et al. (2023)
			Fox and Spector (1999)	1	Avey et al. (2011)
			Dalal et al. (2009)	1	Bush et al. (2021)
			Aquino et al. (1999)	1	Chen et al. (2022)
			Mitchell and Ambrose (2007)	1	Schwarzmüller et al. (2017)
	Ethical behaviour	Ethical behaviour	Vandenabeele (2014)	1	Hattke and Hattke (2019)
			Self-developed	1	Hannah et al. (2011)
		Unethical behaviour	Umphress et al. (2010)	3	Kalshoven et al. (2016); Shaw and Liao (2021); Tang and Li (2022)
			Moore et al. (2012)	2	Wang et al. (2021); Zhang et al. (2022)
			Kaptein (2008)	1	Uppal and Bansal (2023)
			Observation	1	Johnson et al. (2019)
			Vignette	1	Hoogervorst et al. (2010)
	Compliance & Resistance	Extra role compliance	Observation	1	Hannah et al. (2011)
		Complying to unethical demands	Observation	1	Johnson et al. (2019)
		Obedience	Carsten and Uhl-Bien (2012)	1	Suyono et al. (2020)
		Change resistance	Oreg (2006)	1	Groves (2020)
		Constructive resistance	Tepper et al. (2001)	1	Suyono et al. (2020)
		Resistance	Vignette	1	Güntner et al. (2021)
	Covert behaviour	Emotional engagement	May et al. (2004)	1	Nisar et al. (2018)

As displayed in Figure 20, about three-fourths of the measures used for FB were dependent variables, indicating that another variable influences FB, which is seen as an outcome or a reaction. Another fifth included FB as the independent variable in the study assuming FB to influence something else. Few studies included FB as mediators (9) or moderators (1). Shamir (2007) criticizes that leader-centric research approaches FB as the independent variable, thereby seeing followers as passive rather than a part of the process. They propose seeing “followers’ characteristics and behaviors as the ‘independent variables’,” (p. xxi) to produce follower-centric research. According to the analysis above, three-fourths of current research still seems to adopt a leader-centric approach, as they include FB as an outcome in their research, rather than aiming for a balanced, co-productive view, which would include more research investigating FB as a dependent variable or an influence on the process.

Figure 20

Types of Variables Implemented for Follower Behaviour in Quantitative Studies



In 89 of the 108 studies, a clear indicator of a formal role approach to FB could be found in the sampling strategy. In some instances, the attribution to a formal role definition was clear. For example, Anand et al. (2018) state: “We collected data from managers and their subordinates” (p. 493), and Chen et al. (2023) say: “We designed two sets of questionnaires as per the role of the respondents (1) subordinates (followers) and (2) supervisors (leaders)” (p. 4). Other authors (e.g. van Dierendonck & Dijkstra, 2012) do not state the formal position of their participants but instead call them “person” (p. 252). At the same time, their questionnaire refers to managers, which makes the approach one of formal role. Some sampling strategies did not reveal the approach to FB, and 19 studies were categorized as “unclear role understanding”.

Three studies included an informal role understanding and, therefore, differed from most studies. One study that conducted an experiment included a control group that was neither assigned a formal follower nor leader role (Hoption et al., 2012). In a second study, they let employees fill out a scale to measure the extent to which they labelled themselves as followers. Alegbeleye and Kaufman (2020) deliberately focus on middle managers as participants, as this role unites both leader and follower behaviours. They define their informal view on FB by stating that “leader-follower roles are flexible: one can operate as a leader as well as a follower at the same time” (Alegbeleye & Kaufman, 2020, p. 8). Another informal view on FB can be found in Lehmann-Willenbrock et al. (2015), who analysed video recordings of meetings and state, “Note that because the relational process between leaders and followers can take place in both formal and informal leadership settings ..., leader-follower dynamics can be detected whether meeting leaders are formal supervisors or elected group members” (p. 1023). In this study, the leader was the person who was officially assigned the responsibility to prepare and conduct the meeting. The few studies considering an informal role understanding in their sampling strategy support the finding that FB research is based on a leader-centred view.

Overall, the analysis in this section shows that quantitative studies on FB are strongly influenced by the fragmentation of the research field, and – with few exceptions – based on a formal view on FB, and principally investigate leader-centred views rather than follower-centred, or co-production, perspectives. This preponderance of a one-sided few suggests that followership research is in essence a continuation of leadership research and it needs to be questioned if followership research is not, at its core, employee research.

3.6.6.2 APPROACHES IN QUALITATIVE STUDIES

Ten qualitative studies derived from nine publications were included in the analysis. Table 8 presents an overview of their research aims and the approaches adopted.

Table 8

Research Questions/Aims and Approaches Implemented in Qualitative Studies

Author(s)	Research Question or Aim	Approach
Bonner (2018)	Understand how an employee's perception of their followership behaviours impacted their engagement in the workplace.	Structured interviews
Mohamedzadeh et al (2015)	The goal of this study is to explore follower's implicit followership theories (IFTs) which entail an analysis of follower's views and perception about followership.	Semi-structured interviews
Gesang & Süß (2021)	This study shifts the prevailing perspective of leaders' effect on their followers to look at how leaders perceive the behavior of their followers and how this perceived behavior affects them.	Semi-structured interviews
Carsten et al (2010)	To examine how individuals socially construct their roles as followers and to explore followership schemas and contextual influences that relate to these constructions.	Semi-structured interviews
Gochmann (2018)	What are the behaviors followers typically show in leader-follower interactions?	Diary study
Almeida et al (2011)	Can you be a follower even when you do not follow the leader?	Qualitative survey
Seele & Eberl (2020)	This paper examines newcomers' reactions when facing unfulfilled leadership expectations.	Semi-structured interviews
Seele & Eberl (2020)	This paper examines newcomers' reactions when facing unfulfilled leadership expectations.	Diary study
O'Donoghue (2022)	How do academic middle managers in Business Schools and Business Faculties in Malaysia, in their dual roles as both followers and leaders, deal with the challenges, conflicts, contradictions and dilemmas that they experience?	Semi-structured interviews
Schilling (2009)	The research aims for the present study are twofold: (1) investigating the content and meaning of negative leadership: what are the most typical aspects of negative leadership in the view of practitioners? How do people causally attribute negative leadership? Which are the most important effects of negative leadership? And (2) analyzing the structure of negative leadership behaviours: how are the different behaviours related to each other? Are there underlying topics (e.g. task- versus human-orientation; Einarsen et al., 2002) that characterize the views of negative leadership?	Semi-structured interviews

The focus of qualitative studies in FB research lies on followers' understanding of their role. Carsten et al. (2010) explore the social construction of the follower role, which includes FBs. Almeida et al. (2021) investigate if followers are still followers when they do not follow the leader and discuss this question in the light of destructive leadership. Gochmann (2018) explores the behaviours exhibited by followers from their managers' perspective and provides a list of behaviours (see section 3.6.5.1, p. 105 et seq.). FB is also interpreted as a reaction to a leaders' action. For example, Seele and Eberl (2020) investigate how unfulfilled leadership expectations influence FB in employees with low tenure. Schilling (2009) explores FBs in reaction to negative leadership behaviours. FB is also regarded as an antecedent for effects on leaders, as Gesang and Süß (2021) do not aim to investigate actual behaviour but the perception leaders have of those behaviours. FB has also been explored as an antecedent for work engagement (Bonner, 2018).

Similar to quantitative studies, qualitative studies rely on formal role definitions to explore FB. Gochmann (2018) asked leaders, whom they "defined as individuals who are authorized to give instructions and/ or issue directives to at least one other individual" (p. 109) to report FBs in a diary study. Bonner (2018) states their formal point of view more explicitly in their research question that aims "to explore how employees view themselves as followers" (p. 129). Gesang and Süß (2021) interviewed participants in "a disciplinary leadership position" (p. 3). Mohamadzadeh et al. (2015) refer to their participants as 'subordinates'. As these individuals were managers or employees by definition, the underlying approach to FB is formal. O'Donoghue (2022) follows an approach already discussed in quantitative sampling strategies by interviewing middle managers who hold both formal roles of managers and employees.

Overall, the analysis of qualitative research on FB suggests that it is investigated from a formal perspective and demarcation between employee and follower behaviour for concept clarification is absent. Relatively few studies investigate FB as an influencing factor on perceptions and attitudes, and the notion of FB as an outcome of external stimuli remains prevalent.

3.6.7 *ANTECEDENTS*

In this section, the antecedents of FB explored in existing research are described, addressing RVQ six. As discussed in section 3.6.6.1 (see p. 116), most studies treated FB as a dependent variable. Therefore, it is regarded as the outcome of something else. Four main categories of antecedents of FB could be identified based on 223 meaning units referring to antecedents. The overview is displayed in Table 9.

Table 9

Concepts Explored as Antecedents of Follower Behaviour

Main category	Sub-category	Number of investigations
The leader		100
	Leadership style	42
	Leader behaviour	21
	Leader affect	13
	Leader personality	8
	Leader attitudes	4
	Leader values & norms	4
	Leader skills	2
	Leader beliefs	2
	Leader identity	3
	Leader health	1
The follower		73
	Follower attitudes	16
	Follower personality	10
	Follower beliefs	9
	Follower characteristics	9
	Follower identity	7

The follower (continued)	Follower skills	7
	Follower motivation	6
	Follower affect	4
	Follower values	4
	Follower health	1
Context		27
	Organizational culture	14
	Task characteristics	7
	Organizational characteristics	5
	National culture	1
Relational aspects		23
	LMX	13
	Identification	4
	Psychological safety	4
	Reciprocity beliefs	1
	Social capital	1

Researchers have identified and examined a variety of potential antecedents for FB. The chief focus was on the leader. Several authors investigated leadership styles as antecedents of FB. Ethical (e.g. Avey et al., 2011; Bush et al., 2021; Moss et al., 2020; van Gils, 2012), transformational (Groves, 2020; Hannah et al., 2016; Zhu et al., 2013) and servant leadership (Gracey, 2019; Hunter et al., 2013; van Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011) were explored most often as an influencing factor. Furthermore, leader behaviours, such as the provision of mentoring (Lapierre et al., 2012), control behaviour (Wang et al., 2023), or their communication (Lehmann-Willenbrock et al., 2015), and their affect in the form of emotional display (Little et al., 2016; Schwarzmüller et al., 2017; Wang & Seibert, 2015) have been of interest to researchers. The leader’s general personality traits (Asghar et al., 2022; Kahya & Şahin, 2018; Tran et al., 2020), their characteristics regarding the dark triad of personality (Lorsch et al., 2021; Uppal & Bansal, 2023), and the authenticity of their personality (Hattke & Hattke, 2019) were examined. In addition, leader attitudes, such as humility (Asghar et al., 2022; Bharanitharan et al., 2019; Chen et al., 2023), leader values such as justice (Zill et al., 2020), and their self-concept and identity (Huang et al., 2016; Lapierre et al., 2012; Zheng et al., 2021) were regarded as antecedents of FB.

Regarding the follower, researchers have focused on follower attitudes and personalities (Groves, 2020; Hannah et al., 2011; Johnson et al., 2019). Furthermore, their beliefs about the follower role have been investigated (Carsten, 2017; Carsten et al., 2010; Inderjeet & Scheepers, 2022). Regarding the self-concept, the focus has been on self-efficacy (Asghar et al., 2022; Bharanitharan et al., 2019) and self-esteem (Avey et al., 2011). The individual’s skills have regularly been explored as political skills (Shahzadi et al., 2017; Shahzadi et al., 2022; S. Xu et al., 2019). Follower characteristics, such as status (Carnevale et al., 2022; MacMillan et al., 2020), age (Dixon et al., 2013; Smith, 2009), or tenure (Smith, 2009) have also been investigated as influences on FB.

Regarding the individuals involved in the process of FB, it becomes evident that followers with their characteristics have been explored in less depth than leaders. Therefore, the notion that leader-centered perspectives are prevalent in research is further supported.

The context in which FB takes place was investigated with 27 measures. These include the organizational culture (e. g. Hunter et al., 2013; Smith, 2009), organizational structure (e. g. Groves, 2020; Velez & Neves, 2022), organizational characteristics such, as company size (Brumm & Drury, 2013), vision clarity (Gracey, 2019), or work resources (Somers, 2022), and task characteristics, such as job autonomy (Kalshoven et al., 2016) or innovation requirement (Gerlach, 2019). While a small number of authors acknowledge the role of the organizational context in FB, most publications do not include it in their study design. Connected with nearly three-fourth of the studies either not stating the industrial context of their study or basing it on student participants, it seems that researchers assume that the context in which FB is exhibited does play a subordinate role at best, or is not worthy of note at worst. This would then lead to the conclusion that there is one conceptualization of

FB valid for all industries. Schell and Kuntz (2013) analysed secondary data case studies and found overlaps and differences in the experience of leader behaviour for different job roles, and Coyle et al. (2023) include stable and unstable characteristics of organizations in their conceptualization of followership, indicating that FB would also be perceived and exhibited differently in various contexts. Therefore, the role of the organizational context needs further empirical exploration. Additionally, the influence of national cultures, in which organizations are embedded, has only been explored in one study (Suyono et al., 2020). In contrast, theoretical contributions discuss the role of societal culture in the conceptualization and occurrence of FB in depth and suggest propositions for further research (Koo & Park, 2018; Urbach et al., 2020). Therefore, researchers seem to assume that national culture plays a major role as an antecedent of FB, and, hence, needs more exploration.

Relational aspects have received the least attention in current research. Leader-member-exchange has mostly been explored as an antecedent of FB (e.g. Anand et al., 2018; Fletcher & Brannick, 2022; MacMillan et al., 2020). Psychological safety has also been investigated (Chen et al., 2023; Eva et al., 2020; Thompson & Klotz, 2022; Tran et al., 2020), which refers to a feeling of trust. Perceived trust has been identified as an influence on FB and investigated in some studies (Bush et al., 2021; Newman et al., 2014; Zhu et al., 2013) as well as the level of identification (Ete et al., 2021; Shaw & Liao, 2021; Zhu et al., 2015). The low number of publications exploring relational aspects of FB is surprising as it seems logical to explore the relationship between the two parties involved in the process. The neglect of relational aspects suggests that there are few points of contact between the actors. In contrast, overarching theories used to explain FB (see section 3.6.3, p. 96 et seq.) include more interpersonal approaches, which indicates a higher significance of such explanations. Furthermore, Hayes et al. (2015) highlight the role of relationships in their theoretical conceptualization of followership and emphasize the need to conduct additional empirical studies. Therefore, relational aspects seem to be under-researched as antecedents of FB.

In summary, the antecedents of FB have captured the interest of researchers but an imbalance in their investigation becomes evident. While aspects of relationships and context have only been recognized as relevant antecedents to a small extent, the high number of investigations into the role of leadership styles and the person of the leader contributes to the notion of mainly leader-centred research in the field.

3.6.8 *OUTCOMES*

In this section, the outcomes of FB explored in research are described, providing an answer to RVQ seven. In total, 57 meaning units were labelled for outcomes, and the same main categories as for the antecedents were identified. The overview of the outcomes identified is displayed in Table 10.

The outcomes for the leader contain personal outcomes, including leader emotions, such as satisfaction (Fletcher & Brannick, 2022; Gochmann, 2018; Rich, 2008), and frustration (Gesang & Süß, 2021; Zheng et al., 2022). Leader behaviours, such as effort (Gesang & Süß, 2021), destructive and unethical behaviours (Ahmad et al., 2020; Güntner et al., 2020), or inspiring behaviour (Baker et al., 2016) have been investigated. Leader trust in the follower (Shahzadi et al., 2017; Shahzadi et al., 2022), their interest in voice behaviour (MacMillan et al., 2020), and their motivation (Carsten, 2017) have further been of interest.

Outcomes for the follower have mainly been researched on an attitudinal level, including commitment (Blanchard et al., 2009; Dixon et al., 2013) and job satisfaction (Gatti et al., 2017). Feedback in the form of performance ratings (Zhang et al., 2022), motivation (Fletcher & Brannick, 2022), and the perceived potential for trust (McAuley, 2019; Shahzadi et al., 2022; Shen & Abe, 2023) have further been investigated as outcomes for followers.

Outcomes for the organization have been researched to a limited extent, mainly focusing on performance (Gerlach, 2019; Jin et al., 2017; A. J. Xu et al., 2019), but also including innovation (Klonek et al., 2020) and person-organization fit (Jin et al., 2017).

Relational outcomes include the evaluation of the behaviour by supervisors and colleagues (Bowler et al., 2019), teammate satisfaction (Fletcher & Brannick, 2022), and LMX (Ayoko et al., 2023; A. J. Xu et al., 2023; A. J. Xu et al., 2019).

Table 10

Concepts Explored as Outcomes of Follower Behaviour

Main category	Sub-category	Number of investigations
The leader		33
	Leader affect	11
	Leader attitudes	8
	Leader behaviour	6
	Leader perception of follower	5
	Leader status	1
	Leader motivation	1
	Leader health	1
The follower		11
	Follower attitudes	7
	Follower perception of leader	2
	Follower affect	1
	Follower motivation	1
Organization		7
	Performance	5
	Innovation	1
	Person-Organization fit	1
Relational aspects		6
	Evaluation	3
	LMX	3

The analysis shows that outcomes have been paid less attention than antecedents. Research, again, is focused on outcomes for leaders, rather than followers, the organization, or the relationship. This supports the notion that followership research is often leadership research, acknowledging that followers are a necessary component of the leadership process. The focus of this leader-centred research is still the person of the leader rather than taking a balanced perspective on all individuals and their interconnections. It is surprising that few researchers investigate the organizational outcomes of FB, as this aspect might increase the concept's relevance in business contexts. A possible explanation is the multi-disciplinarity of the field. This finding suggests that few studies were conducted from a business research perspective, and most were interested in the explanation of behaviour from a psychological viewpoint. Therefore, the research field not only lacks balance between the exploration of antecedents and outcomes but is also in need of a more balanced approach regarding the influence of research domains.

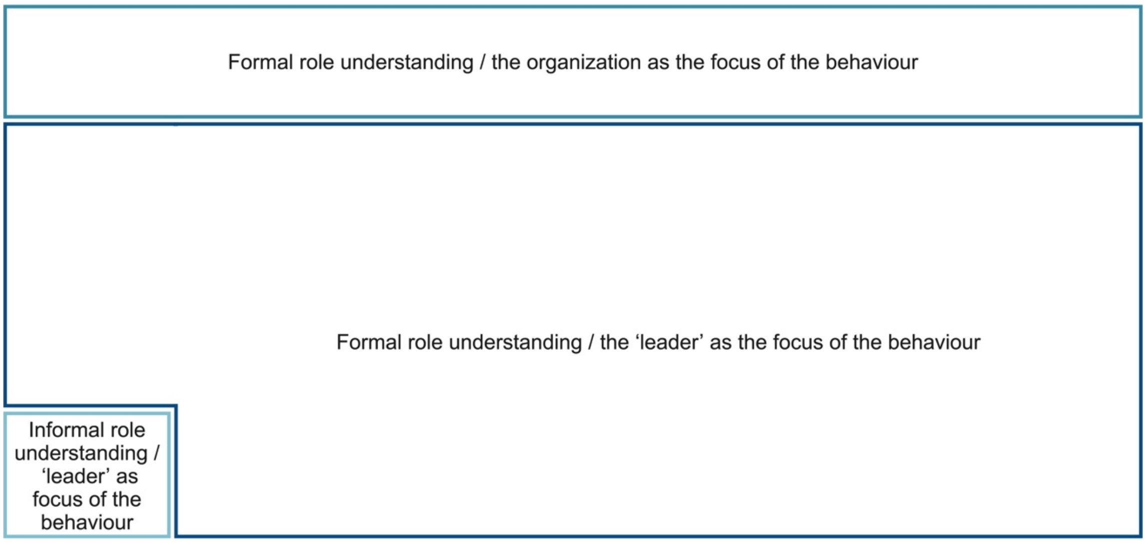
3.7 CONCLUSION

In the introduction, the research field of followership was problematized in relation to the research methods employed, a lack of definition clarity and demarcation, and the relevance of the research. This SLR reinforces this problematization as it reveals an insufficient understanding of FB on four levels: (a) one-sided definitional focus, (b) imbalance in research methods, (c) missing concept clarity, and (d) missing processual conceptualization and lack of balance in their exploration.

First, a one-sided focus of existing research regarding the definition of and the approach to FB becomes evident as illustrated in Figure 21. Definitions presented in current research concur as they see FB either as, chiefly, part of the formal role of employees or, less often, an informal role. Furthermore, definitions distinguish leaders and organizations as the focus of FB. Publications mainly focus on the leader as the aim of FB, while the organization as a potential focus is acknowledged but seldom explored. Therefore, existing research seems to explore only a fraction of the concept.

Figure 21

Imbalance in the Definitional Approach to Follower Behaviour

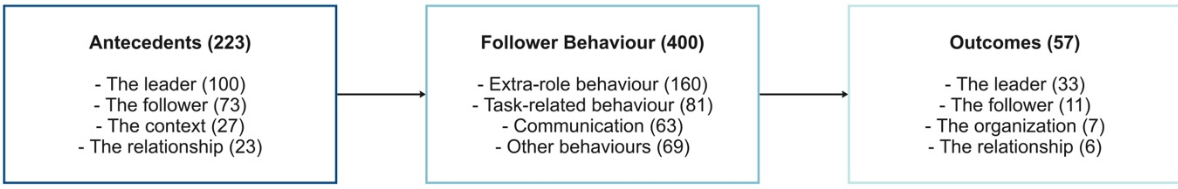


Second, the majority of methods employed are quantitative and an understanding of the phenomenon's complexity is only sought in a small number of qualitative and theoretical contributions. Therefore, a formal role understanding is also prevalent in research methods, supported by sampling, participant selection methods, and the use of *follower* and *employee* as synonyms. Hence, the impression manifests that followership research is primarily leadership research acknowledging that followers are to a certain extent a necessary component of leadership.

Third, concept clarity is missing regarding the demarcation from other concepts and the inclusion and exclusion of behaviours in the concept of FB. Even though Bonner (2018) states the necessity to demarcate FB from employee behaviour, no approach to doing so can be found. Furthermore, the absent demarcation from employee behaviour suggests that FB is only shown by employees. Additionally, the lack of concept clarity becomes evident by the high number of behaviours and behavioural constructs investigated as FB as displayed in Figure 22. Therefore, it seems like a common conceptualization regarding the behaviours subsumed in FB does not exist. Researchers rather define a behaviour as FB and explore existing constructs under the umbrella term.

Figure 22

Overview on the Leadership-Followership-Process in Existing Research



Fourth, an imbalance in the interest in the aspects of the FB process can be seen, as illustrated in Figure 22. While many potential explanations from overarching theories are applied to FB, most current research considers FB as an outcome and, therefore, takes on a leader-centred perspective. A comparatively small number of publications consider FB an influencing factor in the leadership-followership-process. Furthermore, the linear process identified and displayed in Figure 22 suggests that FB is a self-contained process consisting of antecedents, leading to behaviour, resulting in outcomes. This conceptualization of FB appears to be initiated for each behavioural process. Hence, the complexity of time, relation, and change aspects is not considered. Therefore, the applicability of the findings needs to be critically reviewed.

In summary, this review problematizes the restricted focus on formal roles in the definition and empirical exploration of FB, a lack of its demarcation from other concepts, and a one-sided methodological approach prevalent in the research field. Overall, a balanced view on the leadership-followership construct, called for by Shamir (2007), cannot be detected and the field seems to be an extension of leadership research. Therefore, research based on problematization rather than gaps is needed to help broaden the conceptualization of FB and create approaches for truly balanced leadership-followership research. The study conducted in the next chapter aims to explore such research options to contribute to a more balanced research landscape.

4 METHODOLOGY

To address the research aim, the philosophical standpoint employed and its implication for the study conducted needs to be clarified. While some researchers such as Kuhn (1962) call the sum of these standpoints ‘paradigms’, others prefer the term ‘worldview’ (Creswell & Creswell, 2018), the terms are often also applied as synonyms. Paradigms are “universally recognized scientific achievements that, for a time, provide model problems and solutions to a community of practitioners” (Kuhn, 1962, p. 10), equipping these researchers with guidelines on making decisions in their research projects. The term ‘paradigm’ has been criticized for promoting discussions about the differences in fundamental beliefs and their appropriateness rather than the diversity of potential knowledge gain (Walker, 2010; Wray, 2010). Therefore, the term ‘worldview’, defined as “a basic set of beliefs that guide action” (Guba, 1990, p. 17), is used in this research and ontological, epistemological, and axiological standpoints are discussed. Ontological discussions deal with the question “What is the world really made of?” (Moses & Knutsen, 2007, p. 5) and aim to determine the worldview on the nature of reality (Klenke, 2016). Epistemology aims to answer the question “What is knowledge?” (Moses & Knutsen, 2007, p. 5) and enquires about the nature of truth and the legitimacy of knowledge (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Axiology considers the role of values in research and the proximity, or distance, of the researcher to the research object (Scotland, 2012). Two prominent worldviews have developed, differing in their ontological, epistemological, and axiological assumptions: Positivism and Interpretivism (Ikram & Kenayathulla, 2022). This chapter explores the worldview adopted in this study, its impact on the research, and the practical application of the research methods, including a reflection on ethical considerations.

4.1 PHILOSOPHICAL STANCE: SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONISM

Potential philosophical stances: Researchers with a positivist approach to knowledge believe that one real world exists, which can be uncovered. This realist view is derived from natural sciences and leads to the ontological assumption that regularities can be found, and generalization is possible (Moses & Knutsen, 2007). From an axiological perspective, realist researchers see themselves as neutral and value-free observers. They are objective and not involved with or in the research object or situation they study. They tend to gain knowledge in a deductive way and use quantitative methods to receive data that can be analysed and from which general explanations can be deducted (Antwi & Hamza, 2015; Bryman, 2012; Saunders et al., 2016).

Interpretivist researchers believe that there are multiple realities to be explored, as relativist ontology is based on the assumption that every individual perceives reality differently (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Interpretivism is based on a subjective epistemology, meaning that "the world does not exist independently of our knowledge of it" (Scotland, 2012, p. 11). Interpretivists, therefore, mostly use inductive processes for theory building and tend to implement qualitative research designs (Bryman, 2012; Moses & Knutsen, 2007).

Justification: In this study, a social constructionist approach is adopted. The approach aims to understand individual's socially constructed realities of FB in organizational contexts. Following Weber (1947), the term 'Verstehen' ('understanding'), includes the meaning for an individual and the social system around it, as both influence each other. Accordingly, FB is seen as an individual's construction of the concept embedded in the organization's social system with a mutual influence between the individual's construction and the meaning of FB in the organizational context. Thus, social constructionist research enables the exploration of a diversity of FB realities.

In contrast to other research philosophies such as post-positivism or critical realism, social constructionism sees the knowledge available to research as socially constructed, meaning that it does not exist outside social relationships and interactions (Blaikie & Priest, 2017). Fagan (2010) adds that "if something is socially constructed, then it has undergone a process of development in some way mediated by social structures, interactions, or values" (p. 95). Therefore, social construction includes a process of social interaction that creates meaning and understanding. Keeping Weber's approach to understanding in mind, roles are often defined as expectations regarding behaviour in a specific context (Anglin et al., 2022). Social roles are constructed through interaction; what is considered 'true' about these roles depends on the cultural and historical background in which they are positioned, and such roles are, therefore, inherent socially constructed (Burr, 2015; Mallon, 2007). In an organizational context, the meaning of the follower role is, therefore, influenced by a person's experiences, and framed by the implicit expectations present and communicated in a specific context. These precepts underscore role theory, which has regularly been applied to organizational contexts (Anglin et al., 2022). Status roles such as superiors and subordinates have been investigated (Matta et al., 2015). However, little research has been conducted on the meaning of the follower role and its behaviours, leading to an insufficient understanding (Andersen, 2019; Oc et al., 2023). Underpinned by the social constructionist philosophy, the understanding of the follower role is constructed through social interaction, communication, and experiences. Research should provide more insight into the behaviours shown in the workplace and the role concept leading to these behaviours. Therefore, it is necessary to include lived experiences in studies so they can become part of theoretical models about the role. This research, thus, aims to explore practitioners' understanding of FB to provide suggestions for future research based on the juxtaposition of current research and the lived experiences of practitioners in the German service industry.

The adoption of the social constructionist worldview is supported by calls for more research that investigates followership inductively (Shamir, 2007; Uhl-Bien et al., 2014). Understanding followership as a multi-paradigmatic research field, Uhl-Bien et al. (2014) state that "for true scholarly advances, followership researchers should draw insights from across all paradigmatic perspectives and findings on followership" (p. 100). Furthermore, Alvesson (2020) criticizes that researchers, especially in journal articles, often do not state their philosophical worldview explicitly. Hence, it is interpreted that quantitative studies tend to be based on worldviews leaning towards the positivist, while qualitative work tends to adopt worldviews from the interpretivist spectrum (Baškarada & Koronios, 2018). The number of publications reviewing followership from interpretivist perspectives is still small, even though Uhl-Bien et al. (2014) called for more balanced paradigmatic research nearly ten years ago. The imbalance can also be found in the SLR conducted in chapter 3, which contained 100 quantitative studies in contrast to ten qualitative studies, thereby supporting the general tendency towards post-positivist frameworks, implementing quantitative research strategies (Bryman, 2004). Therefore, the research field lacks balance in paradigmatic and methodological diversity. One explanation for the low response to Uhl-Bien et al.'s (2014) appeal for a richer paradigmatic base can be found in current research practice. Scholars might refrain from exploring the research field based on non-standard, hence non-post-positivist, viewpoints, as they fear rejection from publishers and peers (Butler et al., 2017). Therefore, deviating from the agreed standard in the domain includes risks for researchers. By avoiding these risks and subordinating to accepted research practices, limited developments in the field can be accomplished, and the paradigmatic crisis, long overdue in leadership studies, is bypassed (Spoelstra et al., 2016). Hence, this study contributes to rebalancing research in the domain by taking that risk and employing a social constructionist viewpoint and, subsequently, a qualitative methodology.

Implications for this research: Adopting a social constructionist worldview gives rise to several consequences for studies based on the associated epistemological and ontological assumptions. The following discusses the implications for axiology, findings generalization, and the research quality evaluation.

In terms of axiology, researchers are value-bound and cannot be separated from the research problem (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This assumes that researchers are part of the construction of knowledge rather than being explorers of the meanings and understandings constructed by participants. This is regularly the case as they engage in data generation (e.g. through interviews) and the interpretation of data during the analysis phase (Fagan, 2010). Therefore, researchers need to reflect on their contribution to social construction (Gomes Pessoa et al., 2019). In this research, reflexivity is ensured through an introduction to the researcher in section 1.2 (see p. 3 et seq.) and three reflective sections on participant selection, data generation, and data analysis (section 4.4.4, p. 146 et seq., section 4.5.4, p. 156 et seq., and section 4.6.3, p. 168 et seq.).

In relation to the potential for generalization in social constructionist research, Payne and Williams (2005) suggest moderatum generalization. While statistical generalization cannot be achieved with small sample sizes and is not sought for in interpretivist worldviews (Williams, 2000), moderatum generalization is based on the reasoned transferability of the findings and the acknowledgement of its limitations. Furthermore, interpretivist research regularly contains indications, tendencies, or patterns rather than universally valid statements. Based on moderatum generalization, this research aims to gain an understanding of the practitioners' conceptualizations of FB in the German service industry. Thereby, it is acknowledged that the findings need to be reviewed in terms of their transferability and should be interpreted as insights into the concept through the eyes of individuals. Conversely, interpretivist research enables detailed insights and understandings regarding the concept of FB which, as argued in the SLR, is currently missing in the domain. Therefore, moderatum generalization offers the opportunity to explore the understanding of a small number of individuals in detail and derive further research potential from their experiences.

Regarding the evaluation of research quality, reliability, validity, and objectivity are the main indicators for good quality research for positivist scholars (Basham et al., 2010). In contrast, no generally accepted way of assessing the quality of interpretivist research exists. For example, the JARS-Qual framework proposed by the American Psychological Association (2020) includes recommendations for each step of the research process and aims for clarity, transparency, and accuracy in the descriptions. Other approaches employ criteria such as credibility, dependability, transferability, reflexivity, and confirmability (Stenfors et al., 2020) to evaluate the quality of such research. This framework is used for this study due to its comprehensive yet clear nature. Table 11 details the implementation of the quality criteria and is then reviewed in section 6.3.2 (see p. 348 et seq.).

Table 11

Quality Criteria and Their Implementation in Qualitative Research

Criteria	What it means	How to recognize it
Credibility	The research findings are plausible and trustworthy	There is alignment between theory, research question, data collection, analysis, and results. Sampling strategy, the depth and volume of data, and the analytical steps taken, are appropriate within that framework
Dependability	The extent to which the research could be replicated in similar conditions	There is sufficient information provided such that another researcher could follow the same procedural steps, albeit possibly reaching different conclusions
Confirmability	There is a clear link or relationship between the data and the findings	The researchers show how they made their findings through detailed descriptions and the use of quotes
Transferability	Findings may be transferred to another setting, context, or group	Detailed description of the context in which the research was performed and how this shaped the findings
Reflexivity	A continual process of engaging with and articulating the place of the researcher and the context of the research	Explanations of how reflexivity was embedded and supported in the research process

Note. From “How to ... assess the quality of qualitative research,” by T. Stenfors, A. Kajamaa, and D. Bennett, 2020, *The Clinical Teacher, 17*(6), p. 598 (https://doi.org/10.1111/tct.13242). CC BY 4.0

4.2 DESIGN AND STRATEGY CHOICES

According to Blaikie and Priest (2019), a research design “incorporates all the decisions that need to be made before the research commences, and provide justifications for these decisions” (p. 15). The decisions referred to in the definition can include the methodological approach (quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods) (Parylo, 2012), the logic of reasoning (inductive, deductive, abductive) (Blaikie & Priest, 2017), the research strategy (e.g. case studies, action research) (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015), the theoretical underpinning of explorative or descriptive approaches (Hunter et al., 2019), and aspects of time (cross-sectional or longitudinal design) (Hua & David, 2008). This research follows a qualitative, inductive, explorative, cross-sectional approach.

Based on the social constructionist worldview justified in section 4.1 (see p. 130 et seq.), a qualitative methodological approach is chosen, which is linked to inductive reasoning. Qualitative research has its "focus on the lived experiences of participants and their authentic voice" (Klenke, 2016, p. 11), and thereby works with words rather than numbers and statistics (Prasad & Prasad, 2002). Research question three seeks to gain an understanding of the experiences, sense-making, and meaning of FB for practitioners in the German service industry. Based on Weber's (1948) notion of 'Verstehen', a qualitative approach is suitable as it provides the opportunity to elicit practitioners' narratives that form the basis for the authentic voice indicated by Klenke (2016).

Deductive approaches seek to verify or falsify theories (Evci, 2021). Therefore, a theory or a model is required as a basis of deductive reasoning (Mabry, 2008). In contrast, inductive reasoning starts with data generation and reasons from the experiences of individuals (Hussy et al., 2013). As identified in the SLR in chapter 3, little research on the understanding of FB is available, which makes inductive reasoning in an explorative study a suitable approach to begin to address this lacuna.

Regarding time aspects, studies can be cross-sectional or longitudinal (Hua & David, 2008). Cross-sectional studies collect data once, while longitudinal studies collect data at multiple points in time. Longitudinal studies are implemented to explore processes and changes over time, while cross-sectional studies are suitable for research questions that focus on investigating a status quo at a certain point in time (Elliott et al., 2008). As the research question does not aim to capture changes in the concept of FB but intends to provide an understanding of the concept based on participants' past experiences, a cross-sectional study approach is applied. At the same time, the narrative approach to data generation provides the opportunity to explore the experiences practitioners have made in the past, which can cover decades in some cases, leading to the potential of the interviewees reflecting on different situations and contexts, through which a certain time-related aspect is covered.

4.3 TRANSLATION PROCEDURES

As this research was conducted in German and the findings are presented in English, translation procedures need to be addressed to ensure the transparency of the research process (McKenna, 2022). Abfalter et al. (2020) propose a framework of seven questions that should be answered: why, what, when, who, how, where, and by what means. The following discusses translation procedures and decisions based on that framework.

1. Why: The reason for translating. Translation became necessary as the source language is German, while the target language is English. Conducting the interviews in English would have avoided the need for translation. As this study is conducted in the German service industry context, the participants were fluent German speakers. To ensure depth, authenticity, and linguistic comfort, the interviews were conducted in the language the participants can best express themselves in; their day-to-day language (Gawlewicz, 2014; Welch & Piekkari, 2006).

2. What: The content for translating. Generally, interview transcripts, the findings of the research, or the publication text can be translated (Abfalter et al., 2020). For this research, the identified themes and quotes used in the findings and discussion section were translated as they needed to be integrated into the presentation in chapter 5. In addition, one full interview transcript was translated to provide readers, who are not fluent in German, with an example of the analysis procedures (see appendix C6).

3. When: The time for translating. Santos et al. (2015) discuss the timing of translation and find that translation can happen before or during data collection, during the transcription process, during data analysis or when presenting the findings. This research used translation during data analysis and while writing the findings. The interviews, which were conducted in German, were also analysed in German. This decision was made as translating the transcripts leads to a loss of depth due to the challenge of finding appropriate terms for idioms, region-specific terms, or cultural meanings (Abfalter et al., 2020; Temple & Young, 2004).

The identified themes were translated during the coding phase. Codes were allocated both in German and English. As Roth (2013) described, being fluent in several languages also leads to thinking in those languages. Therefore, this procedure felt natural as codes often occurred in English as they are regularly rooted in theoretical knowledge, which was mainly acquired in English. At the same time, coding in two languages permitted assessment of whether the translation contained as much of the meaning the German word enclosed as possible. To solve ambiguities and improve translation quality, resulting from the translation process, terms were discussed with critical academic friends (including one supervisor) who are either German or English native speakers but fluent in the other language. The paragraphs used in the findings and discussion section were translated during the writing process.

4. Who and where: The person(s) translating and the location of translation. I, as the researcher, translated the transcripts, themes, and quotes. Adiyoso and Wilopo (2021) discuss the advantages and disadvantages of researchers as translators. For this research, the argument of containing the meaning, which can best be achieved by the person who was part of the conversation, led to the decision to combine researcher and translator roles. As suggested by Abfalter et al. (2020), the initial translation was conducted by the researcher and an editing service was used to ensure comprehensibility and a natural flow in the target language English. To ensure no meaning was lost, the English native speaker was instructed to make suggestions regarding grammar changes and clarifications without changing the content. A selection from the suggestions was made, with reference to the original transcript in German to preserve meaning.

5. How and by what means: The mode of translating and the means and tools used. The translation was based on a hermeneutic approach, aiming to include as many nuances of meaning as possible (Steiner, 1998). The translation process was supported by the online tool DeepL. In addition, the linguee forum was used to look up discussions about terms that were ambiguous in their translation. Some terms were challenging to translate as they relate to specifics in the German context. For example, Marc states that he still works for the

company where he originally trained. The verb ‘to train’ covers several meanings in German. In the German transcript, Marc stated that he did his apprenticeship in that company. Additionally, as discussed in section 2.1.3 (see p. 30), the term 'Führungskraft' has a special status in German, as it does not distinguish between leaders and managers. As ‘Führungskraft’ includes a formal role, it was translated as ‘manager’, meaning that the term ‘leader’ was not used. Some participants used the term ‘leader’, as it is common to include English terms in German discussions of business. In this case, the term was not changed. Metaphorical language also leads to difficulties in translations. For example, Sam (MFL) said: “ich hatte immer das Gefühl, dass meine Mitarbeitenden beeindruckt waren, wenn die Führung mit schwimmt, ... um sich dann wieder abzuseilen und den Dingen nachzugehen, die der Chef von einem erwarten würde”. The sentence can be translated as “I always had the feeling that my employees were impressed when I lent a hand ... and went back to tasks that my boss would expect me to do.” Some meaning is lost in this translation. While ‘schwimmen’ would be directly translated as ‘to swim’, the term has a metaphorical meaning, in which it implies that the situation is not under the control of the speaker, or the person is unsure about a situation. A second example can be found in the same sentence, as the colloquial term ‘abseilen’ could be translated as ‘to skedaddle’ or ‘to skive off’, which would have a negative connotation. The term used means that the person leaves the scene, so no colloquial term was used.

In summary, the translation process described in the preceding paragraphs leads to a structured approach to translation that provides transparency on the process, and preserves intended meaning expressed in German best possible while presenting and interpreting these meanings in English.

4.4 PARTICIPANT SAMPLING, SELECTION, AND DESCRIPTION

4.4.1 *OVERVIEW*

Discussion of the terms ‘participant sample’ and ‘sampling’ continues (Gentles & Vilches, 2017; McCrae & Purssell, 2016), demonstrating that the terminology used in the process of identifying one’s participants is not clearly defined. The terms used in this thesis are primarily based on Gentles and Vilches (2017). The following definitions are used: Sampling is the process of determining how the participants should be selected. Participant selection refers to the process of recruiting, identifying, and including the participants. Participant description refers to the presentation of the participants included in the study.

An adjusted version of the four steps of participant recruitment, as suggested by Bonisteel et al. (2021), is followed herein, as they suggest a comprehensive framework, leading to consistency in the approach to participant selection. They subdivide the process into: (a) developing a plan, (b) implementing the plan, (c) engagement of participants during and after data collection, and (d) assessment after recruitment. In light of the specified definition of *participant sampling*, *selection*, and *description* step (b) was divided into two sections, participant recruitment, and participant description. As (c) engagement of participants during and after data generation only comprises a small description, it was integrated into the participant recruitment. The complete outline, which also displays the structure of the following sections, can be seen in Figure 23.

Figure 23

Participant Sampling, Selection, and Presentation Structure

Step 1	**Developing a plan** Participant sampling: the process of determining, how participants should be selected
Step 2	**Implementing the plan** Participant selection: the process of recruiting, identifying, and including the participants
Step 3	**The outcome of the plan** Participant description: the presentation of the participants included in the study
Step 4	**Post-recruitment assessment** Reflection: the assessment of the quality of the plan and its implementation

Note. Based on "Reconceptualizing Recruitment in Qualitative Research," by I. Bonisteel, R. Shulman, L. A. Newhook, A. Guttmann, S. Smith, and R. Chafe, 2021, *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 20, p. 3 (https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406921104249). Copyright 2021 by SAGE Publications Ltd. Journals. Adapted with permission.

4.4.2 *PARTICIPANT SAMPLING AND SELECTION*

Sampling Strategies: Two general forms of sampling can be distinguished: probability and non-probability sampling (Denscombe, 2021). Probability sampling aims for representativeness of a population and uses designs such as cluster sampling (Dawson, 2009). Non-probability sampling uses purposeful methods including quota sampling or snowball (Dawson, 2009). Qualitative research regularly uses non-probability to support the inductive development of knowledge (Robinson, 2013). As this research is based on social constructionism, it aims to explore the variety of followers' lived experiences, rather than seeking statistical representativeness (Blaikie & Priest, 2017). As sampling strategies should follow the epistemological stance inhabited, non-probability sampling has been chosen for this research (Gobo, 2008).

While non-probability sampling implies that the sample does not represent the basic population in a statistical sense, reasons for the inclusion of participants are still necessary, as non-probability sampling is made intentionally (Campbell et al., 2020), and participants explicitly chosen for who can best contribute to answering the research question (Kelly, 2010). In purposive strategies, criteria for participant inclusion in the sample can be defined before the start of participant selection (termed a top-down approach, a priori sampling, or initial sampling) or during data generation (termed a bottom-up approach or ongoing sampling) (Gentles & Vilches, 2017; Hussy et al., 2013). Top-down approaches can be used when some information about the participants' characteristics is already known (Hussy et al., 2013).

In addition to the time of sampling determination, sample size also has to be defined. While bottom-up approaches often use saturation, even though the approach has been subject to critique, to determine when to stop recruiting participants, top-down approaches set a fixed number of interviews before data collection starts (Braun & Clarke, 2021; Saunders et al., 2018). Sim et al. (2018) argue that top-down approaches with pre-set sample sizes contradict the explorative nature of inductive research and suggest an iterative process for determining the participant set. Braun and Clarke (2021) in their critical review of sampling and the concept of saturation in qualitative research, describe the determination of the number of participants as “a pragmatic exercise – not disconnected from what is acceptable or normative” (p. 211). Numerical guidelines for sample sizes range from three to 60 participants, including recommendations related to research philosophy and study type (Baker & Edwards, 2012; Creswell & Poth, 2016). Some authors suggest lowest limits for publications (Warren, 2001) or highest limits to ensure data generation and analysis quality (Ritchie et al., 2014). It becomes clear that no approach can generally be agreed on. This research adopts a top-down approach with a purposive strategy, as it ensures variability throughout participant selection. The approach taken to determine the final number of interviews is explained in the next section.

Development of the Top-Down Selection Approach: The German service industry has been chosen as the study's context, as its focus on direct customers, either in the B2B or the B2C context, highlights relevant behaviours that can potentially be labelled as FB. In section 1.6.1 (see p. 13 et seq.), the structure of the service industry has been discussed and a focus on consumptive and information-based services has been defined. In addition, different forms of work, namely front-line, and back-office with, and without, formal managerial positions, have been identified. The service industry has been found to be heterogeneous even when excluding improvement services. Due to this heterogeneity, members of each sub-section of the service industry are given a voice and the variety of experiences available to the research can be acknowledged. In so doing, statistical representativeness is explicitly not sought. Rather the sampling strategy seeks maximum variation of lived experiences and a variety of socio-demographic characteristics (Suri, 2011). By pre-determining a sample representing the heterogeneity of the service industry through a combination of characteristics, the influence of availability in the sample is reduced. Based on the context discussed in section 1.6.1 (see p. 13 et seq.), a general sampling strategy was developed in Table 12. Following discussions in the literature, this top-down approach can only serve as a starting point and needs to be revisited throughout the data generation and analysis phase (Sim et al., 2018). Table 12 includes a variety of perspectives in terms of sector, position, and task. For each combination, one interview was conducted. Two interviews were conducted if the participant in the pre-test belonged to this group (see section 4.5.2, page 151).

Table 12

Top-Down Sampling Strategy Table

	Manager		Employee		
	Front line	Back office	Front line	Back office	Sum
Banking & insurance	1	2	1	2	6
Trade	2	1	1	1	5
Transport & Logistics	1	1	1	1	4
Hospitality	1	1	1	1	4
Other services	1	1	2	1	5
Property	1	1	1	1	4
Other economic services	1	1	1	1	4
Information & Communication	1	1	1	1	4
Liberal professions	1	1	1	1	4
Sum	10	10	10	10	40

In addition to clarifying participant eligibility, procedures for contacts must be implemented. Therefore, a PDF was created that contains information about the researcher, the general research topic, the form of the exchange, the general conditions of the interviews (e.g. online, estimated duration), the use of the data, ethical and data privacy policies, and contact information for potential questions. The last page contained a consent form summarizing the information provided and asking for general information including age, work sector, and occupation. The information PDF can be viewed in Appendix C4.

Participant Selection and Participant Engagement: A purposive approach was used to search for potential candidates. Participants were located through several channels. In the first stage 18 participants were identified in my personal network. The second stage included addressing gatekeepers including the participants, friends, former students, colleagues, and current fellow students. A further 16 participants were identified through gatekeepers who were not participants themselves. Through the snowball approach, participants referred an additional four interview partners. The remaining two participants were approached in their workplace directly.

Bonisteel et al. (2021) recommend staying in contact with the participants after data generation, to value their contribution and provide them with findings from the research. Firstly, participants were sent an e-mail about a week after the interview, thanking them for the time invested and the contribution made (Berger et al., 2009). The e-mail also contained their interview transcript. In this first member check, participants were provided with the opportunity to review the transcript in light of the messages they wanted to convey, and were given the opportunity to request changes regarding anonymization or to comment on the conversation. As several participants had voiced their interests in the findings of this study, participants were sent an e-mail in September 2023 containing a link to a video in which the study findings were explained. This video was also used as a second member check, as participants were given the opportunity to respond and state their reflections on the study's outcomes (Iivari, 2018).

4.4.3 *PARTICIPANT DESCRIPTION*

Table 13 gives an overview of the participants. All names were changed to ensure anonymity.

Table 13

Overview on Participants for the Narrative Interviews

Participant	Formal role	Position	Company size	Company focus	Gender	Age span
Trade						
Evan	Employee	Back office	large	B2C	male	40-49
David	Manager	Back office	large	B2C	male	30-39
Caitlyn	Employee	Front line	small	B2C	female	20-29
Holly	Manager	Front line	small	B2C	female	30-39
Tom	Manager	Front line	small	B2C	male	50-59
Transport & logistics						
Carrie	Employee	Back office	small in large	B2B	female	30-39
Henry	Manager	Back office	large	B2C	male	60-69
Rick	Employee	Front line	large	B2C	male	20-29
Nell	Manager	Front line	large	B2C	female	60-69
Hospitality						
Mary	Employee	Back office	medium	B2C	female	30-39
Elise	Manager	Back office	medium in large	B2C	female	40-49
Thomas	Employee	Front line	micro	B2C	male	30-39
Sam	Manager	Front line	medium in large	B2C	male	60-69
Property						
Melinda	Employee	Back office	large	B2C	female	30-39
Jeffrey	Manager	Back office	medium	B2C	male	50-59
Mick	Employee	Front line	medium	B2C	male	20-29
John	Manager	Front line	small in large	B2C	male	40-49
Other services (e. g. hairdressing)						
Liz	Employee	Back office	medium	B2B	female	40-49
Steven	Manager	Back office	small in large	B2B	male	40-49
Amanda	Employee	Front line	small in large	B2C	female	20-29
Kirby	Employee	Front line	micro	B2C	female	20-29
Megan	Manager	Front line	micro	B2C	female	30-39
Information & communication						
Bree	Employee	Back office	medium	B2B	female	50-59
Robert	Manager	Back office	large	B2B	male	60-69
Sarah	Employee	Front line	medium	B2B	female	30-39
Connor	Manager	Front line	medium	B2B	male	30-39
Banking & insurance						
Daisy	Employee	Back office	large	B2C	female	40-49
Isabel	Employee	Back office	large	B2C	female	20-29
Allen	Manager	Back office	large	B2C	male	30-39
Edith	Manager	Back office	large	B2C	female	40-49
Mark	Employee	Front line	medium in large	B2C	male	20-29
Jack	Manager	Front line	medium	B2B	male	50-59
Liberal professions						
Monica	Employee	Back office	large	B2B	female	40-49
Abby	Manager	Back office	medium	B2B	female	30-39
Denny	Employee	Front line	medium	B2B	male	20-29
Matthew	Manager	Front line	micro	B2B	male	30-39
Other economic services						
Cora	Employee	Back office	large	B2B	female	40-49
Bill	Manager	Back office	medium	B2B	male	30-39
Jess	Employee	Front line	micro	B2B	female	40-49
Lilly	Manager	Front line	small	B2B	female	40-49

4.4.4 *REFLECTION ON PARTICIPANT SAMPLING AND SELECTION*

During the participant selection process, I revisited the selection strategy several times. Initially, the top-down approach supported broad variability in the data set and provided a framework for selecting participants. As expected, many potential participants were available in the banking and trade industries from my personal network based on my work experience, but additional offers were declined. Not all the participants' roles could be easily categorized into the identified groups of employees, managers, front-line, and back-office staff. For example, Henry (MBO), a pilot, describes that he mostly does not interact with customers directly except via announcements. On the other hand, his actions as a pilot directly impact customers experience, as he does not sit in an office but provides an on-site service. At the same time, he has a second function in which he plans work roosters for staff. While both functions do not include direct contact with customers, the allocation as 'back office' first seemed inappropriate due to the proximity to the customers. Ultimately, he was allocated as 'manager back office' as he emphasized his lack of customer contact. This example clarifies that contexts, in practice, are more complex than allocations of front-line and back-office positions and employee and management positions. When a clear allocation was not possible (three cases), I gained more insight into the person's everyday work and their perception of their role and used this knowledge as a basis for allocation. Furthermore, the classification as manager or employee only serves as a starting point. As I took an informal role approach, I assume that FBs can be reported regardless of a person's formal role. Therefore, the allocation serves to diversify the perspectives represented in the study and is not an attempt to provide equal participation from different formal groups, but rather acknowledge the issue in selection and consider it within data interpretation.

Regarding the identification of participants, it became apparent that gaining access to organizations without a gatekeeper is often not possible. LinkedIn posts and direct messages to suitable potential participants did not provide the desired outcome. This might be due to the vagueness of the topic, being entitled 'voluntary behaviours at work' and the search for participants from specific industries rather than their individual characteristics.

This was surprising as participant attraction for the research underlying my book chapter was highly successful on LinkedIn. It seems that topics that touch potential employees emotionally are better suited for participant attraction on professional social media. Gatekeepers were the best way to attract participants for this research. Three gatekeepers were especially valuable as they provided access to three additional interview partners each. Gatekeepers also reduced the participation bias, since only participants who are willing to contribute to the study can be asked and other opinions remain unrevealed (Saunders et al., 2016). Two participants who could not easily relate to the concept of voluntariness in the work context were acquired through gatekeepers, who would likely not have volunteered without a personal contact.

In conclusion, I found choosing a top-down approach to participant sampling and several approaches for participant recruitment to be suitable for this research as they led to various interview partners with diverse backgrounds. This variety in sociodemographic characteristics, work experience, position, task, and sub-industry adds to the value and contribution of this study, as it provides a broad view on the experiences in the German service industry.

4.5 DATA GENERATION

4.5.1 *NARRATIVE INTERVIEWS*

Interviews have been used widely in qualitative research as they provide detailed insights into how everyday life is perceived, how situations are understood and interpreted, and how experiences affect people (Atkinson & Silverman, 1997; Mason, 2002). The researcher can explore the meaning of these events, feelings, and thoughts through questions in an interactive conversation (Edwards & Holland, 2013). With interviews being known to participants, for example from job applications, they can easily be made comfortable (Gobo & Cellini, 2011).

Interviews can be distinguished regarding their level of structure. Unstructured interviews refrain from using pre-set questions and at most contain a short guideline of topics the researcher wants to cover (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2017). Unstructured or non-standardized interviews allow the participants to guide the direction of the interview, and they are open regarding the content discussed during the interview (Reissman, 1993). Narrative interviews are a form of non-standardized interviews and were introduced by Schütze (1983). They were initially focused on investigating biographies and the lived experiences of generations. “A narrative can be defined as an organized interpretation of a sequence of events” (Murray, 2015, p. 115). These reports of events often reveal what is important to the participant and information about their self-concept and identity. Hence, the underlying meaning becomes apparent as narratives reveal unconscious aspects (Butina, 2015; Murray, 2015). As narrative interviews are unstructured, they usually contain an introduction, an open question that aims to encourage the interviewee to talk about the topic without further questions. When the interviewee has finished, the interviewer can ask questions to better understand situational contexts or descriptions (Anderson & Kirkpatrick, 2016).

Given the open structure, there are some practical issues to be considered throughout the interviewing process. When interviewer and interviewee are located at a distance, a telephone or online interview can be suitable even though the interview mode can affect the interaction (Saunders et al., 2016). Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, conducting meetings and interviews online has become standard for most people, which means that the virtuality of the interaction is considered less influential than before (Keen et al., 2022; Self, 2021). Individual interviews are regularly recorded after the participants gave their permission. Recording interviews allows researchers to repeatedly examine the interviewees’ answers, including pauses and tone. It also reduces the effect of retrospection of the researcher (Dresing & Pehl, 2015). Recorded interviews are transcribed, to facilitate data analysis and to provide quotes for the findings and discussion section (McMullin, 2023; Parameswaran et al., 2019). Recording and transcription procedures for this study are described in section 4.5.3 (see p. 154 et seq.).

Several bias-problems related to interviews can influence the outcome of the research. Three of these are discussed, as they became apparent in this study: desirability bias, agency bias, and hindsight bias (Tavory, 2020).

The desirability bias describes “the tendency to present oneself in a way that is perceived to be socially acceptable, but not wholly reflective of one’s reality” (Bergen & Labonté, 2020, p. 783). The definition of what is acceptable is influenced by social norms rooted in culture, and characteristics including personality traits (Johnson & Van de Vijver, 2002; Lalwani et al., 2006). This research is conducted in the German cultural context, which limits transferability of the findings in the light of moderatum generalization (see discussion in section 6.3.1, p. 346). Another outcome of the desirability bias describes situations in which the interviewee chooses not to talk about specific elements relevant to answering the research question (Kaushal, 2014). This could lead to an insufficient understanding of the meaning of FB. To address this issue, the interview introduction and previous research processes included reassurance that all answers are permissible, and confidentiality was assured.

Given that this is an ‘interview’, the interviewees might feel pressured to report situations in which they are the centre of the story (Gubrium & Holstein, 2002), which is called agency bias (Tavory, 2020). This verbal behaviour is not unique to the interviewing situation, as human beings convey their perspective of their identity through stories in which they are regularly the protagonists in regular social situations (Murray, 2015; Tavory, 2020). It needs to be acknowledged that the outcome of situations is often influenced by a more complex set of impacts that might be underrepresented in the participants’ stories (Tavory, 2020). However, narrative interviews offer insights into the experiences and situational interpretations of participants that are richer than in other data generation methods, such as problem-centred interviews (Witzel, 2000), as participants are in control of the content and, therefore, the direction the interview takes (Anderson & Kirkpatrick, 2016). Thus, narrative interviews grant the researcher access to lines of thought and connected emotions relevant to the participants.

Hindsight bias refers to the “tendency to overestimate the probability that an event could have been predicted once its outcome is known” (Neal et al., 2022, p. 102). By focusing on the outcome that seems evident from the perspective provided by the time of the interview, other possible options that could have happened are not considered (Tavory, 2020). Hindsight bias is linked to the problem of retrospection, which describes the distortion of memories. Especially feelings might be recalled differently than they were perceived at the moment of occurrence (Bell, 2005). To address hindsight bias, some questions about a hypothetical different outcome of the situation were introduced in the interviews, exploring the reaction of the participants to these optional courses of events.

Even though several biases need to be considered when conducting and analysing interviews, narrative interviews have been used regularly to explore the lived experiences in organizations (e.g. Decker et al., 2020; Geiger & Antonacopoulou, 2009; Langley & Meziani, 2020; Nigar, 2019). Hence, given their acceptability as a method and benefits, this approach offers an appropriate means to data generation.

4.5.2 *PRE-TEST INTERVIEWS*

Before a broader number of potential participants were approached, the data generation instrument of narrative interviews was tested with four participants in a pre-test study (Malmqvist et al., 2019). As narrative interviews only follow a generic structure, it is important to determine if the narrative-generating question is well-phrased and leads to responses that contribute to answering the research questions. Additionally, the framework conditions, such as the time frame of the interview, the information provided, and the applicability of technical support were the focus of the pre-test interviews.

The initial interview structure can be found in Appendices C1 and C2 and was organized as follows: Interviewees were first asked to introduce themselves and their job. They were then presented with a PowerPoint slide that contained a short version of the definition of followership provided in section 2.1.7 (see p. 46). The definition presented to participants is displayed in Figure 24.

Figure 24

Narrative Generating Question in the Pre-Test Interviews

Followership is a role that is adopted by a person in an organizational context.

Followership relates to a person with a formal or informal leadership role.

Followership contains voluntary behaviours.

These behaviours support either the goals of the leader or of the organization.

Interviewees were then asked to think of a situation in which they had expressed followership (for the employee version) or in which somebody had expressed followership towards them (for the manager version) and to describe the situation, being as detailed as possible. Then, the question was phrased inversely to explore both exhibited and observed behaviours. The situations were then reviewed with the interviewees in relation to the definition of followership.

To test the data collection generation process, four interviews were conducted as pre-test interviews in the order presented in Table 14. All names were changed to ensure anonymity. To clarify the characteristics of the participants in the quotations, and thus increase comprehensibility, the alias names are supplemented by an abbreviation. Here, E stands for employee, M for manager, FL for front line, and BO for back office. As an example, Daisy (EBO) can be identified as an employee in a back-office position.

Table 14

Participant List for Pre-Test Interviews

Participant	Formal role	Sector	Position	Company size	Age span
Daisy	Employee	Banking and insurance	Back office	medium	40-49
Allen	Manager	Banking and insurance	Back office	medium	30-39
Holly	Manager	Retail	Front line	small	30-39
Amanda	Employee	Other services	Front line	large	20-29

The first interviewee, Daisy (EBO), stated that a repetition of some of the information provided in the invitation would be helpful at the beginning of the interview. She had read the information but would have liked to be reminded that there are no right or wrong answers. In future interviews, therefore, it was emphasized that the research aims to explore the lived experiences of everyday work life and participants were encouraged to take some time and think about the answer. Daisy (EBO) initially had some difficulties describing situations that fit the definition and stated that the task was “easy and hard simultaneously”. She would have liked to be provided with some examples but then added that this would have led to much narrower answers and that the open format of the interview encouraged her to reflect more.

In the second interview, Allen (MBO) first had some issues providing examples for followership and stated that he sees more than two roles, making it hard for him to focus on the follower role. He also said that he “squeezed [his answers] into the frame [the researcher] provided” and “adapted the answers according to the terminology” used in the research. Due to the difficulty of providing an answer, the conversation became very philosophical and lasted nearly two hours. While lots of interesting questions regarding followership were raised and discussed, the focus was not consistently on FB. As Allen (MBO) was mainly confused by the information about formal and informal leader roles, these were eliminated for the following test interview.

The third test interview was conducted with Holly (MFL). She liked the digital conduct of the interview and positively mentioned that the definition was shared on the screen during the whole discussion. She found answering the questions demanding but understood that open questions provide broader responses. She stated that she always tried to refer to the term ‘leadership’, which she calls the “classic term” when thinking about followership.

As discussed in section 2.1.3 (see p. 29 et seq.), the term ‘follower’ is linked to negative stereotypes. The use of the term ‘followership’ also confused the first three participants. Therefore, a different approach was successfully tested with Amanda (EFL), the fourth test interview participant. The terms ‘follower’ and ‘followership’ were not used in the conversation. However, she was asked to report about a work-related situation in which she had expressed voluntary behaviour that supported the goals of another person or the organization. The slide presented for narrative generation changed accordingly. The adapted version (see Figure 25) was used in this and all following interviews. Separate slides were designed for formal managers and formal employees, addressing participants either with the German formal 'Sie' or informal 'Du'. The overview of slides can be found in Appendix C3.

Figure 25

Narrative Generating Question after the Pre-Test Interviews

Please report about a work-related situation, in which you expressed voluntary behaviours that supported either the goals of another person or the goals of the organization.

In summary, the following changes were made: The introduction was adjusted, and a sentence clarifying that the study goal is to investigate the lived experiences was added. It also contained reassurance that no right or wrong answers are possible and that questions the researcher might ask to seek clarification are non-judgmental. The term 'followership' was erased from the narrative generating question and a more everyday language was used. A short description of the research and the term 'followership' was added at the end of the conversation to fully inform participants about the aim of the research they took part in and allow them to add further comments with the knowledge of the study's goal. The information provided before the interviews did not need to be changed, as all pre-test participants felt well informed and did not request additional information or clarification.

While the test interviews were conducted in a slightly different form than the following data generation, they still provided valuable information and contained relevant material regarding the research question. They were, therefore, included in the analysis.

4.5.3 *CONDUCTING AND TRANSCRIBING THE INTERVIEWS*

For this research, 40 narrative interviews were conducted. Thirty-eight interviews were conducted via MS Teams, and two interviews were conducted in person at the request of the interviewees. On average, the interview duration was 38 minutes. The interviews lasted between 14 and 117 minutes. The evident imbalance in interview duration is addressed in the reflection on data generation (see section 4.5.4, p. 157 et seq.). The pre-test phase took place between September 6th, 2022, and October 18th, 2022; the data generation phase started on October 19th, 2022, and the last interview was held on April 14th, 2023.

With the permission of the participants provided in the consent form, the interviews were recorded – with Microsoft Teams for the interviews conducted digitally and with an iPhone for the two interviews conducted in person. The interviews were then saved as audio files. The files were labelled in an anonymous form (e.g. 4MB.mp3, meaning 4 = Hospitality, M = Manager, B = Back office).

While transcription procedures are often not presented in detail, the quality of the outcome, the transcript, lays the foundation for data analysis and, therefore, impacts the research quality and should be outlined, including decisions that were made (da Silva Nascimento & Steinbruch, 2019). Transcription serves two purposes. First, there is the pragmatic task of generating a written document that can be used for analysis (Lapadat, 2000). Furthermore, transcription is the first step of the analysis phase, as readability and exact representation of the conversation need to be balanced (Bailey, 2008; Oliver et al., 2005). While the former can be conducted by any person qualified, the latter should always be conducted by the researcher, as it contains the first aspects of interpretation (Bailey, 2008). Transcription for this study was conducted according to the basic guidelines provided by Dresing and Pehl (2015), supported by a transcription service provider. The transcription rules are displayed in Appendix C5. A transcription service was used to avoid long gaps between the interview and the opportunity for interviewees to re-read their transcript, helping to maintain participant engagement (Bonisteel et al., 2021). TranskriptionsSpezialist, the transcription service provider chosen, operates according to the General Data Protection Regulation (Bundesministerium der Justiz, 2016), uses encrypted data connections with safety certificates to protect the data, and regularly trains employees on data security issues (Transkriptionsspezialist, 2022). The service provider is, therefore, trustworthy regarding its ethical handling of data. After receiving the transcripts back from the service provider, I reread them while listening to the original recording, checked for typing errors, misunderstandings, and proper anonymization. Furthermore, decisions regarding the balance between readability and exact representation of the conversation were reviewed in this step (Bailey, 2008). By doing so, quality was ensured and the process of familiarization with the data was initiated (Braun & Clarke, 2022; Davidson, 2009). A sample transcript can be found in Appendix C6.

The transcripts were then sent to the interviewees for a first member check with a consent form to clarify that the provided transcript contained the actual conversation and may be used as presented (Birt et al., 2016). The consent form and the accompanying e-mail are displayed in Appendix C7. In this study, member checking is not seen as a mere validation of the transcript but as a possibility to involve participants in the interpretation process and as a means to add to the ethical conduct of the study by providing ownership of the data to interviewees (Birt et al., 2016). Member checking, therefore, addresses participant involvement as Bonisteel et al. (2021) suggest. As transcripts state the basis for further interpretation, the aim was to clarify if participants evaluate the transcript as a suitable representation of the conversation, including the meaning and understanding they wanted to convey (Iivari, 2018). Hagens et al. (2009) discuss the advantages and drawbacks of member checking, which lets participants review the transcripts. From an ethical perspective, the opportunity to make corrections or withdraw data, and, therefore, be in charge of the data, is essential. On the other hand, interviewees might alter transcripts to an extent that does not reflect the original conversation, and there is a risk that participants might not consent as they see the interview process as finished. Some participants might also doubt their contribution as transcripts reveal spoken language, including grammar errors, aborted sentences, and other errors (Hagens et al., 2009; Mero-Jaffe, 2011). To balance the positive and negative aspects of transcript reviews, participants were first thanked for their valuable contribution to the success of the research. They were then asked to read the transcript and return the signed consent form if they saw no need for changes. They were specifically asked to review anonymity and were offered the possibility to contact me via e-mail or phone. One participant stated that they did not want to reread the transcript. All other participants, but two returned the consent form. The two participants whose consent forms were missing were twice reminded. Their consent was assumed as they had the chance to respond for several weeks. Some participants requested minor changes regarding anonymity and provided alternatives for the wording. Two participants asked that specific sentences should not be cited directly. One participant re-wrote the interview in paraphrases to ensure that their verbalization was understood correctly. In general, only minor changes were made, and the authenticity of the conversations could be preserved. At the same time, participants were given the opportunity to review the transcript, which provided the participants with ownership of their data.

4.5.4 *REFLECTION ON THE DATA GENERATION PROCESS*

Generally, interview quality is highly influenced by the interviewing skills of the researcher. I have gained extensive knowledge and experience through my work as a lecturer for qualitative research methods and I have conducted several qualitative studies. My previous research projects were mainly based on semi-structured interviews, which made narrative interviews a new challenge. The pre-test interview phase was particularly beneficial as it allowed me to transition from semi-structured to narrative interviewing.

As described in section 4.5.1 (see p. 149), desirability bias is inherent to interviews. It became apparent, as several participants voiced the need for reassurance by asking if what they reported was what I wanted to hear. In these situations, I reassured participants that there is no right or wrong answer but that the research aims to learn about individual experiences and perceptions. Agency bias could also be detected, as stories in which participants had expressed voluntary behaviours were more accessible than those in which others had expressed such behaviour. To address this issue, I encouraged participants to take time to think about situations in which they had observed such behaviour in others. Hindsight bias was addressed, as I asked detailed and open questions about the situation. For example, I asked participants to recall their thoughts and feelings before showing the behaviour and if there was a possibility to act differently. To address this bias, my qualification as a business coach helped to ask thought-provoking questions. Participants repeatedly provided feedback after the interview, stating they had thought about a topic they usually would not reflect on, which shows that I accomplished my goal to gain a deeper understanding of the underlying, partly unconscious meanings for practitioners, as my questions provoked reflection.

Furthermore, I noticed that most participants reported situations that occurred during the last 12 to 18 months. Therefore, it seems that recent experiences are prevalent in the answers provided by the interviewees, meaning that they conveyed their current understanding of FB rather than an understanding they might have had in the past. Reports from longer ago were mostly linked to emotionally engaging situations. For example, Nell (MFL) contributed a story that happened more than two decades ago. Interestingly, this is a situation in which she was highly emotionally invested and perceived high risk. She highlighted that this incident had a lasting effect on her understanding of the leader and follower role. Overall, it seems that the findings and conclusions I can derive from this research are rooted in the present work situation, meaning they are influenced by current organizational culture, and to some extent influenced by former experiences.

It is notable that interview duration varied and there is a remarkable difference between the shortest and the longest interview. The reason for this discrepancy is that narrative interviews are guided by the participants. Allen (MBO) and Nell (MFL) both provided interviews lasting 116 minutes. Allen’s (MBO) interview took place without time restrictions, which allowed thoughts to flourish, and he presented himself as a person who enjoys philosophical discussions. Nell’s (MFL) interview lasted longer than average, as she asked for a supplement interview after having additional ideas while reading her transcript. Amanda (EFL), who provided the shortest interview, is a young employee with less than three years of work experience. While her interview during the pre-test phase showed that the altered narrative-generating question was suitable, she had limited experience and could, therefore, make her statements in a shorter time. Furthermore, I found that the duration of an interview does not allow a conclusion regarding its quality. For instance, the interview with Mark (EFL) that was translated as an example (see Appendix C6) is 24 minutes long and thereby below the average of 38 minutes. Mark (EFL) gave reflected answers and provided four detailed storylines with rich insights into his understanding of FB. In contrast, Jack (MFL), whose interview lasted 61 minutes, provided less insight into his understanding of FB. He mainly reported his perspective on himself as a leader but had difficulties changing perspective. Therefore, I evaluate the differences in interview durations as notable but not a characteristic to judge the quality of the participant's contribution.

4.6 DATA ANALYSIS

4.6.1 *TEMPLATE ANALYSIS*

The approach chosen to data analysis in qualitative research is determined by the research question(s) from within the several methods that exist, such as framework analysis (Srivastava & Thomson, 2009), grounded theory analysis (Glaser, 1992), thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006), or content analysis (Shannon & Hsieh, 2005).

Thematic vs. content analysis: Thematic analysis and content analysis are the two methods commonly used for data analysis in qualitative research in the business context (Humble & Mozelius, 2022). While commonalities between the two approaches, such as the use of coding strategies, can be found, and researchers such as Schreier (2012) argue that the two terms are synonyms, some differences must be considered (Humble & Mozelius, 2022). Braun and Clarke (2020) compare thematic analysis and content analysis with a family. In this analogy, the two analysis approaches are siblings, each with a family of their own. The children of these siblings are different approaches to thematic or content analysis. While both approaches can be used to analyse qualitative data, thematic analysis is more applicable for analysing narrative stories in a constructionist philosophy, as it includes latent aspects rather than solely focusing on the manifest descriptions (Vaismoradi et al., 2013). As the purpose of this research is to explore practitioners' lived experiences and meanings of FB, latent and manifest findings are expected, making thematic analysis an appropriate approach to analysis in regards of the research question. It will therefore be applied in this research.

Choices in thematic analysis: Thematic analysis needs to be seen as a method with several choices, as it is not a methodology with a straightforward process attached (Braun & Clarke, 2022). These choices can be made on a philosophical and analytical basis.

In relation to the philosophy, Braun and Clarke (2022) build on Kidder and Fine (1987) and discuss Big Q and small q approaches. Big Q is rooted in an interpretivist philosophy and focuses on the underlying meaning in the data, using qualitative research methods in data collection and analysis. Small q research uses qualitative methods but is not necessarily rooted in a purely interpretivist worldview. They also introduced medium Q research, which is rooted in an interpretivist worldview but takes a more structured approach to analysing the data. Medium Q also allows deductive and inductive derivation of themes, while Big Q favours a purely inductive approach (Braun & Clarke, 2019, 2020, 2022). While Braun and Clarke (2006, 2022) offer a Big Q approach with reflexive thematic analysis, they link small q research to the deductive approach of coding reliability thematic analysis and medium Q research to codebook thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2019). Examples of coding reliability can be found in Boyatzis' (1998) work, codebook thematic analysis can be found in template analysis (King, 2012) and framework analysis (Goldsmith, 2021). The philosophical assumption of social constructionism sees realities as being constructed by social processes between the individuals involved in a specific context. Hence, Big Q or medium Q methods would be appropriate. The decision is made and justified through the analytical choices in the following paragraphs.

To assist in deciding between Big Q or medium Q methods, Terry et al.'s (2017) comments on the two analytical choices are instructive: inductive or deductive and semantic or latent. They stress that both choices are not exclusive, but “a primary mode of engagement” (p. 22) needs to be chosen. While inductive coding derives codes and subsequently themes from the data, deductive coding commences with code sets based on theory. It, therefore, provides a framework for coding that is less led by the data and more influenced by existing theory. Semantic codes contain a summary of the data on a descriptive level, while latent codes interpret the underlying meaning.

Inductive or deductive? The aim of this research includes providing suggestions for future research based on the juxtaposition of current research and the findings of this research. The findings from this analysis are compared with the results from the SLR. This starting point can lead to arguments for either an inductive or a deductive coding approach. For juxtaposition, a congruent set of themes would make the process more straightforward. At the same time, a purely deductive approach would lead to ignoring themes in the data that have not already been encountered in the SLR. To make use of the breadth of data generated, this research uses inductive coding as a primary approach but equally acknowledges that researchers are never free of their knowledge during data analysis (Terry et al., 2017). Deductive elements are, therefore, also included during the formation of themes.

Latent or semantic? As the research question aims to investigate the meaning of FB for practitioners, relevant content can be found on a semantic and a latent level. For example, observable behaviours reported in the stories told during the narrative interviews are descriptive and, therefore, semantic. On the other hand, descriptions of situations need more interpretation and include latent aspects. As the findings of the analysis provide the basis for the juxtaposition with the results of the SLR, the semantic level of analysis is a relevant focus of the analysis. However, as role expectations are often unconscious, the meaning of FB cannot be analysed solely on a semantic level and the emergence of latent themes is expected. While questions during the interviews sought to be thought-provoking and bring some of meanings to the surface, participants do not regularly phrase their answers in a way that negates the need for interpretation. Therefore, the interview can only uncover part of the meaning for practitioners, making interpretational work in the analysis necessary.

The analysis of the narrative interviews is, therefore, conducted primarily through an inductive approach, containing manifest and latent aspects. Therefore, both the need for comparability with the results from the SLR and the richness of the data are acknowledged. Data analysis is conducted in the medium Q spectrum of thematic analysis, as flexibility in the logic of reasoning and exploring both, semantic and latent content ensure that the richness of the data can be considered.

Template analysis: Even though the framework of reflexive thematic analysis, presented by Braun and Clarke (2006, 2022), has been regularly cited and is the closest to a 'standard of qualitative thematic analysis' (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017), Braun and Clark themselves argue that reflexive thematic analysis is only one of several possible ways to approach thematic analysis. Picking up the family analogy, reflexive thematic analysis is one of the children of thematic analysis, located in the Big Q section. Template analysis is another method that is set in the medium Q section on the continuum.

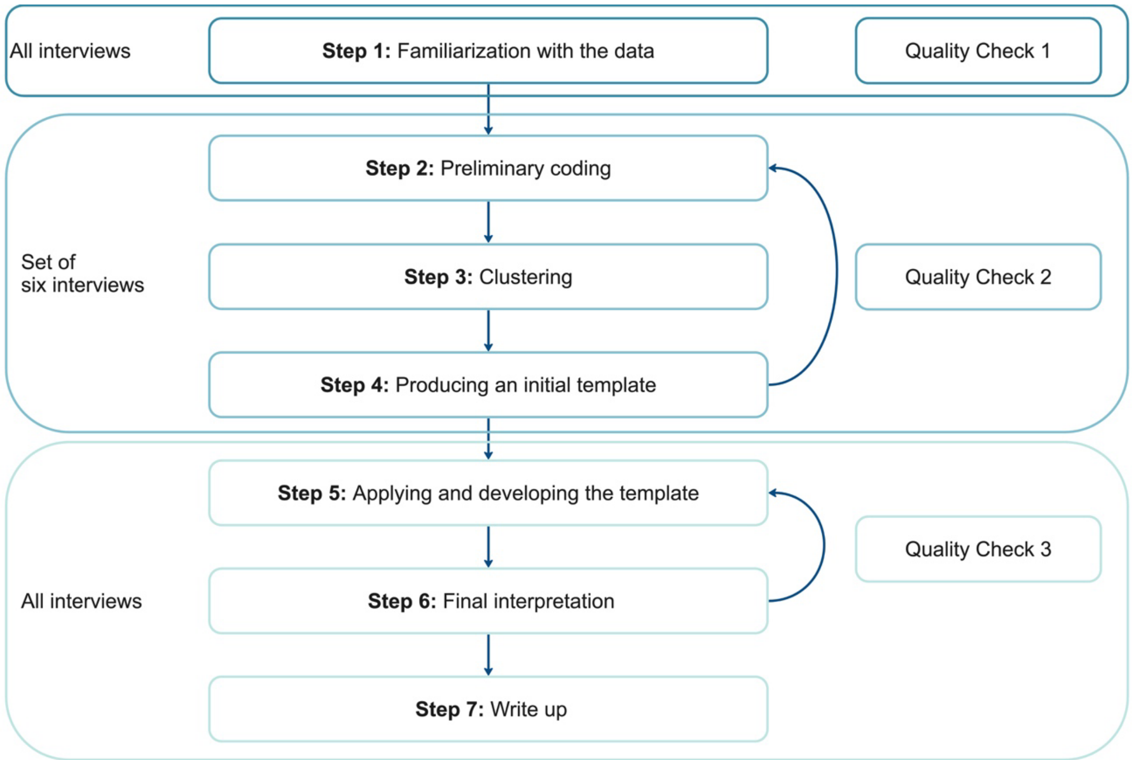
Brooks et al. (2015) explain three main differences between template analysis and reflexive thematic analysis. First, there is a difference in the process outlined as a methodological basis. Reflexive thematic analysis places the creation of themes at the end of the process. In contrast, template analysis encourages researchers to create themes early on and redefine them in the process. Second, template analysis includes a phase of preliminary coding, which only includes a small portion of the data, while reflexive thematic analysis includes the entire data set throughout the whole coding process. This also indicates that reflexive thematic analysis is better suited for smaller data sets, while template analysis can be applied to larger data sets (King & Brooks, 2017). Third, there is a difference in the depth of the theme structure. While reflexive thematic analysis is often, but not necessarily, limited to up to three theme levels, which are then described in detail in the findings, template analysis aims to represent the richness of the data in the theme structure and often contains more than four levels.

Brooks et al. (2015) and King and Brooks (2017) postulate a structure for template analysis consisting of seven steps. While these steps are presented in Figure 26, King (2012) emphasizes that researchers need to adapt the process according to the needs of their specific research questions, which is also the most highlighted advantage of this analysis method.

A potential downside of the implementation of template analysis is its focus on cross-case analysis rather than in-case analysis (King & Brooks, 2017). Especially in studies with larger participant numbers this generates a tendency to focus on cross-case rather than in-case analysis (King et al., 2019). As the empirical study aims to explore the understanding and sense-making of practitioners, it becomes clear that the research question does not aim at single cases but rather at the aggregated view of understanding the concept in the industry, as it is socially constructed in a specific context, as crafted through the interpretation of the researcher. At the same time, themes might be found throughout an interview, and connections between the codes might be missed by not including in-case analysis. King and Brooks (2017) suggest writing reflections on each interview as case summaries. These case summaries are closer to postscripts, which are helpful in including data that was non-verbal and perceived by the interviewer but does not resolve the issue of missing in-case analysis. King et al. (2013) included visual data in the form of Pictor charts participants created during the interview. In this study, creating a visual was difficult as it would have extended the interview duration significantly and might have led to fewer potential participants willing to take part in the research. A different approach was chosen, and participants' narratives were treated as in-case meaning units, referred to as 'storylines'. Storylines were defined as reports on specific situations, including their time-horizon (before, during, and after the behaviour), its social interactions, and the context provided (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). This means that stories could be fragmented, as interviewees do not always report their experiences chronologically (Ollerenshaw & Creswell, 2002), and some storylines consist of several coded segments. The interview transcripts were screened for these storylines, to keep the interdependences between the themes, which are mainly cross-case based, in mind. A total of 183 storylines were included in the analysis.

Figure 26

Data Analysis Process



Note. Based on "Template Analysis for Business and Management Students," by N. King, and J. Brooks, 2017, Sage p. 26. Copyright 2017 by SAGE Publications Ltd. Journals. Adapted with permission.

4.6.2 *CONDUCTING THE ANALYSIS*

In step 1, the researcher should become familiar with the data. King and Brooks (2017) see transcribing as a first opportunity to familiarize oneself with the data. The interviews were transcribed by a transcription service (see section 4.5.3, p. 154 et seq.). Before sending the transcripts to the participants for a member check, I re-read them while listening to the audio recording. The first step of familiarization, therefore, took place during the interviews themselves and re-reading them after transcription. By doing so, the quality of the written data was ensured, which also marks the first quality check.

During steps 2 to 4, an initial template is produced through preliminary coding and clustering. In larger studies, it is common to start with a smaller subset of data (Brooks et al., 2015). As the average number of interviews conducted in qualitative studies on PhD level is 31, this research can be evaluated as a larger study (Mason, 2010). Six of the 40 interviews were chosen for preliminary coding and initial template creation, taking the suggestion by Brooks et al. (2015) to use a variety of data into account. To cover that variety, the following interviews were included:

1. Mark: Banking & Insurance, employee front line, early phase of interviews
2. Denny: Liberal professions, employee front line, middle phase of interviews
3. Melinda: Property, employee back office, late phase of interviews
4. Megan: Other services, manager front line, early phase of interviews
5. Elise: Hospitality, manager back office, middle phase of interviews
6. Lilly: Other economic services, manager front line, late phase of interviews)

Therefore, interviews with employees and managers from different sub-sectors in front-line and back-office positions and from different phases of data collection were considered.

In step 2, preliminary coding is conducted. "In template analysis, it is permissible (though not obligatory) to start with some *a priori* themes, identified in advance as likely to be helpful and relevant to the analysis." (Brooks et al., 2015, p. 203). These deductive, a priori themes are explicitly subject to discussion and potential changes (Brooks et al., 2015; King, 2012). A small set of basic themes derived from the SLR were used, acknowledging that this is only an initial set of potential themes. These themes were: behaviours, antecedents, outcomes, evaluation, voluntariness, and description of one's job.

In step 3, preliminary codes are clustered and put together in an initial template. King (2012) states that researchers should avoid themes that overlap to a large extent to strengthen comprehensibility in presenting the findings. Thus, they suggest using integrative themes (Brooks et al., 2015; King, 2012), defined as those themes permeating several other themes or allocatable to several themes (King et al., 2019). Integrative themes were marked with (I). Additionally, latent, and manifest themes were labelled with (L) and (M) respectively.

These themes differ, as integrative and latent themes require more interpretation from the researcher, as they convey the meanings and functions of FB not explicitly stated by the participants, whilst manifest themes are often discussed explicitly and, therefore, require less interpretation. Appendix D1 shows the template and a sample coding in the early stage of template development.

The quality check in this step contained three aspects: (a) re-coding the interviews with the initial template, (b) discussing the themes with an academic critical friend, (c) presenting and discussing the themes at a conference. For (a), the initial template was applied to blank versions of the six interviews used in steps 1 to 3. Thus, it was ensured that the initial template represented all content relevant to answering the research question. As the production of an initial template is an iterative process, steps 2 to 4 were repeated eight times until the quality check demonstrated the initial template to be satisfactory. In (b), the initial template was explained to a critical academic friend, who provided feedback on the consistency and potential overlaps. During the analysis phase, the Global Followership Conference took place in Norfolk, Virginia, USA. The initial results were presented (Kugler, 2023) and valuable feedback from a community of researchers knowledgeable in the research field was provided. The initial template after quality check 1 and its application to the sample transcript is displayed in Appendix D2.

In step 5, all interviews were included in the coding process using the initial template. Some sub-themes were added, but no themes were merged or shifted during this phase. The quality in this step was ensured by keeping an audit trail, which means that the development process of the final template has been documented by saving different versions of the template (King & Brooks, 2017). At the same time, changes in the themes can be tracked in MAXQDA, as the system logs all changes automatically.

In step 6, the final analysis of the themes, the coded sections allocated to themes were reviewed and partly re-organized. The creative coding tool in MAXQDA was used to try different allocations of codes and to determine their connections. Table 15 displays the final template.

Table 15

Final Template

1. Description of follower behaviour (M) 1.1 Staying with the organization 1.2 Task execution 1.2.1 Task excellence 1.2.1.1 Provision of excellent customer service 1.2.1.2 Internal customers & subsequent process 1.2.2 Improvement 1.2.2.1 Gain knowledge 1.2.2.2 Voice ideas 1.2.2.3 Promote ideas 1.3 Support 1.3.1 Explore support options 1.3.2 Support task completion 1.3.2.1 Share information 1.3.2.2 Help with tasks 1.3.2.3 Substitute 1.3.2.4 Take on new tasks 1.3.3 Protect 1.3.3.1 Solve errors 1.3.3.2 Speak up 1.3.4 Individual advancement 1.4 Additional roles 1.4.1 Informal leadership 1.4.2 Provide training 1.4.2.1 Apprentices 1.4.2.2 Employees 1.4.3 Represent 1.4.3.1 Internal 1.4.3.2 External 1.4.4 Volunteer work	1.5 Social interaction 1.5.1 Consideration 1.5.2 Conflict solving 1.5.3 Private exchange 1.6 Differentiation of follower behaviour (M) 1.6.1 Relation to formal job (task) 1.6.2 Verbal communication vs. action 1.6.3 Time aspects of follower behaviour 1.6.3.1 During or outside working hours 1.6.3.2 Singular vs. repeated vs. enduring behaviour **2. Meaning (L)** 2.1 The informality of follower behaviour 2.1.1 The provider of follower behaviour 2.1.1.1 The employee as follower 2.1.1.2 The manager as follower 2.1.2 The recipient of follower behaviour 2.1.2.1 Individuals 2.1.2.1.1 Formal manager 2.1.2.1.2 Colleague 2.1.2.1.3 Employee 2.1.2.2 Groups 2.1.2.2.1 Team 2.1.2.2.2 Customers 2.1.2.2.3 Employees 2.1.2.3 Organization 2.1.2.4 Immaterial concepts 2.1.2.4.1 Goal 2.1.2.4.2 Purpose	2.2 Interpretation of voluntariness (L) 2.2.1 Criteria for voluntariness 2.2.1.1 Without instruction 2.2.1.1.1 Perceived freedom 2.2.1.1.2 Intrinsic motivation 2.2.1.2 Positive intention 2.2.1.3 Individual effort 2.2.1.3.1 High task involvement 2.2.1.3.2 Time-bound efforts 2.2.1.3.3 Beyond expectations 2.2.1.4 Risk taking 2.2.1.4.1 Level of risk 2.2.1.4.2 Form of risk 2.2.1.4.3 Risk handling 2.2.2 Level of voluntariness 2.3. Expectations (L, I) 2.3.1 Organizational expectations 2.3.1.1 Formal structure 2.3.1.2 Representation by manager 2.3.2 Relational expectations 2.3.2.1 Reciprocity 2.3.2.2 Organizational culture 2.3.3 Individual expectations 2.3.3.1 Self-image 2.3.3.2 Ideal self 2.3.4 Volatility of expectations

2.4. Contexts (L)	**3. Function (L)**	**4. The follower behaviour process (M)**
2.4.1 Organizational context		
2.4.1.1 Org. characteristics	3.1 Pertinence of organizational success	4.1 Potentiality
2.4.1.2 Representative	3.1.1 Economic level	4.1.1 Organizational context
2.4.1.3 Industry	3.1.1.1 Generate revenue	4.1.2 Individual context
2.4.1.4 Structure	3.1.1.2 Economic decision making	4.1.3 Relational context
2.4.1.5 Strategy	3.1.1.3 Efficiency	
2.4.1.6 Role understanding	3.1.2 Customer level	4.2 Opportunity
2.4.2 Relational context	3.1.2.1 Customer awareness	4.2.1 Event
2.4.2.1 Affection	3.1.2.2 Customer acquisition	4.2.2 Perception
2.4.2.2 Trust	3.1.2.3 Customer experience	4.2.3 Knowledge
2.4.2.3 Shared values	3.1.2.4 Customer satisfaction	4.2.4 Verbal communication
2.4.2.4 Reciprocity	3.1.2.5 Customer retention	
2.4.2.5 Intensity of social exchange	3.1.3 Employee level	4.3 Follower behaviour
2.4.2.6 Identification	3.1.3.1 Candidate awareness	4.3.1 Exhibiting
2.4.3 Individual context	3.1.3.2 Retention	4.3.2 Withholding
2.4.3.1 Personality		
2.4.3.2 Attitudes	3.2 Source of effects for individuals involves	4.3 Evaluation and Response
2.4.3.3 Self-concept	3.2.1 Behaviour provider	4.3.1 Awareness
2.4.3.4 Competencies & knowledge	3.1.2.1 Feelings	4.3.2 Evaluation (I)
2.4.3.5 Working style	3.1.2.2 Job versatility	4.3.2.1 Attributed motivation
2.4.3.5.1 Independence	3.1.2.3 Positive work environment	4.3.2.2 Benefits
2.4.3.5.2 Use skills & knowledge	3.1.2.4 Career advancement	4.3.2.3 Effort
2.4.3.5.3 Prioritising	3.1.2.5 Self-affirmation	4.3.2.4 Alternative
2.4.3.5.4 Creativity	3.1.2.6 Self-presentation	4.3.3 Reaction
2.4.3.5.5 Prioritising	3.2.2 Behaviour receiver	
2.4.3.5.6 Flexibility	3.2.2.1 Feelings	4.4 Effects
2.4.3.6 Values and purpose	3.2.2.2 Reduction of efforts	4.4.1 Organizational effects
	3.2.2.3 Information gain	4.4.2 Individual effects
	3.2.2.4 Growing opportunity	4.4.3 Relational effects
	3.3. Retaining or enhancing reciprocity	4.5. Change in potential
		4.5.1 Change in organizational potential
		4.5.2 Change in individual potential
		4.5.3 Change in relational potential

4.6.3 *REFLECTION ON THE DATA ANALYSIS PROCESS*

I experienced the data analysis process as an exciting but challenging phase of the research project. I found challenges in implementing a new analysis method and the vast amount of data that needed to be reviewed. As my experience as a researcher is mainly based on content analysis, the shift to template analysis led to a less structured approach than I was used to. Furthermore, the openness of the research question led to a large number of themes. Consolidating these themes was a challenge that required several iterative phases. Through these iterative phases, exploring the manifest themes was easy for me, as this approach is close to content analysis. Identifying the integrative themes and interpreting the lateral themes in depth was more challenging. Again, my qualification as a business coach helped me, and I used strategies I learned during the training, such as a change of perspectives, to help me understand the meaning conveyed in the interviews in more detail and fully inhabit the social constructionist worldview. In addition, discussing the template with academic friends at different stages of its development helped, as it made me verbalize my interpretations, contributing to their advancement.

Furthermore, it was noticeable that all but two participants could relate to the topic of FB. I assume that most participants who agreed to an interview were interested in the research topic. Therefore, people who might consider themselves ‘followers’ or can relate to the concept of followership were potentially more likely to participate in the study. Subsequently, their experiences have been voiced more than those of practitioners who see fewer voluntary behaviours in their everyday working lives. As qualitative research does not aim for statistical representativeness, I do not see this as an issue that needs to be addressed but rather an observation that needs to be kept in mind when informing the need for additional research.

By taking an approach of social construction, the researcher’ influence on the interpretation is acknowledged. In this analysis, my work experience in the service industry helped me understand the situations participants reported. My influence on data analysis becomes evident in the template developed. Template analysis offers the opportunity to illustrate complexity. Several iterative steps were necessary to develop the final template. While the assignment of terms to the behaviours reported includes little interpretation, the attributed meanings and functions of FB identified are based on my experiences, values, and knowledge. It would be interesting to explore if other researchers would uncover additional meanings. Furthermore, the findings include potential explanatory approaches for the presence, or absence, of aspects. For example, sentences that start with “interestingly” imply that I found this aspect thought-provoking based on my personal expectations, as a practitioner and researcher.

4.7 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The University of Gloucestershire granted initial ethical approval for this research through the Project Approval Form on February 19th, 2020. The steps taken to ensure ethical conduct throughout this research are discussed in this section.

King et al. (2019) suggest nine ethical considerations for qualitative studies that include interviews as a data generation method. These considerations and the guidelines provided by UoG form the basis for the discussion of ethical considerations for this study.

1. Informed consent: To ensure informed consent, participants were provided with a written invitation to a dialogue, followed by a consent form (see Appendix C4). The invitation included information about the researcher, the study’s topic, information about the nature of answers sought, organizational details (e.g. estimated duration, digital conduction), anonymization, storage and deletion of data, and ethical guidelines. Potential participants were also provided with a telephone number and an e-mail address for questions. The informed consent form explicitly states that participating in the research was entirely voluntary, that the participant is not obliged to answer any questions and that the conversation can be ended at any time. According to the take-it-home principle, participants were sent the consent form at least a week before the interview, which gave them enough time to make a conscious decision (Nusbaum et al., 2017).

2. Confidentiality: “Through qualitative research methods ... researchers have the privilege of viewing our study participants’ lives and experiences in great detail” (Kaiser,

2009, p. 1639). This greater detail includes the risk that third parties can identify the participants. Several measures were taken in the presentation of the findings to protect the confidentiality of the participants. First, the information provided to the reader is limited. All names were changed to an alias, the age of the participants was consolidated into age groups, and only some information about the company the person works at was provided. Second, participants were provided with the interview transcript after transcription and were explicitly supplied with the opportunity to request further anonymization. Five participants made use of that offer, and one also requested to be sent all direct quotes before they were used in the thesis. All anonymization requests were implemented. As only one transcript can be found in the appendix, all other participants could only be identified by their direct quotes. Mark, the participant whose transcript was used to explain the research process in detail, agreed that his interview would be used for this purpose. Confidentiality is also ensured by securely storing the data (University of Gloucestershire, 2022). The interviews were recorded with Microsoft Teams (virtual interviews) or an iPhone (in-person interviews). They were then downloaded, deleted from the Microsoft webspace, and stored on two password-protected USB flash drives.

3. Right to withdraw: In the declaration of consent, participants were informed that they could end the conversation at any time. This was also repeated in each interview before the recording was started.

4. Assessing risk of harm: In this study, the “potential harm that could arise from the research to the participant or others (including themself)” (King et al., 2019, p. 34) was limited. As no vulnerable groups (e.g. children) were part of the research (Surmiak, 2018; University of Gloucestershire, 2022), it can be assumed that the participants could understand the potential effects their contribution to the research could have on them. While anonymity was highly valued in the research process, a slight risk of being identified remained. Due to the power gap between managers and employees, the latter could be identified as the more vulnerable group. To avoid managers knowing about their employees’

participation in the study, participants who are employees were approached by gatekeepers who are not their managers, whenever possible.

As data were collected during the late phase of the COVID-19 pandemic, physical safety of both researcher and participants was ensured by socially distant interviewing practices (Roberts et al., 2021). The two interviews conducted in person were with participants personally known to the researcher. Regarding psychological risk, the participants were asked to recall situations in the workplace. While unpleasant memories could be awakened, the psychological risk of this study can be evaluated as minimal.

5. Deception: Participants should be given information about the study before consenting to take part. In this study, the research was described in a general way, using the term ‘followership’. Therefore, the content of the study was explained without misleading elements.

6. Debriefing: Participants should be aware of the use of their data after the interview has ended. The last phase of the interview included an in-depth explanation of the investigated topic. The participants were encouraged to voice any additional thoughts they might have after being informed about the study context and having discussed the situations. Additionally, the member check was not only used to verify the statements and allow the participants to check the transcript for sufficient anonymity. They were also given information about the analysis phase of the study. In addition, a video containing the presentation of the findings was sent to all participants after finishing the study.

7. Use of incentives: Incentives for participation in the research should generally be used carefully (King et al., 2019). In this research, all participants volunteered to contribute to the study without any form of incentivization.

8. Limitations to the researcher’s role: In cases in which the researcher and the participant know each other from different settings, the role of the researcher has to be made clear, as there is a risk of role confusion (King et al., 2019). As nearly half of the participants were part of the researchers’ broader network, this risk was inherent in many interviews. The relationship outside the interview ranged from close friends to acquaintances and former

colleagues with different levels of interaction during the shared time of employment. Anonymity was highlighted before starting the recording with these participants. It was also specifically stated that no person known to both the researcher, and the participant, will gain knowledge of the person's identity. It was also highlighted that the interviewer adopted the role of a researcher and not a friend or a former colleague. Therefore, those participants were specifically instructed to explain everything in detail without assuming the researcher understood what they meant. This would have led to the need to interpret more of the data than necessary.

9. Honesty and integrity in the research process: King et al. (2019) emphasize the researcher's responsibility in designing an ethical research process. This research was not funded by a third party. Therefore, no conflict of interest is present. The researcher's influence in the interviewing process has been acknowledged and is part of interpretative axiology (Gomes Pessoa et al., 2019). All statements in the interviews were accepted and comprehension questions were asked without judgment. While decisions about data inclusion had to be made, these were always based on the potential contribution to answering the research question and were not influenced by the researcher's personal perspective on the topic.

Overall, the research was conducted in a way that conforms to general ethical standards (King et al., 2019) and the ethical guidelines issued by the University of Gloucestershire (2022).

4.8 CONCLUSION

This study adopts a social constructionist viewpoint to explore practitioners' understanding of FB. Doing so intentionally breaks with the generally accepted realist approach to knowledge gain prevalent in the field. Thereby, it contributes to the research domain by openly approaching the concept of FB. Because the study is built on problematization rather than a research gap and deviates from frequently implemented worldviews and methods, it enables a fresh perspective on FB conceptualization.

While new insights into FB are sought, this chapter provides detailed insights into the procedures of this study so readers could replicate this study in different contexts, providing future researchers with possible approaches to their studies. Therefore, dependability, identified as a quality criterion for qualitative research, is supported. Furthermore, the reflexivity is addressed through reflections on participant sampling, data generation, and data analysis. Additionally, credibility is enhanced by justifying methodological decisions based on the research aim and objectives. Hence, this chapter addresses three of the five quality criteria (Stenfors et al., 2020).

Lastly, this study sets an example for future researchers who doubt the applicability of social constructionist worldviews to FB research. It encourages additional qualitative or mixed-methods studies to explore FB understandings and more generally, followership from in more detail. Therefore, it contributes to the paradigmatic balance in the field (Uhl-Bien et al., 2014).

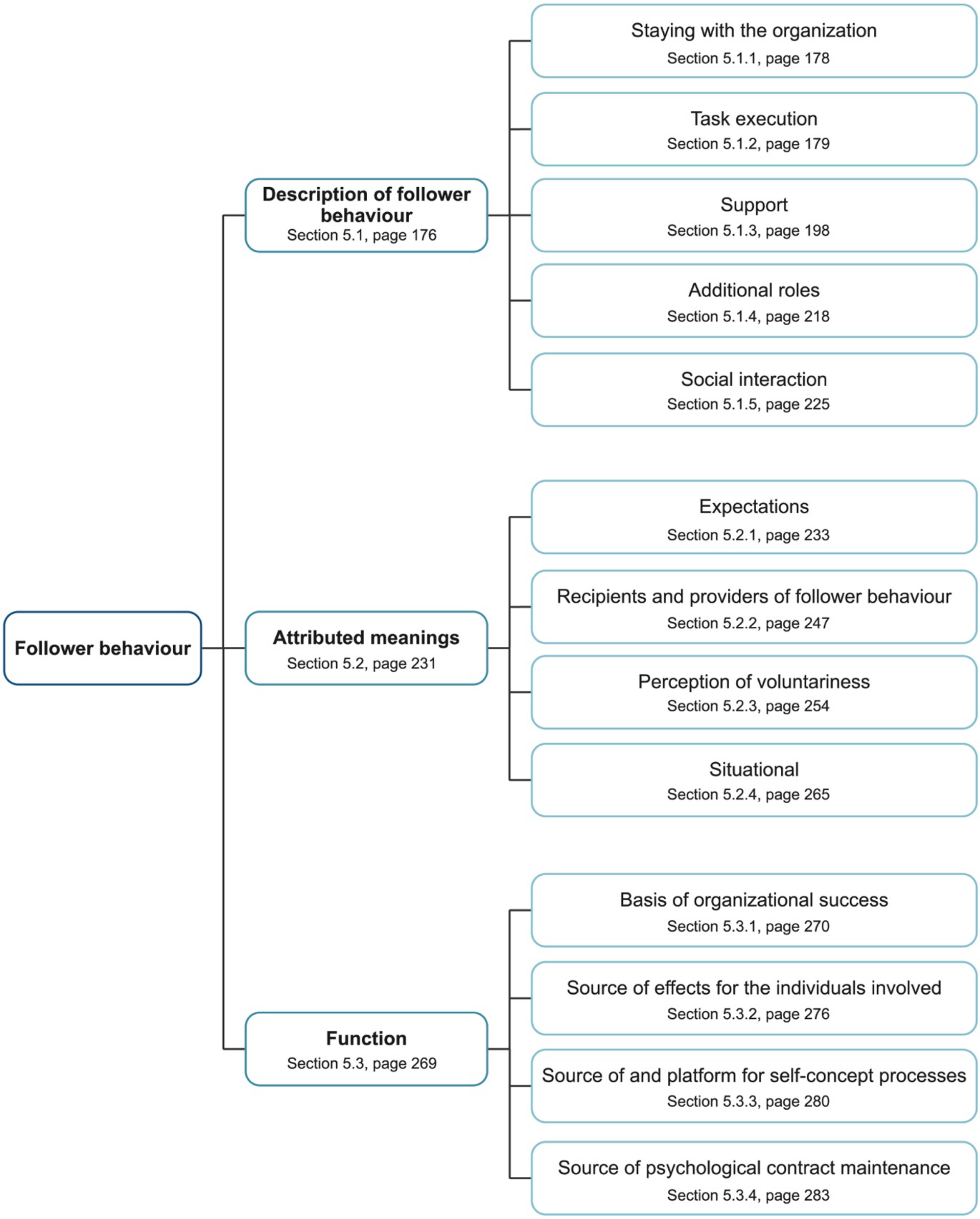
5 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

During the analysis, a detailed template was developed. The iterative process revealed the complexity of the conceptualization of FB and led to three levels of its understanding: (a) description, (b) attributed meaning, and (c) function. In the theme 'description', participants narrated what they do. Therefore, this theme deals with what behaviours are considered FB and how they are characterized. This theme is chiefly manifest in nature and participants directly report the behaviours through their stories. Hence, the participants are able to name the behaviours, making this theme less subject to interpretation. The theme 'attributed meaning' contains the implicit characterizations of FB and explores conditions under which a behaviour is understood as FB. This theme is latent in nature. Nevertheless, some aspects were explicitly discussed in the interviews while others need more interpretation. The final theme 'function' explores the role FB plays in organizations. It addresses the motivation to exhibit FB and its individual, relational, and organizational effects.

Figure 27 provides an overview of the three main themes and the first level of sub-themes, which guide the structure of this chapter. Each section starts with a more detailed overview of the theme construction.

Figure 27

Overview of Main Themes and First Level of Sub-Themes

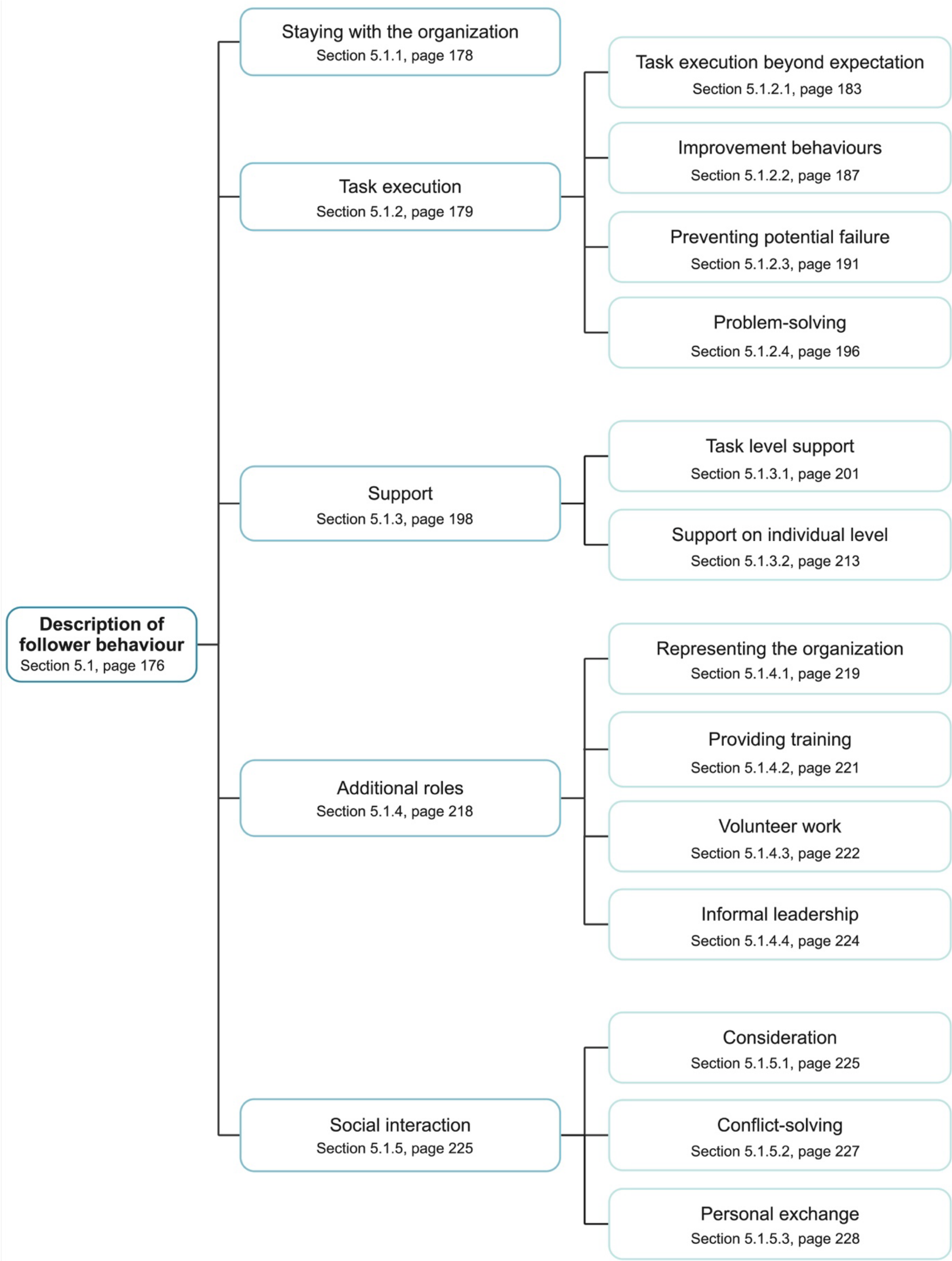


5.1 DESCRIPTION OF FOLLOWER BEHAVIOUR

The analysis is based on 186 behaviour storylines that contain 244 individual behaviours. The themes discussed in this section are manifest in nature and analyse the FBs and their characterizations perceived by the participants. From the analysis, five main themes have been identified and are elaborated in the subsequent sections: (a) staying with the company, (b) task execution, (c) support, (d) taking on additional roles, and (e) social interaction. The participants associated all behaviours mentioned in this section as FB, and they are, therefore, treated as such, although not specifically labelled. As staying with the organization is the foundation for all other FBs, this theme is discussed first. The remaining themes are presented according to their prevalence. Figure 28 provides an overview of the themes, including the second level.

Figure 28

Overview on First and Second Level Sub-Themes on the Description of Follower Behaviours



5.1.1 *STAYING WITH THE ORGANIZATION*

Eight meaning units were allocated to the theme ‘staying with the organization’. Despite the seemingly low number of mentions, its significance for understanding FB and its conceptualization surfaces in the intensity and depth of these statements. In the analysis, two different viewpoints emerged. Sam (MFL) represents the first of these viewpoints. He interprets ‘staying with the organization’ as the only fully voluntary behaviour as everybody could leave the company at any time. In his perception, all other behaviours are either moderately or minimally voluntary. Thereby, he distinguishes voluntary from involuntary behaviour through the possibility to make an opposing decision. This view might be influenced by the pace of the hospitality industry, which is linked to high turnover rates. Thereby, he generally expects more turnover and values retention. Conversely, Evan (EBO), Caitlyn (EFL), Thomas (EFL), and Jeffrey (MBO) represent the second viewpoint, that sees ‘staying with the organization’ as influenced by context. Evan (EBO) explains that “we currently clearly act on a worker’s job market... . Of course, I do have the money in my account to pay rent, that’s part of the deal. But you can have that at any other company, too.” Thereby, he clarifies that this behaviour is only fully voluntary when the context allows staff members to switch jobs easily. Caitlyn (EFL) and Thomas (EFL) confirm that jobs opportunities are plentiful in their respective industries, supporting Evan’s (EBO) claim of a ‘worker’s job market’. Caitlyn (EFL) explains that the decision to stay with the company is a conscious behaviour that enables all other FBs through belonging to the organization. Jeffrey (MBO) adds that he would not have expected to stay with the company for nearly 30 years and highlights that he still stays voluntarily, supporting Caitlyn’s (EFL) understanding of permanently repeated decision-making.

‘Staying with the organization’ can be interpreted as a fundamental FB that influences the perception of voluntariness in all other potential FBs or as a conscious decision in a context, offering other options that enables other FB.

5.1.2 *TASK EXECUTION*

In this section, behaviours related to task execution are discussed. Table 16 provides an overview of the behaviours participants reported. Four behaviours could be distinguished in terms of their aim: task execution beyond expectations, improvement behaviours, preventing potential failure, and problem-solving. In Table 16, these behaviours are displayed according to the position of the behaviour provider and the person reporting them. Thereby, conceptualizations of different position-based groups can be detected and interpreted, leading to insights into the social construction of the conceptualization of FB in organizations.

Table 16

Follower Behaviours Related to Task Execution

	Employees as follower behaviour providers		Managers as follower behaviour providers	
	Reported by employees	Reported by managers	Reported by employees	Reported by managers
Back office	**Improvement**			
	• Gain knowledge • Voice ideas • Implement ideas *The knowledge is in my head but it is not written down anywhere for others to profit from it. I approached the internal person responsible for project management and said, "I do have the idea that we could design a checklist, which steps you need to run through, which aspects need to be considered, and all other kinds of experience." (Isabel, EBO)*	• Voice ideas • Create concepts and prepare analyses ready for decision making or implementation *One of my employees approached me and said: "We are working with this service provider and I checked the costs ... and compared it to other service providers." In the end, her idea saved the company two third of the costs. (David, MBO)*	-/-	• Implement employees ideas • Try another managers' suggestions *In a normal job-role relationship, this colleague would never have thought about proactively talking to me about whether this might be a different approach ... let alone would he have made me, an executive, sit on the terrace on a Sunday afternoon and write a script, implementing his idea. (Robert, MBO)*
	Task execution beyond expectation			
	• Accept additional tasks • Execute tasks independently with little information • Prioritize tasks • Contribute their knowledge to a task • Put extra care in their task • Work overtime *The seminar I did yesterday was on short notice. That means additional stress and extra work for me as it was a topic that hadn't done before. That means I had to write a concept, think about the day, build up competencies for that topic. (Evan, EBO)*	• Make decisions within their respective decision making powers • Independently define their own approach to reaching their work goals • Use their skills *I don't say: "Please go on Xing, write a message to this specific person, do this, do that, and then we'll hire this person." But they start with the knowledge and see how they solve it themselves. (Bill, MBO)*	-/-	• Do tasks expected from employees *I don't wait for an assistant to bring coffee in a meeting, but I get up and get coffee for everybody in the room myself. (Abby, MBO)*

	Employees as follower behaviour providers		Managers as follower behaviour providers	
	Reported by employees	Reported by managers	Reported by employees	Reported by managers
Back office	**Preventing potential failure**			
	• Work during their vacation, on weekends, or work overtime • Stay within their competencies • Ask for support *I wrote an e-mail from my private account while I was on holiday because I thought of something that was really a time issue and needed to be solved. (Melinda, EBO)*	-/-	-/-	• Work while sick or on a weekend • Provide working equipment • Communicate difficulties to other departments • Ask for support *A service provider did not carry out a job we assigned them. ... All three of us worked on the weekend to do what the service provider should have done. ... If we hadn't done that, we would have massively endangered operational capabilities. (Allen, MBO)*
	Problem-solving			
	• Provide solutions for problems • Solve problems for other departments when the manager is not present *I knew that we needed more office space and as I am well connected, I heard that another company was moving out of the building. ... Now that problem is solved. (Carrie, EBO)*	-/-	-/-	-/-
Front line	**Task execution beyond expectation**			
	• Exceed customer expectations • Adjust their sales activities according to organizational suggestions • Do unpleasant task that are not directly related to the customer experience *Customers come to the shop and don't expect much. And then I tell them, "I'll change your nose pads" or I offer to take frames home to try them, and the customer leaves the shop with a smile. (Caitlyn, EFL)*	• Exceed customer expectations • Engage in cross-selling und up-selling activities • Do unpleasant task that are not directly related to the customer experience *One of my employees recognized a guest, greeted him by name and remembered that this guest liked his coffee with lukewarm milk the last time and asked if he would like to have the same this time. That was extraordinary. (Sam, MFL)*	-/-	• Keep their own managers informed and ensure decision-making processes • Allow creative ideas even though there is a risk *I wouldn't have to say anything as long as everything is good, and nothing escalates. It is important to me that they [his own managers] know what is going on at the moment and who is doing what, so they don't to lose touch with operations. (Connor, MFL)*

	Employees as follower behaviour providers		Managers as follower behaviour providers	
	Reported by employees	Reported by managers	Reported by employees	Reported by managers
Front line	**Preventing potential failure**			
	• Maintain customer satisfaction in difficult situations • Prioritize answering a colleagues' questions over their own tasks • Work overtime, while sick or on a weekend • Ask for support *I am relatively new and sometimes I haven't seen some of the programs. ... And then he [a more experienced colleague] prioritizes my problems over his own tasks ... to support the projects' progress. (Denny, EFL)*	• Agree to change their vacation to a different time • Work overtime, on weekends or outside their regular working hours • Ask for support *We have many colleagues, thank God, who don't turn their work phones off during rest time. And when we ask them to take over a flight at the end of this rest time, which was unplanned, most of them (Henry, MBO)*	• Take time to solve problems with their employee *My former manager worked part-time, and she was still always reachable and present when I needed her. (Jess, EFL)*	• Collect information and pass it on to other departments *There are always aspects that are important for my colleagues, for example in consulting during the implementation of our software, later in the project. (Connor, MFL)*
	Improvement			
	-/-	• Voice ideas • Implement ideas • Gain knowledge *We digitalized all our files. ... I was the project lead ... and the employees contributed ideas regarding the process, how we can implement that well, what we need to adjust, and which steps are necessary in addition to standards. (Matthew, MFL)*	-/-	• Gain and share knowledge *To acquire the knowledge. ... That's not knowledge I acquire during working hours or that is part of my daily work, but it is my personal interest. I read a lot of books, I inform myself, and then pass on the knowledge. (Lilly, MFL)*
	Problem-solving			
	• Provide urgent services for customers outside working hours • Try to retain customers who want to terminate their contract • Convey negative messages to customers *The heating in a building had stopped working and I got a call on a weekend. I went to a hardware store, bought heating pellets, and filled them into the heating system, because I knew that the tenants' anger would be big on Monday otherwise. (Mick, EFL)*	-/-	-/-	-/-

5.1.2.1 TASK EXECUTION BEYOND EXPECTATIONS

Front-line employees and managers most often report behaviour that includes task execution beyond expectations. Furthermore, front-line employees and managers seem to have a shared understanding of the meaning of task execution beyond expectations, based on a formal employee role, which even extends across sub-industries. This notion can be illustrated by two stories reported by Rick (EFL), an employee in the transport industry, and Sam (MFL), a manager in the hospitality industry. Rick (EFL) often has passengers with special requirements who need his attention. For example, he once had a minor travelling alone on board. Rick (EFL) explains: “I’ve spent more time with this passenger, and I showed the kid how the train works and explained that in a language adapted to the kid’s age.” Sam (MFL) reports that one of his employees recognized a guest, greeted him by name and remembered that this guest liked his coffee with lukewarm milk the last time. The employee then asked if the guest wanted the same coffee this time. A common understanding underlying both stories becomes evident: customers have varying needs that need to be grasped by the employee and integrated into the behaviour exhibited. The behaviours that exceed expectations lead to “extraordinary experiences” where “the customer gets the feeling that they are special” (Nell, MFL).

To achieve such extraordinary experiences, Nell (MFL), a manager in the transport industry, claims that managers need to show voluntary behaviour by allowing the creativity required from employees to implement the customers’ needs into otherwise rigid rules. She illustrates this notion through a situation where her crew wanted to celebrate New Year’s Eve with the passengers during the flight, and she says: “I first wasn’t sure if that was a good idea, because there’s always an aspect of security. How would the passengers react if we had a party?”. She decided to allow the idea to progress and reports: “The passengers who were on that flight will never forget it, in a positive way.” Therefore, her voluntary behaviour, allowing employees to implement an idea while taking a risk herself, enabled them to provide the customers with experiences that are perceived as extraordinary. For middle managers such as Connor (MFL), voluntary behaviour also includes keeping their own manager informed, which is not expected unless problems arise. By doing so, he supports efficient decision-making processes, enabling his project members to deliver extraordinary customer experiences. All examples provided by managers regarding their own voluntary behaviour aim to *enable* the exceeding of customer expectations.

A second group of task execution behaviours beyond expectations in front-line settings concerns sales activities and is reported by both employees and managers. Mark (EFL) describes a situation in which he follows the call of his employer to focus on selling insurance.

> For example, when the bank says, “Hey, let’s see if you can somehow put an emphasis on insurance with your customers,” I start, for example, and select my customers using a program and see who is in my portfolio of customers, I look after about a thousand customers whom I may not have had consulted on this topic yet. Invite them to this topic and then simply advise them on it.

Mark (EFL) sees the behaviour as voluntary, as no negative consequences are attached to disregarding the organization’s recommendation. From a manager’s perspective, John (MFL) reports a similar situation in which one of his employees volunteered to participate in a sports event and to promote their employers’ services whilst there. Connor (MFL) also sees voluntary behaviours exhibited by his colleagues when they engage in cross-selling. Sales activities seem to be more relevant in information-based services. This might be related to the services being knowledge-intensive and buying decisions being based on trust and having long-term effects. Therefore, employees in industries such as banking, insurance, or consulting are more likely to show these behaviours than those in short-term service industries such as transportation or trade.

Another group of behaviours exhibited by front-line employees and reported by both employees and managers can be found in unpleasant tasks that still need to be done. For example, employees tidy up staff rooms, bring out the trash (Megan, MFL), sweep the floor, keep the guest room clean (Thomas, EFL), wash colour bowls (Kirby, EFL), or re-organize storage space (John, MFL). While these behaviours could be seen as part of the job, they were reported regularly, and John (MFL) states: “Those are small things, but they are still important.” Furthermore, these behaviours were consistently reported to happen without instruction. Therefore, managers do not need to remind employees of these tasks but can trust that unpleasant tasks are completed, even though they do not directly affect customer experience, or are stipulated as formal role responsibilities. These behaviours seem more relevant in micro-organizations than in larger ones. This might be the case as larger companies often outsource such tasks. For example, Lilly (MFL) reports that her organization pays a service provider to clean the office space. At the same time, one of her employees cleans the desks and the windows once a week, as they find the service providers’ work unsatisfactory. However, as a manager, Lilly (MFL) does not value such behaviour, as “this is paid working time and the behaviour does not benefit the organization because we have a service provider who does that task.” Hence, evaluating whether such smaller tasks are voluntary, part of the job, or unwelcome depends on the organizational context.

When considering task execution beyond expectation in back-office employees, it becomes evident that the shared understanding, as described from a front-line perspective, is not present. Back-office employees report a more extensive variety of behaviours they exhibit than their managers comprehend. This imbalance between the perceptions of voluntary behaviours regarding task execution beyond expectation might be based on the limited visibility of these behaviours to managers, linked to their expectation that employees work independently. For example, Evan (EBO) reports two incidents where he showed voluntary behaviour. First, he delivered an additional seminar; second, he answered questions participants had after a workshop and extended his working hours. While both situations evidence additional effort from Evan (EBO), they differ as his manager was involved in the first but not in the second situation. Had the interview been conducted with the manager, only the first situation could have been reported. Therefore, it can be assumed that managers’ observations of FB in back-office employees are limited through the situations they share with their employees – as their working relationships are not as proximal. In contrast, many, but not all, front-line managers share multiple stories where voluntary behaviour occurs from their employees and can, therefore, report more situations. Due to the greater proximity, front-line employees and managers report a concurring conceptualization of task execution behaviour.

Back-office employees also report situations that include effort or the use of skills, knowledge, or specific working styles. For example, Liz (EBO) describes a situation where she was asked to prepare a presentation and developed the content herself. At the same time, she has a variety of tasks she needs to prioritize. David (MBO) describes a situation in which one of his employees worked independently, using part of their working time “to analyse the costs of working with a supplier for the last months or years” and provided suggestions for cost reductions. In contrast to front-line employees, they report more situations that detail how a task is to be conducted in the future rather than what they do in the present. As such, both the activity focus and the temporal range of task execution beyond expectations differs between front-line and back-office employees, and the proximity and immediacy of front-line employees’ behaviours render them as apprehensible to their managers.

Back-office managers report they exhibit behaviours that would normally be expected from their employees and are, therefore, not expected from them. Henry (MBO) states that he sometimes answers questions that passengers afraid of flying have. By doing so, he also switches from his original back-office position, which does not include contact with customers, to a front-line position. As his working time ends when he turns off the plane’s engines, he also shows this behaviour outside his regular working hours, making this behaviour beyond expectation on several levels.

Generally, task execution beyond expectations seems highly relevant as FB, as various situations have been described that fit this theme. In a front-line context, it is represented as the most important behavioural theme. In contrast, back-office participants report a variety of such behaviours, but it cannot be interpreted as the most important aspect based on the prevalence of the accounts. When contrasting voluntary behaviour exhibited by front-line and back-office employees, it becomes evident that they have different understandings of what ‘beyond expectation’ means. Back-office employees focus on how a task is conducted (e.g. independently), influenced by the expectations of managers and colleagues. In contrast, front-line employees focus on exceeding customer expectations. Hence, the origin of the expectation and the basis of assessment vary. Contrasting voluntary behaviour exhibited by front-line and back-office managers, front-line managers enable their employees to achieve a goal (e.g. positive customer experience), while back-office managers exhibit behaviours that go beyond their managerial role in the sense that they would normally be expected from individuals with lower hierarchical status.

5.1.2.2 IMPROVEMENT BEHAVIOURS

Back-office employees and managers reported many behaviours exhibited by employees that lead to improvements. In contrast, front-line employees described none of these behaviours and their managers reported few. This difference is interesting, as it conspicuously differentiates FBs based on the work type. Back-office employees and managers seem to have a concurring understanding of improvement behaviours, as they report similar situations. For example, Edith (MBO) reports a situation in which one of her employees “had about a thousand ideas [for a concept to attract talent] and she developed a concept and presented that to decision-makers”. From an employee perspective, Isabel (EBO) reports that she had the idea to develop a standardized handbook for digitalization projects and supported the implementation of her idea by approaching the project management office. Both examples include an idea presented and implemented by an employee.

While the employees in the examples above implemented their ideas themselves, voicing ideas is one form of FB that sometimes leads managers to grasp and implement the idea in both back-office and front-line contexts. In those cases, managers reported voluntary behaviour by adopting their employees’ ideas. For example, Robert (MBO) describes a situation in which one of his employees presented him with the idea of developing a storytelling approach for pitching a project. He says: “My colleague convinced me and thought that I would do a good job. I should just sit down and start writing a script.” Matthew (MFL) reports a situation in which he was the lead for a digitalization project. He asked his team members for ideas and says: “They thought about the structure we can use for the digital filing system and how the processes can be renewed.” While both examples include ideas voiced by employees, they differ as Robert’s (MBO) employee voiced the idea without external stimulation. At the same time, Matthew (MFL) triggered the behaviour in his employees by asking them for suggestions. This is interesting, as back-office employees report these behaviours themselves while front-line employees do not report them. It seems that front office employees provide suggestions when they are asked for them, then evaluate this behaviour as involuntary because their manager approached them. In contrast, front-line managers evaluate such behaviour as voluntary, even when they encourage it actively, highlighting the differing understanding of voluntariness in improvement behaviour in front-line settings. Thereby, it seems that front-line and back-office managers hold different expectations and, therefore, conceptualizations of, follower improvement behaviour. The higher expectation towards the proactivity of back-office employees in such behaviour might be linked to their higher average level of education and higher average salaries.

Edith (MBO) reports a situation where FB in the form of implementing an idea voiced by another person occurs between managers.

> I presented new methods, and I was very convinced of their potential use for other departments. A manager said he wants to try these methods. ... I was a bit surprised because I had presented the methods a few weeks back, and there were resentments as another manager had expressed doubts.

As illustrated in the examples, managers see voicing behaviours as part of their task but detect the potential for voluntary behaviour in implementing ideas expressed by other individuals, such as their employees or other managers.

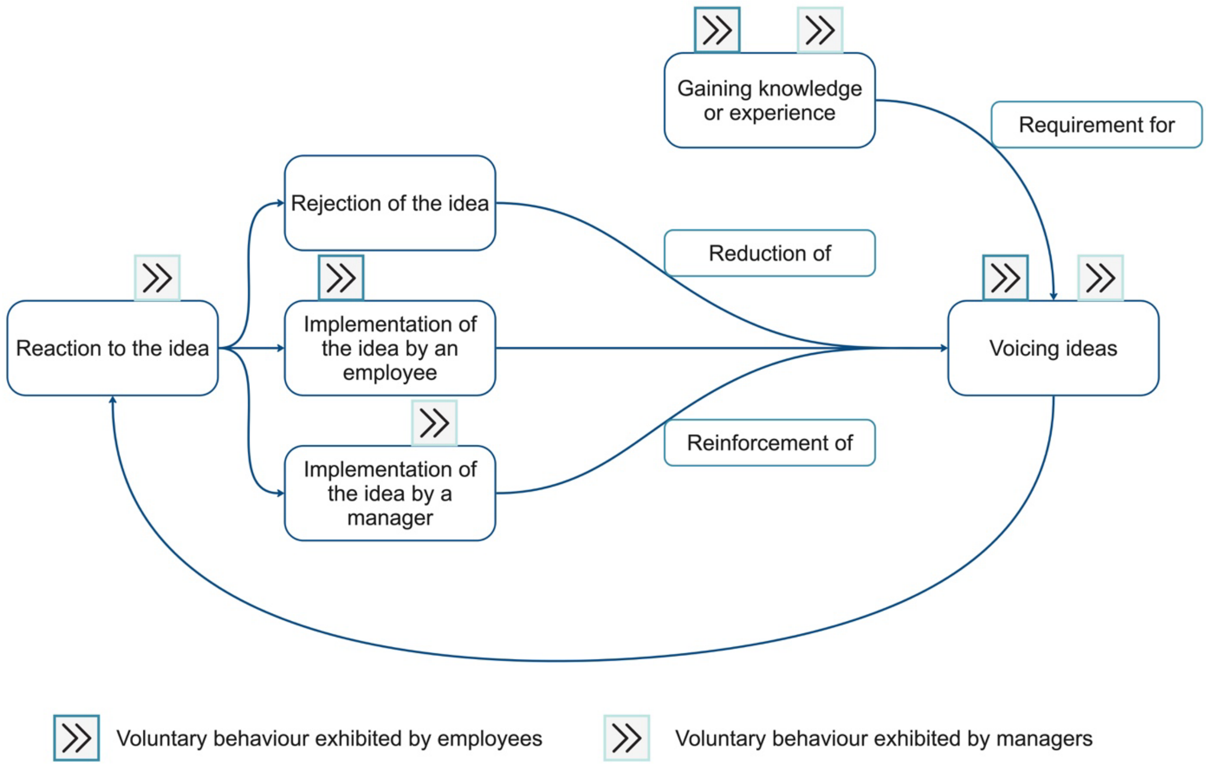
While voicing ideas can sometimes lead to the behaviour of ‘promoting ideas’, it can also be a standalone behaviour. There seems to be a tendency, unsurprisingly, that voice behaviour that does not lead to the implementation of an idea reduces the willingness to exhibit voice behaviour in the future. For example, Melinda (EBO) reports an experience with a former employer and states: “I didn’t care anymore because I thought that they will not implement it anyway. All decisions were based on internal politics and at some point, making suggestions wasn’t attractive anymore.”

Back-office employees report that their voice behaviour is based on the knowledge or experiences they have gained. For example, Melinda (EBO) says: “I educate myself further a lot, both formally and informally. And by seeing so many things I can contribute a lot at work.” Isabel (EBO) sees her experience gained through a digitalization project as the foundation of her ability to voice ideas. Voicing ideas also seems to be the behaviour most often recognized by back-office managers in their employees. In addition, managers in general seem to value employees displaying such behaviour. This might be the case as voice behaviour is perceived as limited in its availability as it requires knowledge or experience and can, therefore, not be exhibited by everyone.

The examples provided here also suggest interrelations between the three specific behaviours subsumed within improvement behaviours. Figure 29 illustrates the connections described in the last paragraphs.

Figure 29

Interrelations Between Voluntary Improvement Behaviours



Comparing front-line and back-office perceptions of improvement behaviour, it seems that back-office employees and front-line managers show similar behaviours. Taking the same perspective as Melinda (EBO) and Isabel (EBO), Lilly (MFL) sees gaining knowledge through engaging with the topic in her free time and sharing this knowledge with others in the organization as a voluntary behaviour.

Overall, improvement behaviours, including gaining knowledge, voicing ideas, and implementing ideas, are conceptualized differently in front-line and back-office positions. While these behaviours offer large potential for back-office employees to manifest FB, front-line employees do not mention such behaviour. There are parallels between back-office employees' and front-line managers' behavioural descriptions, indicating concurring cross-positional understandings of improvement behaviours. This might be the case as the context of their tasks provides them with similar opportunities to act in that particular way.

5.1.2.3 PREVENTING POTENTIAL FAILURE

Behaviours that aim to avoid potential failure are shown in reaction to a problem that is highly likely to emerge due to the current situation. When voluntary behaviour is exhibited, no negative consequences have yet emerged – in that sense the voluntary behaviour is prophylactic.

Front-line employees and both front-line and back-office managers perceive a variety of behaviours attributed to preventing potential failure. This is the only behaviour perceived as exhibited by employees and managers from both perspectives. Therefore, it seems to be critical to the execution of front-line tasks. Front-line employees identify behaviours that focus on direct interaction with the customer, as well as working outside their regular working hours. At the same time, managers report behaviour related to the configuration of tasks. For example, Henry (MBO) is responsible for planning staff roosters for front-line employees. He evaluates employees responding to phone calls during their time off as voluntary behaviour, as they are not legally obliged to do so. He explains that this behaviour was especially relevant during the recent COVID-19 pandemic, as more employees called in sick on short notice.

> That was a huge topic, as there was a real threat that we might be unable to operate a flight. ... That could mean that 350 passengers are disappointed and need to be rebooked and accommodated with high costs. ... If somebody is willing to fly even though they might have planned a bike trip with their family on their day off, that directly impacts our revenue and customer satisfaction.

Jess (EFL) reports a corresponding example from an employee perspective by stating: “We normally accept appointments between 9am and 6pm. But when a candidate is only available on a Friday evening at 8pm, I will still accept that appointment.” This indicates an overlap of the conceptualization of front-line employees and managers regarding employees’ voluntary behaviours that aim to avoid potential failure. Still, front-line employees see a broader range of behaviours than managers. Mick (EFL) reports a situation in which tenants are waiting for a repair in their home, and he must organize service providers who can fix the issue. Mick (EFL) is, therefore, reliant on others to solve the problem. Unfortunately, service providers are not always dependable, so he regularly calls the tenants to show them that he cares about their problems. By doing so, he avoids the tenants becoming unsatisfied. Thomas (EFL) provides another example and remembers a situation where he had to tell a group of customers that they could not sit outside the restaurant due to noise regulations. Although he feels that “these regulations are nonsense”, he also acknowledges the economic aspect of this decision, as keeping the restaurant open for a few people would not make sense. He says: “In these situations I often get sent forward... . I have to be very polite in conveying the message. Quite often, that works.” Both situations aim to avoid dissatisfaction among customers. Differences in the conceptualizations held by front-line employees and managers become apparent, as employees report such behaviour while managers do not. This could, again, be linked to front-line managers expecting their employees to exhibit such behaviour.

Front-line managers, however, see voluntariness with themselves in collecting information and passing it on to other departments. Connor (MFL) reports a situation where he passed information about a customer to colleagues involved in the next project stage. He does so because he wants to avoid the customer thinking that internal communication is poor. Jess (EFL) sees voluntary behaviour in managers who support their employees in avoiding potential failures by thinking the situation through and finding the right approach with them, prioritizing the prevention of potential failures over their own tasks. In contrast to front-line employees, who seek to avoid dissatisfaction in customers, front-line managers ensure communication in processes not visible to the customer. Evaluating such manager behaviour as voluntary indicates that customer satisfaction is ultimately not their goal but is rather viewed as their employees’ responsibility. This is interesting, as this suggests that the goals front-line employees and managers pursue differ, with managers, despite being on the front line, not always focusing on the customer.

In summary, front-line employees and managers show the behaviours discussed above to avoid customer dissatisfaction. There are several ways to do so in the interaction with the customer, through flexibility in workforce planning, and functional internal communication between employees and their managers as well as departments.

Looking at behaviours that prevent potential failure from a back-office perspective, it is interesting that both employees and managers report such behaviours for themselves but not for the other perspective. For both perspectives, working on weekends or while on vacation or sick is considered voluntary behaviour. Allen (MBO) reports a situation in which he and his employees worked on a weekend:

> A service provider did not carry out a job we assigned them properly. We then decided in a small team how to proceed and all three of us worked on the weekend to do what the service provider should have done. ... If we hadn't done that, we would have massively endangered operational capabilities.

As part of the team, Allen (MBO) acknowledges his employees working on the weekend with him, but no other managers reported such behaviour for their employees.

Back-office employees report various behaviours that include working overtime (Sarah, EFL; Evan, EBO) or while on vacation (Cora, EBO; Melinda, EBO). These behaviours, however, receive divergent evaluations, as Cora's (EBO) example illustrates:

> When my colleague answers her mobile phone on holiday, I tell her off, to be honest. I think it's absolutely important that she gets away from the workload and relaxes. But I can absolutely understand that she doesn't want to have a mess in her inbox when she comes back after three weeks of holiday. ... Just to see what has happened and if I can prepare for when I get back or if I can solve something really quickly. But that's the wrong approach.

As Cora (EBO) describes, the potential failure is assumed to affect the employee after their return, but the mitigating actions are deemed inappropriate. Back-office employees often give the impression that they might be unable to handle the backlog of unanswered e-mails after a longer holiday and could miss important tasks that would lead to negative outcomes when not answered. Managers report similar behaviours, but they evaluate them differently. For example, Jeffrey (MBO) reports that he has been sick for about six weeks and could have extended his absence to three months, according to the doctors. Instead, he decided to work while in rehabilitation. In contrast to Cora (EBO), he highlights the positive aspects of his job's flexibility, which includes working at non-standard times. He states: "My working times comply with the need of third parties, like colleagues. That might be a Sunday evening or a Saturday. But that might also mean that I don't work on a Monday." This reveals different understandings regarding the expectations towards employees and managers and their evaluation of irregular working times. Employees perceive working outside regular working hours as an additional effort not covered by their job profile expectations. Their behaviour is often rooted in the avoidance of negative outcomes, such as personal disadvantages. In contrast, managers tend to see the personal advantages of flexibility. This may be due to managers seeing the provision of increased workloads as part of their job expectation. By accepting the job, they agreed to these expectations and, therefore, emphasize the positive aspects related to it. Hence, their behaviour is rooted in the approach of positive outcomes. The different evaluations can, therefore, be explained through the approach and avoidance behaviours present.

Mary (EBO) presents a different perspective on avoiding potential failure as she states that it is crucial "not to overestimate one's boundaries. ... Otherwise, that might lead to mistakes. It is important to openly admit when you don't have the competencies to do a task." Amanda (EFL) supports that notion as she asks for help "when customers have questions about their contract, and I do not know the right answer." From a managers' perspective, Holly (MFL) sees FB in her employees when they ask for help "if they get stuck in their tasks and do not know what the next step forward is." These statements are interesting, as they are the only task-related behaviour describing employees' limited capabilities. All other behaviours highlight the *potential* of employees. A probable explanation can be found in hindsight bias. Most behaviours reported have positive outcomes, which lets them be perceived favourably. As the narratives are reported in retrospect, it is possible that participants mainly report stories with positive outcomes. Mary (EBO) makes intimations about negative responses to exhibiting more proactive behaviours that led to negatively evaluated outcomes. While it remains unclear if these are her own or observed situations, it impacts her perception of accepted behaviours and the expectation towards her as an employee. In contrast, Holly (MFL) and Amanda (EFL) highlight that asking for support, in such circumstances, is not necessarily interpreted as a sign of incompetence but rather positive, as it avoids potential negative outcomes. Therefore, this seemingly restrained behaviour is interpreted as being voluntary.

Interestingly, Robert (MBO) reports asking for support from a managers' perspective. While the employees' examples stated above aim at avoiding mistakes, his intention is to make his employees feel valued. He states: "It's great when a leader says to his followers: 'We have to position ourselves differently. What do you think? Do you have better ideas? How can we manage that?'. That's perceived better than just making a top-down announcement." Through his statement, it becomes evident that Robert (MBO) does not doubt his own capability to find a solution that would prevent negative future outcomes. Hence, his motive in asking for support differs from that of employees, as it is based on a deliberate and purposeful decision, aimed at creating a supportive outcome for the individuals through this task, rather than directly. Additionally, communication with other departments and providing equipment necessary to execute tasks are also seen as behaviour that avoids potential failure is evaluated as voluntary behaviour from a management perspective. These behaviours enable others and would lead to negative outcomes when not exhibited.

Overall, both employees and managers see behaviours in their own domain that help avoid potential failures. Both perspectives seem to lack acknowledgement for the other groups' contribution, as they only report behaviours for themselves. On the other hand, such behaviours have been reported to occur in groups including both managers and employees, with the manager initiating the behaviour. Employees report active and passive behaviours, which include responding to the pressure of failure that would be attributed to them. Conversely, managers connotate the necessity of flexible working hours with positive outcomes for themselves and see their role in enabling their employees' behaviour.

5.1.2.4 PROBLEM-SOLVING

In contrast to behaviours that aim to avoid potential failure, problem-solving behaviours address negative outcomes that have already started to emerge as a response to a problem, and the behaviour aims to limit the proliferation of negative outcomes.

Neither employees nor managers see problem-solving behaviour as FB exhibited by managers. This applies to both front-line and back-office perspectives and indicates that problem-solving is concurrently perceived as a core task attributed to the manager role, leaving no space for it to be a voluntary behaviour. Furthermore, only front-line and back-office employees report problem-solving behaviours, while managers do not report such behaviours for their employees. Therefore, only employees perceive problem-solving as voluntary behaviour, while managers appear to either expect these behaviours from themselves and their employees or have limited insight into the employees' actions. A situation reported by Mick (EFL) indicates the former:

> The heating in one of the buildings had stopped working because there were no more pellets, and I got a call on a weekend. I went to a hardware store, bought heating pellets, and filled them into the heating system because I knew that the tenants' anger would be big on Monday otherwise. ... When I told my manager what I did, she said "Ah, well, okay." It sounded like that could have waited until Monday. ... She could have said: "Hey, we will credit the hours on your time account" or just thank me for saving her a lot of trouble.

Mick (EFL) describes his behaviour as voluntary, as he solved a current problem before *further* negative reactions could occur. While Mick (EFL) indicates that he is not certain about interpreting his managers' reaction, it appears that the manager did not evaluate his actions as FB. The manager seems to perceive it as part of the job or as unnecessary. This example illustrates the difference in the understandings of FB between managers and employees. As discussed in 'prevention of failure behaviour', front-line managers seem to attribute the responsibility for customer satisfaction to their employees. Their understanding of their own jurisdictions seems to lie in fields that are not customer related. Therefore, it appears that front-line managers expect problem-solving behaviours from their employees, even outside regular working hours, while employees evaluate such behaviour as voluntary.

Contrasting voluntary behaviours reported by front-line and back-office employees, the characteristic of time-criticality unites both perspectives. Isabel (EBO) describes a situation in which she solved a problem for another department while her manager was on vacation, a task she would usually evaluate as his responsibility. As the manager was away for three weeks and the other department reported problems due to the missing solution, she solved the problem herself. She also reports that she sees problem-solving behaviour in her colleagues in customer service who try to retain customers who want to terminate their contracts. The problems described have immediate effects and are expected to worsen if not addressed.

Problem-solving behaviour is only reported by employees in front-line and back-office functions. The understanding of FB seems to differ between employees and managers, as managers do not report such behaviour, neither for themselves, nor for their employees. Thereby, the notion surfaces that both front-line and back-office managers expect such behaviours from all personnel regardless of their position. Conversely, employees evaluate these behaviours as voluntary as they afford extra effort, often outside working hours or one's original perceived scope of responsibility. This fundamentally divergent understanding of expectations regarding problem-solving behaviour carries a high risk of conflict as managers may not detect their employees' need for recognition for what employees perceive to be voluntary work. Subsequently, employees may feel unappreciated, leading to a potential decrease in relationship quality with their managers.

5.1.2.5 INTERIM CONCLUSION

Comparing the behaviours attributed to managers and employees, it becomes evident that more voluntary behaviours are reported for employees than for managers by both managers and employees. While managers' reports of voluntary behaviours for employees and managers are more balanced, employees mainly report behaviours for themselves. These two observations indicate that employees see more task-related voluntary behaviour in their own role than in the manager role. This might be linked to higher expectations attributed to the manager role from an employee perspective, leaving less potential for FB. This would mean that the manager role, in the eyes of the employees, does include task-related voluntary behaviours to the same degree as their own role. Another potential explanation can be found in the knowledge of these behaviours. It might be the case that employees do not know of the voluntary behaviours managers exhibit as they do not observe them – potentially as they are not always directed at the employees they manage. In contrast to the employees' perspective, managers generally see potential voluntary task-related behaviours in their role even though they reported it to a lesser extent for themselves than for their employees. Overall, the imbalance in behaviours reported suggests that formal task-related behavioural expectations towards managers are higher than towards employees, leading to more potential for voluntary task-related behaviours for employees than for managers.

5.1.3 *SUPPORT*

Two different foci of support could be identified: the task and the individual. Support on task level includes the verbal exploration of support options and the action of supporting task completion which is again distinguishable based on the transfer of responsibility and the time investment. Support on an individual level includes protecting others and supporting their individual advancement. Support behaviours have in common that they are aimed at another person's development or success without a direct outcome for the behaviour provider. Support behaviours on task level are related to task execution, discussed above, but differ as task execution aims at one's own responsibilities. In contrast, support behaviours aim at the fulfilment of somebody else's responsibilities. Therefore, the conceptualization of FB seems to extend beyond one's own tasks, adding a relational layer with additional expectations to the phenomenon.

Table 17 provides an overview of the support behaviours divided according to position and job profile of behaviour provider and the individual reporting the situations. The table also includes example quotes to illustrate the themes.

Table 17

Follower Behaviours Related to Support

	Employees as follower behaviour providers		Managers as follower behaviour providers	
	Reported by employees	Reported by managers	Reported by employees	Reported by managers
Back office	**Support on task level**			
	• Substitute • Take on new tasks • Help with tasks • Share information • Offer support *The situation that a colleague is sick and I need to take on a workshop on short notice comes up quite often. That can be a challenge, but you then just have to find a solution. (Evan, EBO)*	• Substitute • Help with tasks • Offer support *One of my employees prepared a presentation without being asked to do so. But she knew that I was travelling and in meetings and would likely not be able to finish the preparations. (Abby, MBO)*	-/-	• Substitute • Help with tasks • Share information *During COVID, a lot of my employees called in sick at the same time. ... I called the department waiting for our work and worked out a solution, so their processes weren't endangered. (David, MBO)*
	Support on individual level			
	<u>Support individual advancement</u> • Provide feedback *I told my manager to act more assertive... . When somebody tells you, you become aware of it and can change small things. (Isabel, EBO)*	-/-	<u>Support individual advancement</u> • Support career development • Provide visibility • Provide growth opportunities *My former manager assigned me tasks where I was surprised that he trusted me to be able to take them on. (Monica, EBO)*	-/-
	<u>Protect individuals</u> • Solve other' errors *In my job I make linguistic corrections. But when I see that the written content needs revision, I comment on that. (Bree, EBO)*	<u>Protect individuals</u> • Speak up in favour of somebody *We were in a meeting with executives and two of my team members involved themselves in the discussion and supported my arguments. (Robert, MBO)*	-/-	<u>Protect individuals</u> • Take the blame *A team member said, "I forgot to finish the task." So, I sent a message to the other department and said: "Sorry, this didn't go well. It was my fault." (David, MBO)*

	Employees as follower behaviour providers		Managers as follower behaviour providers	
	Reported by employees	Reported by managers	Reported by employees	Reported by managers
Front line	**Support on task level**			
	• Substitute • Help with task • Share information • Offer support *I help him [a colleague] find the right words for posts on social media. And he helps me understand complex positions. (Jess, EFL)*	• Substitute • Share information • Help with tasks • Take on new tasks • Offer support *When we learned that an employee was sick, another employee came in immediately and she worked overtime for the rest of the week. (Megan, MFL)*	-/-	• Help with tasks • Offer support *Sometimes I find myself standing at the sink or making sandwiches because we need a thousand sandwiches. (Sam, MFL)*
	Support on individual level			
	<u>Support individual advancement</u> • Share knowledge • Provide growth opportunities • Support onboarding process *A colleague was very helpful as I didn't have much knowledge in the beginning. That helped me a lot. (Denny, EFL)*	<u>Support individual advancement</u> • Support onboarding process *One of my employees always takes care of new colleagues. She is very engaged in it, even outside her working hours. (Matthew, MFL)*	<u>Support individual advancement</u> • Support career development *We discuss possibilities for my future career... and he gives me tips. (Mark, EFL)*	<u>Support individual advancement</u> • Share knowledge • Provide growth opportunities • Offer career development • Support onboarding process *I initiated sessions, where I share knowledge with the colleagues. That's not necessarily knowledge currently needed for the job, but I would call it 'future-knowledge'. (Lilly, MFL)*
	<u>Protect individuals</u> • Solve others' errors • Stand up for others *A new colleague had cashed too much, and the customer came back a bit annoyed. I solved the situation by offering a voucher. (Thomas, EFL)*	-/-	-/-	-/-

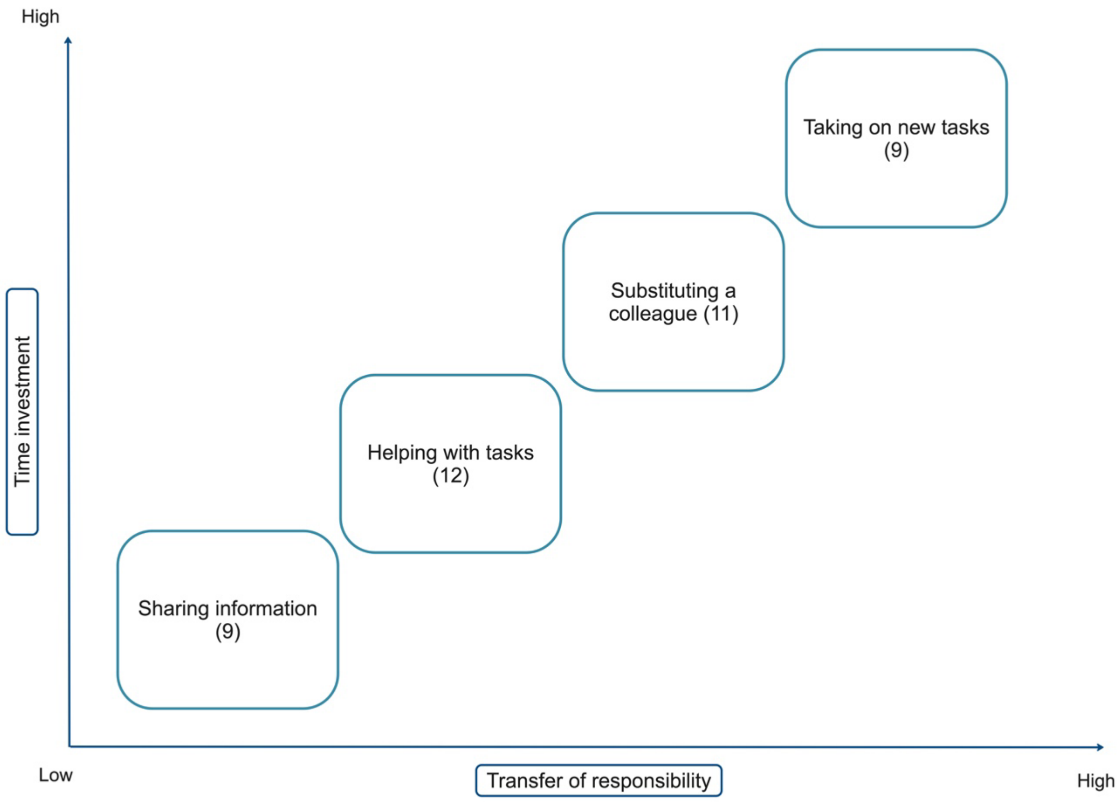
5.1.3.1 TASK LEVEL SUPPORT

This theme contains all behaviours that support the completion of a task which is the responsibility of another person. Four different forms of support were identified: sharing information, helping with tasks, substituting for a colleague, and taking on new tasks. The forms of support for task completion differ regarding the involvement of the person providing support. As displayed in Figure 30, the level of involvement is influenced by time investment and transfer of responsibility. While taking on a new task means that an employee takes on additional long-term responsibilities, substituting for a colleague includes temporarily taking on their responsibility (e.g. during vacation or sickness) and then later transferring them to the incumbent. Sharing information and helping with tasks means that the responsibility for the task remains with the originally responsible person, and the individual who shows support behaviour adds to successful task completion without assuming responsibility. Helping with tasks involves doing parts of the task while the responsible person stays in charge. Hence, supporting task completion may require varying levels of engagement from the behaviour provider.

It could be expected that the behaviour requiring least involvement (sharing information) is the one most often encountered due to the low barriers and the short-term commitment of one’s capacity. Interestingly, a relatively balanced distribution of behaviours was found. Different explanations are possible. First, participants might report incidents in which they perceive their contribution associated with a higher effort, and, therefore, as more meaningful. This might lead to an under reporting of such behaviours. Second, sharing information might be indeed less frequent. This notion is supported by the existence of other sources, including the intranet or knowledge databases, which are frequently used in contemporary organizations, offering a variety of information sources. Therefore, sharing information might be less relevant as its application is limited to information not readily available.

Figure 30

Characterization of Task Support Behaviours



Note. Numbers in ellipses state the prevalence of the behaviour in the stories reported by participants.

5.1.3.1.1 *SHARING INFORMATION*

The least-involved level of supporting task completion is sharing information. The responsibility for the task stays with the original person, and the information provided helps them to conduct the task better. Sharing information is reported by back-office employees and managers for themselves but not for the other group. In front-line positions, managers and employees report sharing information as voluntary behaviour for employees but not for managers.

Similarities can be found as front-line and back-office employees primarily exhibit sharing information behaviour towards colleagues. For example, Jess (EFL) reports a mutual sharing of information between her and a colleague. "I help him find the right words for posts on social media ... while he helps me to understand complex positions.” Similarly, Liz (EBO) explains that her colleagues “would never retain or conceal knowledge” but would instead “explain things 150 times even if I think that it’s almost embarrassing to call again and ask.” Both situations seem to be based on a trusting relationship and employees seem to value such behaviour from colleagues. For example, Liz (EBO) rounds up her description of the current relationship with her colleagues with the sentence “I’ve also got to know that differently”, indicating that she does not take her colleagues’ information sharing for granted.

On the other hand, managers report sharing information exhibited by employees towards them in their formal role or to other departments, but not amongst each other. Jack (MFL) sees this behaviour in his employees “when they keep me up to date about the rough steps of the project.” He also includes the decision of which information is shared with him as part of FB. “I do not need to know all details, but I need to know the big points, so I am able to provide information if the customer calls me directly.” This understanding of FB is supported by managers’ own behaviour, aimed at other departments. David (MBO) reports a situation during the COVID-19 pandemic in which he emphasizes the value of his information sharing behaviour for managers of other departments:

> We had a lot of COVID cases, and only a hand full of us remained... . We knew we wouldn’t be able to hack it... . And then I called the other colleagues in other departments because they had to know that we had a gap here and would have that for the next few days... . I called the buying department, and they had a chance to call the suppliers.

In summary, all reported information sharing behaviours facilitate others in their roles. Furthermore, employees in both front-line and back-office positions see support behaviour in the form of sharing information between colleagues rather than between them and their managers. However, managers describe upward information sharing behaviour and such behaviour in regards to other departments. Therefore, differences in the conceptualization of support behaviour in the form of sharing information become evident regarding the FB receiver.

5.1.3.1.2 *HELPING WITH TASKS*

Helping with tasks contains actions that contribute to task completion without transferring the responsibility or the complete task. In addition, the task that individuals help with does not belong to the scope of their job.

In a back-office setting, these behaviours are either time or knowledge related. Regarding the time aspect, one employee currently has no time critical tasks of their own, but helps another employee finishing their task on time. In a back-office setting, Evan (EBO) reports that he helped a colleague to put large numbers of letters in envelopes. From a front-line perspective, Caitlyn (EFL) says: “At the end of the day we support each other in finishing our tasks so we can all leave on time.” It becomes clear that time aspects are relevant for helping behaviour in both, front-line and back-office employee perspectives. Concurringly, managers report similar situations in which they show voluntary helping behaviour. Elise (MBO) sends some of her employees to help at a customer event organized by another department, Tom (MFL) carries products into the showroom, and Sam (MFL) reports:

> When the restaurant is in deep water, we are all in deep water. That means that the offices have to clear and everybody working in the office needs to help for the customer. Sometimes I found myself standing at the sink or making sandwiches because we needed a thousand sandwiches.

Through these examples it becomes clear, that back-office and front-line employees and managers report behaviours that are triggered by the time sensitivity of the outcome. This might be an outcome for the individual or for the organization. Thereby, the conceptualization of helping behaviour is shared by participants in regard to its time sensitivity. Differences can be found, again, in the conceptualization of managers’ helping behaviour. While managers such as Elise (MBO), Sam (MFL), and Tom (MFL) report voluntary behaviours for themselves, employees do not see that their managers exhibit such behaviour. In Elise’s (MBO) case that might be explained by the missing proximity of her employees to the task. She showed voluntary behaviour towards other departments, which her employees could experience as an instruction and might, therefore, not recognize the voluntariness in her action. Sam's (MFL) and Tom's (MFL) behaviours are more obvious to employees, but managers might be considered as part of the team and not recognized in their formal role in situations that require helping behaviour. While employees might evaluate their manager's behaviour as voluntary, they might not be able to recall their contribution due to the stressful and potentially hectic situation.

Another form of helping behaviour is based on the imbalance of knowledge or skills between behaviour receiver and provider. While most individuals can perform the time-sensitive tasks illustrated above, special knowledge or specific skills are needed to exhibit the second type of helping behaviour. Sarah (EFL) receives helping behaviour from a colleague who writes drafts for her when there is a topic that she finds challenging. Therefore, her colleague has a skill she does not have, which enables them to do the task better than her. Other examples include Melinda (EBO) co-developing a process with a colleague, Bree (EBO) proofreading colleagues' work, and Cora (EBO) testing processes in an IT system for colleagues. Melinda (EBO) illustrates the differences in individuals' potential to perform tasks: "I reduced that big mountain of processes for her and simply approached it in a very processual and structured way. Something that is very, very easy for me." These narratives have in common that one individual has skills or knowledge that enables them to do a task 'better' or 'faster' than another person. Therefore, the potential for helping behaviour relies on an individuals' knowledge and skills, as they are a prerequisite for this behaviour. This also encompasses a potential motive for showing such behaviour. Employees seem to be aware, that their skill set and knowledge base are a strength they can offer others in some situations, and that no individual can be fully prepared for all future tasks. Therefore, helping behaviour might be a strategy to ensure future reciprocal helping behaviour when it might be needed due to new professional challenges not covered by one's skillset and knowledge.

Interestingly, only back-office employees report helping behaviour based on skills and knowledge. Front-line employees might not report such behaviour because time-sensitive helping behaviour is of higher importance to their fast-moving tasks, accelerated by customer expectations. Back-office managers might not notice such behaviour due to lack of proximity. Hence, they might only perceive the positive outcome of a completed task, and, therefore, attribute the success to the helping behaviour receiver. In other cases, such behaviour might not be considered as voluntary, as the manager already thought about assigning the task to an employee to help another colleague. Melinda's (EBO) illustrations support this notion as she states: "My manager came back from her vacation two weeks later and said: 'Great that you have already started working together. I was about to ask you to help your colleague'." Thereby, her manager verbally reduced the voluntariness of the action itself. Still, the proactivity in her behaviour could be evaluated as voluntary. This example illustrates the potentially different interpretations regarding voluntariness, leading to differing conceptualizations of FB.

Overall, two forms of helping behaviour can be identified: (a) time-sensitive helping behaviour and (b) skill- or knowledge-based helping behaviour. While time-sensitive helping behaviour has been reported by front-line and back-office employees and managers, skill- or knowledge-based helping behaviour is only perceived as voluntary by back-office employees. The different conceptualizations could be explained by the different characteristics of the tasks, lower proximity of the manager, or differing expectations.

5.1.3.1.3 *SUBSTITUTE*

Substituting for a person means taking over their tasks and responsibilities for a limited time. Substitution behaviour is often reported when a team member is sick. In front-line positions substituting for a team member is considered of high importance as the customers are directly affected. Megan (MFL) explains:

> One of my employees called in sick, and as you can imagine this is really difficult in our business. Why? We have scheduled appointments with our customers and these appointments are directly in danger when somebody is sick. That means we need to react immediately, call the customer, make a new appointment because we don't have on-call duties. That means an employee calling in sick is a high-alert situation as we don't want to cancel appointments.

Henry (MBO) reports similar situations during the COVID-19 pandemic when colleagues could not show up for their shifts. “I remember a situation when a colleague said, ‘No problem, I’ll be there in an hour’ – even though it was his day off, and he had planned to go on a bike trip with his family.” Through these examples it becomes evident that substitution behaviour is highly valued by managers when the task is time-sensitive and organizational goals are in danger. Substituting is then similar to preventing potential failure, with the difference being that the task is normally the responsibility of another person.

From a front-line employee perspective, Thomas (EFL) describes the situation where there is nobody who can cover for a colleague, and he has to manage without a replacement. For Mick (EFL), covering at the beginning and the end of the month is important as “those are appointments you cannot postpone, especially when we hand over apartments to tenants.” It becomes clear that front-line employees and managers have a similar understanding of substitution behaviour in employees. Both groups do not report such behaviour for managers, leading to a generally concurring understanding of this behaviour in a front-line setting.

In a back-office setting, employees also see situations in which they exhibit or experience substitution behaviour. In contrast to front-line employees, they report less such behaviours, which might be linked to the task and the potential outcome of not showing the behaviour. Comparable to a front-line setting, Evan (EBO) says that he and his colleagues take over seminars when another trainer is sick. Monica (EBO) reports a similar situation in which a manager was prevented from attending an event on short notice and she and a colleague took over host tasks. These behaviours are concurrent with the understanding of front-line employees as they are time-critical and the underlying problems would lead to negative outcomes, such as the cancellation of a seminar or an event. Additionally, Evan (EBO) reports a different behaviour:

> There are times when a colleague takes over a seminar day and says, ‘I’m already there, I’ll take over the training day for you, then you don’t need to drive.’ And that, of

> course, helps me as I can be home a bit longer. And it makes no difference to the company.

In this example, Evan's (EBO) colleague shows voluntary behaviour towards him. While no negative effect for the organization would occur, Evan (EBO) would have a personal disadvantage in the form of more effort and time investment if his colleague had not exhibited this behaviour. Abby (MBO) reports a similar situation from a back-office managers' perspective:

> There was a project kick-off meeting which we always have at the end of the month... . Normally the team assistant would start the meeting, record it, keep an eye on the meeting timeline, and remind participants to fill out slides that are missing content. I did that for a colleague who has been sick for a while.

Abby (MBO) reports taking over tasks that are normally part of an employee role. While there are parallels with managers' task behaviour beyond expectation, Abby's (MBO) behaviour is based on the absence of the employee. The behaviours are, therefore, distinguished by the trigger. Abby (MBO) also provides an explanation why such behaviour is not often displayed by managers. She claims that most managers do not have a hands-on-mentality and expect others to solve such problems. For her, the well-being of the employee, who would otherwise have worked despite being sick, was more important than her "not having a direct benefit from it". This narrative illustrates a potential cause for less support behaviour being exhibited by managers than by employees – the expectation that employees solve such problems. In addition, Evan's (EBO) and Abby's (MBO) narratives suggest that substituting is not only exhibited to prevent potential negative effects for the organization or customers, but also for colleagues and employees. Thereby, a variety of behaviour receivers of substitution behaviour are identified.

Overall, substitution behaviour is regularly exhibited to prevent negative outcomes for the organization or the customer due to an organization member's absence. This conceptualization of FB is prevalent in both front-line and back-office settings. In addition, back-office employees and managers see behaviours aimed to prevent negative outcomes for colleagues or employees as voluntary behaviour.

5.1.3.1.4 *TAKING ON NEW TASKS*

Adopting a new task includes taking on more responsibility. This behaviour is reported by back-office managers and employees for respective employees and by front-line managers for their employees. The trigger of the behaviour is often external. For example, Isabel (EBO) describes that her manager presented a task that needed to be done to the team, and she volunteered to complete it, while Monica (EBO) was asked to become a project team member. Evan (EBO) also reports a situation in which he was asked to deliver an additional seminar. All these behaviours have in common that they were triggered by a communication and the task was assigned, but an opportunity to decline the task was offered. Therefore, the employees perceive the adoption of the task as voluntary. Evan (EBO) describes the situation where he was asked to deliver an additional seminar, including effort for him: “Sometimes those questions are rhetorical. In this particular case, I didn’t have the feeling that it was a rhetorical question, but that I could actually decide, yes or no.” Hence, a different way of communication would potentially limit his perceived voluntariness. Through the top-down assignment of a task, employees might apprehend that they have no discretion in stating if they are interested in undertaking the task or not. Interestingly, a number of examples are provided by back-office employees while their managers do not report such behaviour. This might be the case as, from their perspective, taking on new tasks is expected employee behaviour. As the manager is regularly involved in presenting the opportunity to take on additional tasks, it is unlikely that lack of proximity is an explanation for the divergent perception.

In contrast to back-office employees, front-line employees do not report taking on new tasks as voluntary behaviour. This is interesting, as it highlights the divergent understanding of support behaviour in front-line and back-office positions. In contrast to back-office employees, front-line employees might have less leeway to take on additional tasks, as they focus on providing excellent customer service. Therefore, their availability to the customer is of primary relevance, leaving less time for other tasks. Interestingly, front-line managers report behaviours that extend over a short period of time, such as attending a sports event and promoting the employer there (John, MFL), or that include little time investment, such as entering data into a system (Tom, MFL). This strengthens the argument that additional tasks can only be adopted by front-line employees if they do not interfere with the main focus of their voluntary behaviour, which is the provision of excellent customer service. In addition, a divergence in the conceptualization of voluntary behaviour surfaces, as front-line employees do not see any opportunity to exhibit such behaviour, while managers perceive this possibility at least to a limited extent.

Managers do not see taking on new tasks as voluntary behaviour for themselves. This might be the case as the expectations towards managers change more frequently and they see adopting new tasks as part of their job.

5.1.3.1.5 *EXPLORING SUPPORT OPTIONS*

This theme comprises all verbal behaviours that can lead to actions supporting task completion. By proactively offering support, a person signals the volition to act. For example, Elise (MBO), Evan (EBO), Megan (MFL), Mark (EFL), Amanda (EFL), and Melinda (EBO) report that they or their colleagues have offered to take over a shift or tasks that need to be done on that specific day when a team member calls in sick. This behaviour might be based on the reciprocal expectation that colleagues would take over shifts or on the shared goal to provide customer service and not having to cancel an appointment, which would lead to a negative customer experience.

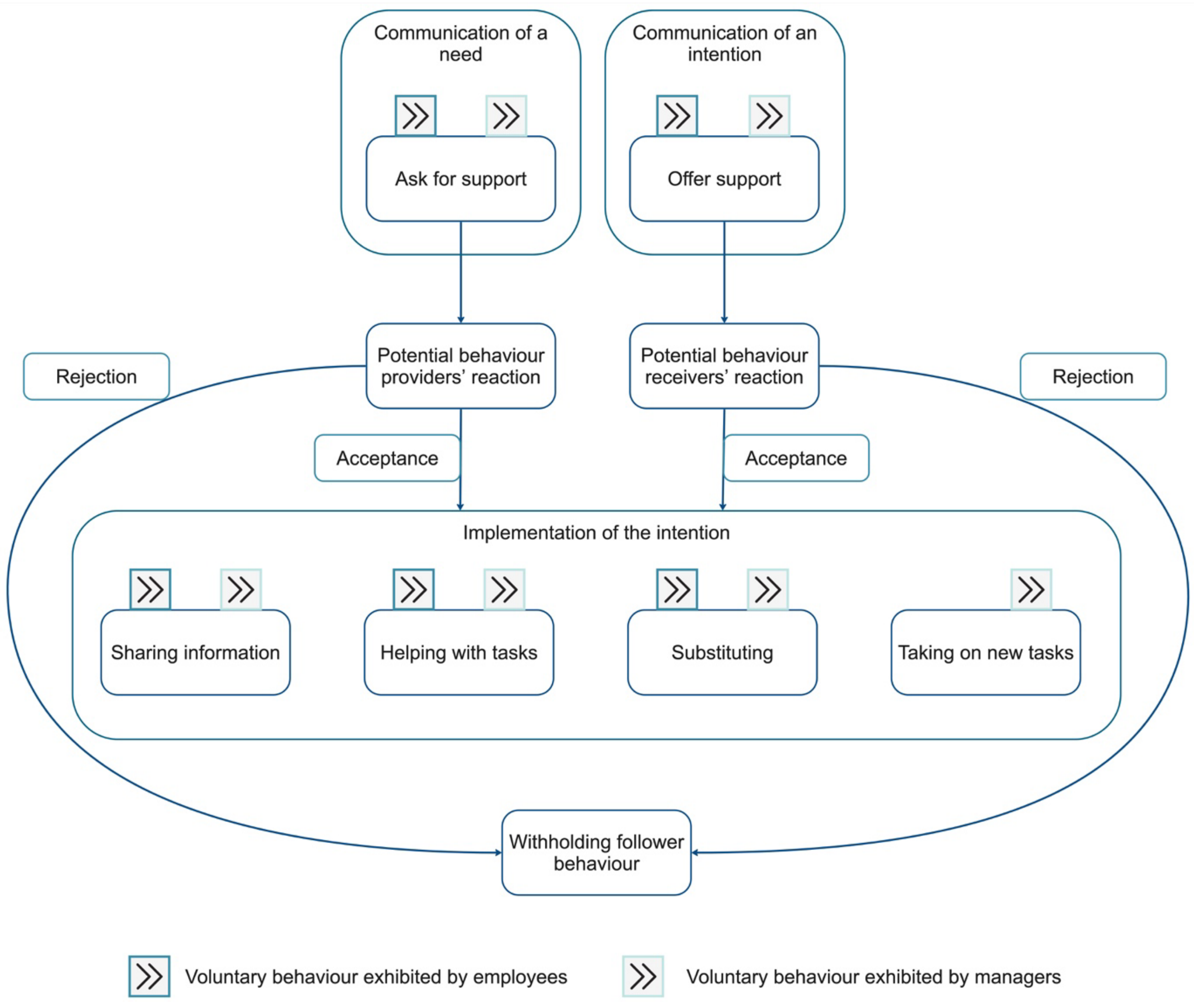
> We work in shifts. A colleague was planned for the afternoon shift and had appointments with customers scheduled. There always have to be two of us so one can make a break or do tasks in the back office... . I offered voluntarily to come back for the afternoon shift to help for two or three hours. But then somebody else could take the shift over who had not already worked the morning shift. (Amanda, EFL)

While Amanda (EFL) did not take over the shift, she still sees offering and showing the willingness to do so as FB. Offering support has also been identified as a preceding communication behaviour for helping with tasks (Elise, MBO; Bree, EBO; Amanda, EFL; Monica, EBO; Melinda, EBO; Evan, EBO), sharing information (Connor, MFL), and taking on new tasks (Isabel, EBO). Through these examples, it becomes clear that the action identified as possible help will only follow if the person offered the support responds and accepts the support. Therefore, unwanted behaviour is avoided. Hence, offering support is a verbal FB that can lead to additional actions but can also be a standalone behaviour.

Another starting point of task support behaviour can be found in the behaviour recipients' preceding task behaviour that aims to prevent potential failure. This can include asking for help, which is a communication behaviour, transmitting the need for support, functioning as a trigger for support behaviour.

Figure 31

The Link Between 'Exploring Support Options' and 'Task Support Behaviour'



Clear connections between the exploration of support options and exhibiting the behaviour can be found, as the two behaviours often occur together. As displayed in Figure 31, exploring support options includes asking for and offering support. These two verbal behaviours can be interpreted as the communication of the request for, or an intention to, exhibit an action. Hence, the potential FB provider can express the volition to exhibit a specific behaviour, while a potential FB receiver can express the wish for somebody else to exhibit a specific behaviour. Through the communication of the intention, the risk of exhibiting negatively evaluated behaviours is reduced. This becomes clear in a situation reported by Abby (MBO):

> A team member knew from a meeting that I was working on the budget presentation for the strategy meeting. She really quickly, within two days, prepared the presentation. She knew that I would not get round to it because I was always in meetings... . My first reaction was that I had not asked her to do that. Initially, I really felt a bit taken by surprise. Afterwards, I was glad that she did it... . But first I thought, “Ooops, is she doing my job now?”

In that situation, Abby (MBO) is surprised and in her initial reaction she is offended in her position. While the other employee might have acted based on the positive intention to surprise Abby (MBO) and at the same time showing her own potential, a risk of negative evaluation was initially attached to the action. Through communicating intentions before acting, that risk is reduced, as an agreement on the mutual expectations is made explicit. Interestingly, offering support is a FB chiefly exhibited by employees, while asking for support is evident by both employees and managers. This indicates that managers do see less need to communicate their intention to provide support, as it is perceived as part of their formal role to be entitled to do so. Hence, the risk reduction seems unnecessary.

5.1.3.1.6 *INTERIM CONCLUSION*

Support behaviours are most often reported by and for back-office employees. For back-office managers and front-line employees, some behaviours of this kind are detailed, but the reports are less frequent than for back-office employees. This tendency suggests that support behaviours play a chief role in the understanding of FB of back-office employees, while it is less important in other roles. Therefore, the findings indicate that front-line and back-office employees set different priorities in terms of their voluntary behaviour. As discussed above, front-line employees primarily report behaviours based on excellent task execution, as these lead to customer satisfaction. In contrast, back-office employees showed less of these behaviours. It seems as if their focus is on supporting task completion. This notion can be explained by the differences in the job profiles. John (MFL) addresses this issue as he explains that the function of the team depends on the task. In the sales environment experiences reported by team members are used to improve one's own performance. He elaborates: "One salesperson looks to the other and analyses what's working well. And then they adapt that for themselves. That improves the team result." John (MFL) describes that the personal outcome is always the most important motivation for FB in sales functions. On the other hand, Liz (EBO) describes a different environment, seemingly less focused on one's own benefit: "I believe that in our culture, everybody is open and positive and really WANTS to support." Overall, the job profile seems to influence if individual or team goals are motivating FB, leading to different forms of voluntary behaviour. In front-line functions, more competitive organizational cultural elements are prevalent. Therefore, it is not surprising that back-office employees report more support behaviours than their counterparts in front-line jobs.

5.1.3.2 SUPPORT ON INDIVIDUAL LEVEL

This theme contains all behaviours that support an individual on a personal level. While the behaviours discussed above resulted in the completion of tasks, these behaviours can have two aims: (a) the positive development of an individual, and (b) the prevention of negative outcomes for an individual. Therefore, these behaviours support an individuals' goals in the first instance. The following sections discuss these behaviours, separated by individual advancement (positive outcome) and protecting individuals (preventing negative outcome).

5.1.3.2.1 *INDIVIDUAL ADVANCEMENT*

The theme individual advancement describes support in a sense of personal development. This behaviour has been reported by back-office employees for themselves and their managers. Interestingly, front-line managers and employees reported such behaviour for themselves and the other group. This indicates a difference in its conceptualization. Interestingly, both front-line and back-office employees report such manager behaviour. These reports are particularly worth mentioning as employees generally report little voluntary behaviour for their managers. Supporting individual advancement, therefore, seems to be a behaviour evaluated as voluntary by employees, while other behaviours are either not perceived or evaluated as non-voluntary.

Regarding the behaviours exhibited by managers, it is noticeable that especially employees with limited work experience report such behaviour. Isabel (EBO) and Mark (EFL) describe that their managers support them in their careers. Mark (EFL) says: “He gives me tips, shows me tricks and structures a plan with me.” Isabel’s (EBO) manager “delegates tasks that help me grow.” She also reports that her manager provides her with visibility in the organization. “When one of my topics is on the agenda of a management meeting, in which I am not present, he speaks in high terms of me and my work.” Caitlyn (EFL) also reports that she was offered growth opportunities with tasks delegated to her by her manager. These examples indicate that employees value behaviour that supports their career development, especially at the beginning of their work life. In addition, examples provided by front-line and back-office employees could be found. Therefore, a concurrent conceptualization for less experienced employees seems to span across both job profiles.

Another group of individuals that can be the recipients of such behaviour are those with limited tenure. The onboarding process is a period in which personal advancement is regularly supported. Matthew (MFL) reports that he supports new colleagues who come straight from the University.

> Even though they have studied for many years, when you start this job, you basically start from scratch... . The first two or three years, they are guided a lot, meaning that I look at how they do their job... . And also, for them to learn.

While Matthew (MFL) reports behaviours exhibited by managers, Denny (EFL), Caitlyn (EFL), and Amanda (EFL) report situations in which colleagues supported new hires during the onboarding phase by taking time to explain tasks and structures, providing them with interesting tasks, or preparing customer appointments with them. Employees seem to evaluate support in the onboarding process as a task that is part of a managers' role, as they do not report these behaviours for their managers. Such behaviour was only reported by front-line employees and managers, which is interesting, as both back-office and front-line employees face similar challenges during the onboarding phase. This might be linked to the tasks that are perceived and evaluated by customers from the first day of employment. In back-office positions, onboarding processes might be more structured, and the outcome might not be evaluated as quickly as in front-line positions. Therefore, front-line and back-office employees and managers have different conceptualizations of onboarding support behaviours.

Other behaviours are not linked to a specific employee group. From a managers' perspective, Jack (MFL) encouraged an employee who had a conflict with another employee to solve the problem without his interference. He provided the employee with structure and suggestions on how to approach the conflict and, therefore, helped them to build competencies. Lilly (MFL) organizes regular "session, in which we pass on knowledge". The content is not necessarily relevant for the job today but might become so later, hence Lilly (MFL) calls it "future-knowledge". Monica (EBO) adds to the notion of managers' support behaviours not linked to specific employee groups and describes that she has been trusted with challenging tasks. "My former manager gave me tasks that surprised me. I didn't think that somebody would think I was capable of doing them." It becomes evident that managers see individual advancement behaviours towards employees regardless of their work experience. This contrasts the conceptualization reported above focusing on early career or limited tenure employees.

Isabel (EBO) provides a different perspective on employees' voluntary behaviour as she offers her manager with a growth opportunity by giving feedback. She says: "I told him a few times to act more assertive... . Often, you don't realize negative consequences and when somebody tells you, you become aware of it and can change small things." This statement is interesting, as it is the only behaviour reported by the participants that includes feedback. Feedback is regularly part of organizations' communicated values. Therefore, more such reports would be expected. Potential explanations include that providing feedback is perceived as part of employees' and managers' roles and, therefore, not considered voluntary. Isabel's (EBO) story indicates that another explanation is more likely. She reports that feedback involves the need to "dare to do something". She says: "I think a lot of other say: 'Oh no, I'd rather be quiet, I don't want to give negative feedback'. You know how it is." Therefore, employees might hold back feedback as they fear negative consequences, hence explaining the low number of stories involving feedback, though not necessarily suggesting less prevalence in practice.

Generally, supporting personal development can occur towards specific groups including individuals with limited tenure or at the beginning of their career, but also during regular employment. The conceptualization of this behaviour set is relatively concurrent in front-line settings. While employees and managers report behaviours exhibited by both groups, they see more such behaviours reported by themselves than by the other group. In a back-office context, employees report most personal development supporting behaviours for their managers. Back-office managers do not report such behaviours at all. Therefore, the conceptualization in back-office functions is divergent.

5.1.3.2.2 *PROTECTING INDIVIDUALS*

This theme includes all behaviours that protect another person from negative impacts. Managers and colleagues can show the behaviour, and it can be sub-divided into solving errors and speaking up.

Regarding solving errors, David (MBO), as a manager, protected his team when they did not finish a task on time. He took the blame for his team by sending a message to the department that was the internal customer saying: “Hey, this did not go well, it was my fault.” His employees noticed and thanked him for “holding a protective hand over them.” Concurringly, Bree (EBO) sometimes corrects colleagues’ errors before the work is delivered to the customer when she notices “that this does not make sense from start to finish.” Thomas (EFL) helped a new team member from a colleague’s perspective:

> A newbie had given out a bill that was too high, and the customer returned and was annoyed. I offered him a voucher and said it wasn’t on purpose and that the colleague was new and still needed to get by the cash system.

Through these examples it becomes clear that the conceptualization of solving errors by correcting them or taking the blame for errors that customers have already noticed is concurrent with back-office employees and managers, as well as front-line employees. This behaviour seems to be shown when the behaviour provider anticipates that the error did not result from laziness or lack of commitment but was based on time pressure or lack of knowledge. Therefore, a positive intention is presumed, leading to the willingness to protect the individual from trouble. Furthermore, the individual exhibiting the behaviour seems to have a lower risk of punishment, making the behaviour easier to exhibit. This can be illustrated by David’s (MBO) case. The other department might be upset that the task was not finished, but in communication with David as a manager, there is a higher barrier to escalate the issue to the next hierarchical level than with the employee with a lower hierarchical standing.

Protecting others can also include speaking up and standing up for others. Robert (MBO) was impressed by an employee who accompanied him in a meeting with high-level managers and “took part in a discussion and argues for topics that are not necessarily their task area,” but supported the team and Robert (MBO) in his manager role. Due to the presence of managers several hierarchical levels above the employee, Robert (MBO) did not expect them to ‘dare’ to speak up. Abby (MBO) also sees speaking-up behaviour in her team and, therefore, reports this behaviour between colleagues at the same hierarchical level. “I noticed behaviours in which they take sides for each other and don’t let the other look bad.”

Nell (MFL) remembers a situation from a time when she was still a crew member and not yet in a manager position, which includes standing up for another team member:

> I had to take over a leadership position as the person normally in that position had mixed up the days and had not shown up for her shift. The passenger attendants assisted me so much that it did go better than with the original leader... . It was phenomenal because everything went like clockwork.

Interestingly, Nell (MFL) says that this kind of voluntary behaviour worked even better than the normal hierarchical setting. The situation and the behaviour exhibited by her colleagues at the time impacted her perspective on her future management position to a great extent, as she “remember[s] that feeling up to this day.” Speaking and standing up for others are verbal and action behaviours not often reported but trigger strong emotions in the behaviour receiver. Hence, the conceptualization reported by front-line and back-office managers is similar.

In summary, front-line employees and managers report less individual protection behaviour for employees than back-office employees. While employees emphasize solving other’s errors, managers focus on speaking up and standing up for others. This indicates differences in the conceptualization of voluntary protection behaviour.

5.1.4 *ADDITIONAL ROLES*

In this theme, the long-term acceptance of additional tasks is discussed. While all behaviours in the theme ‘support’ include taking on additional tasks for a limited period of time and the responsibility for the task remains with the person originally in charge of the task, additional roles include the expansion of the responsibilities of a team member. Four main additional roles could be identified: representing the organization, providing training, informal leadership, and volunteer work. Table 18 provides an overview with example quotes.

Table 18

Follower Behaviours Related to Additional Roles

	Employees as follower behaviour providers		Managers as follower behaviour providers	
	Reported by employees	Reported by managers	Reported by employees	Reported by managers
Back office	• Provide training • Represent the organization internally • Represent the organization externally • Do volunteer work *I am diversity representative. This is not part of my job description but something I do because it is interesting. I communicate in the organization and organize events to create awareness for the topic. (Cora, EBO)*	• Provide training • Take on informal leadership roles *One of my team members supervises our apprentices ... For them, she is like a mom who explains everything from the beginning, especially in the first year when they just finished school. Also, at the end of the apprenticeship, in the third year, she conducts the training sessions for the exam preparation. (Elise, MBO)*	-/-	• Provide training • Represent the organization internally • Represent the organization externally • Do volunteer work *I do voluntary work for my employer as I am on the board of a committee for business interests. (Edith, MBO)*
Front line	• Provide training • Represent the organization internally • Represent the organization externally • Take on informal leadership roles • Do volunteer work *I proactively approach schools around [place], the teachers and the headmasters, and offer to give one- or two-hour lectures to the students on financial education in different areas, depending on what interests them. I then teach that. (Mark, EFL)*	• Represent the organization externally *My employees go to evening events to show their faces and make themselves, and the company, known. The same is true for publishing. All such things are not directly an obligation. (Matthew, MFL)*	-/-	• Represent the organization externally *When we are introducing ourselves to potential new customers it conveys subject expertise when I say that I am a lecturer at a university. (Lilly, MFL)*

5.1.4.1 REPRESENTING THE ORGANIZATION

This sub-theme involves the representation of a group or the organization internally or externally. External representation can include public relations and attending events. Internally, representing colleagues as a member of the work council or being an ambassador for specific topics, such as diversity or sustainability is included.

External representation means that a member of an organization interacts with individuals or organizations outside the company while associating with one's organization and can be exhibited by both, employees and managers. Edith (MBO) represents her employer on an economic committee, and Lilly (MFL) is a lecturer at an academic institution. Team members can also become involved in their employer's public relations and marketing activities. Kirby (EFL) and Mark (EFL) are involved in such activities on different levels. One way is being active on social media. Kirby (EFL) defines the content, writes the posts, and determines the right timing. Mark (EFL) is "a so-called finance-fluencer, so that's ultimately the person who then presents himself in the videos, to show in public and impart financial knowledge." In addition, Mark (EFL) represents the company in schools, where he provides financial education to students. Matthew (MFL) reports that his employees regularly attend after-work events to get in touch with potential customers and play an active role in the marketing strategy. Representing the organization externally seems to be of more relevance in front-line positions, potentially as their jobs include directly interacting with customer, leading to the necessity for external representation.

Taking on representative functions internally can also be exhibited in different forms. It can be aimed at specific topics, such as sustainability or diversity. For example, Mick (EFL) functions as a sustainability ambassador:

> I work on internal projects that plan sustainability. We ambassadors meet every six weeks and exchange everyday work experiences on how we can make things more sustainable. And then I distribute this information among other colleagues and say: "When you have a building with grassed areas, we would recommend wildflower meadows because that is better for bees".

Cora (EBO) is a diversity ambassador who organizes events to generate awareness. "We organized a panel discussion and wanted to record it, so we can distribute it to all employees. In my head, a bit naively, I thought: 'You'll put up a few chairs, point the camera there and that's it'." Many additional tasks came up for her, such as promoting the panel discussion, finding discussion partners, and doing make-up. Managers also report adopting internal representative functions. For example, Edith (MBO) reports taking on the function of a change agent during a rebuilding project. She was the contact person for the employees affected by the building work and the new work design associated with the rebuild. She also acted as a moderator between the employees and the project team.

It becomes evident that, in general, representative roles, internally and externally, can be adopted by front-line and back-office employees and managers. Again, employees do not report such behaviour for their managers, which might indicate that they see these behaviours as part of the leaders' role. All participants who reported accepting additional representative roles emphasized the effort included in such roles, which makes them voluntary from their perspective.

5.1.4.2 PROVIDING TRAINING

There are several options for providing training in an organization that have been reported by participants. This sub-theme needs to be demarcated from support, as support aims at individual team members and happens informally. In contrast, providing training includes the repeated distribution of knowledge among a specific group of employees and the formal adoption of a role. Providing training can aim at new colleagues or team members during a change process. Bree (EBO) and Elise (MBO) represent their departments during official onboarding events. "I speak to our new colleagues for about half an hour ... and I show them what we do, how we work directly with the customer, and what the end product looks like" (Bree, EBO). Jeffrey (MBO) and Mick (EFL) talk about a role that is necessary during the introduction of new software: the key user. For Jeffrey (MBO), key users help him achieve goals related to his formal role. "Before using a new system, you need to clear out the old data first because in the past data was just horded. And I have two colleagues who are very active in doing that." Mick (EFL), on the other hand, functions as key user:

> There is a new software that is currently being introduced. All letters, e-mails, and phone calls are documented in a ticket system with which everybody in the company ..., even the caretaker, is going to work. As a key user I sit down with colleagues and show them how you send e-mails, how you open tickets, just how you properly work with the software.

Another target group for training are apprentices. As described in section 1.6.2 (see p. 18 et seq.), the apprentice system in Germany is highly developed, and more professions can be certified by apprenticeships than in other countries. A special training certificate needs to be presented to be an apprentice instructor. Being assigned as an apprentice instructor means supervising and training one or more apprentices in the workplace for a pre-determined time frame. This is often training on the job but also includes exam preparation. Rick (EFL), Kirby (EFL), and Mick (EFL) regularly function as apprentice instructors and emphasize the effort included.

> It is not easy to ensure good training throughout the workday... . You have to invest a lot of time before the apprentice can work with the customer. That might be that you stay longer in the evening to explain something to the apprentice or to fix errors the apprentice made. (Kirby, EFL)

Elise (MBO) has a team member who trains apprentices and supports their exam preparation. “She organizes one day during which all content of the apprenticeship is revisited because the apprentices need to know all that on the day of their exam.” Interestingly, only front-line employees and managers reported being apprentice instructors as voluntary behaviour. It could be suggested that there are no apprentice instructors in back-office functions among the participants, but Jeffrey (MBO) provides a counterexample as he talks about an apprentice whom he trained but he does not mention being an instructor as one of his voluntary behaviours. This imbalance rather seems to be based on the perception of an extended workload involved in the task in front-line functions. As Kirby (EFL) describes in the quote above, she regularly needs to invest her personal time and Rick (EFL) supports that statement. In back-office functions, the training of apprentices is integrated in one’s workday to a larger extent and no personal time needs to be invested.

5.1.4.3 VOLUNTEER WORK

This sub-theme is concerned with volunteer work linked to the organization but not directly connected with the individual’s job. For example, Edith (MBO), who represents her employer on an economic committee, also became the chair of this committee, which is an additional, voluntary function, exceeding the representation of her employer. Jeffrey (MBO) narrates that a marathon is organized by the city council on a Sunday each year. As the marathon passes their office building, he and some other managers and employees are part of a company-sponsored provision stand. Carrie (EBO) works in a company that has a site in Ukraine and reports:

> About a year ago, the war started. We formed a voluntary project team that aimed to help our colleagues in Ukraine. We helped wives and children to come to Germany and be safe... . We organized buses that brought them here, but we also cared for them in Germany during the first days or weeks. Some were accommodated in the holiday homes of colleagues, and we looked for long-term options. We went to the authorities with them, and we teach them German once a week.

Carrie (EBO) reported this behaviour with enthusiasm, and it became evident that she wanted to contribute to helping colleagues and their families. She reports that the opportunity to get involved in this voluntary work gave her the feeling of contributing to a situation she could not otherwise influence. Therefore, she describes that helping others functioned as a coping mechanism for herself.

Another example of following colleagues through voluntary work is presented by Rick (EFL) and Jeffrey (MBO), who are works council representatives and discuss issues with the employer while representing the staff. One might think that such work is part of a job, but "being a works council representative is an honorary post," as Rick (EFL) states, in accordance with the German industrial relations law. Jeffrey (MBO) describes tensions he experiences in that role, as "there are situations in which you have to take a stand for somebody, an employee, a colleague, that you might not personally like. But it is about the issue that needs to be resolved." He also sees a second perspective in works council representation work in electing somebody as their representative as FB: "I did have lots of followers that voted for me." Therefore, he describes time-delayed reciprocal behaviours.

This theme needs to be distinguished from the theme representation, as the link to the organization is different. Voluntary work often aims at following colleagues or a cause rather than the organization, while representation aims at achieving organizational goals such as customer acquisition or brand awareness. Doing volunteer work has mainly been reported by back-office employees and managers. Hence, front-line employees and managers seem to be involved in volunteer work to a lesser extent. This could be because front-line employees, especially in sales functions, are more extrinsically motivated, as John (MFL) states. Accordingly, they might perceive the personal benefits of these behaviours as less rewarding. Consequently, external representative functions are favoured as they contribute to company and personal success. This explanation is supported by a higher number of reports in the sub-theme of external representation of the organization and, therefore, its seemingly higher importance.

5.1.4.4 INFORMAL LEADERSHIP

The behaviours described in this sub-theme refer to team members that show behaviours usually associated with leadership without having formal management roles. Denny (EFL) observed that behaviour with a colleague who assumed broader responsibility by “seeing about relevant problems”. Thomas (EFL) reports a similar experience in which his manager does the general staff planning but lets Thomas (EFL) distribute the tasks during the day. For Allen (MBO), informal leadership also means making decisions and promoting topics that are important for the success of the company.

While only a small number of behaviours were reported in this sub-theme, it is interesting as leader and follower roles seem to become indistinct. These behaviours are not attributed to the formal role but are seen as voluntary. Therefore, they cannot be labelled as management behaviour, as this would require the attribution to a formal role. By showing informal leadership behaviour, employees adopt a different role and the behaviours reported suggest that followers can switch roles. Interestingly, this behaviour is only reported for employees, as managers seem to be expected to show leadership behaviour. Furthermore, the lack of conceptual clarity becomes evident, as the distinction of follower and leader behaviour has not yet been defined. According to the participants of this study, repeatedly showing behaviours that they would usually expect from managers, is FB in the form of adopting an informal leadership role.

5.1.5 *SOCIAL INTERACTION*

This main theme (overview and example quotes displayed in table 19) contains all behaviours between team members on a social level. Three main behaviours have been identified: consideration, conflict solving, and personal exchange. Interestingly, as above, employees do not report social interaction behaviours for their managers.

Table 19

Follower Behaviours Related to Social Interaction

	Employees as follower behaviour providers		Managers as follower behaviour providers	
	Reported by employees	Reported by managers	Reported by employees	Reported by managers
Back office	• Engage in personal exchange • Consider other individuals' needs • Solve conflicts *It might sound silly but it's small things like bringing him [her manager] a coffee when he seems stressed. (Daisy, EBO)*	• Consider other individuals' needs *Everybody should put their own cup in the dishwasher. That's not the secretary's job. (Steven, MBO)*	-/-	• Consider other individuals' needs *One of my employees was interested in mental health, just out of her own motivation. So, I gave her the possibility to include that in her work. (Bill, MBO)*
Front line	• Engage in personal exchange • Consider other individuals' needs *A colleague asked if I wanted to go to see a soccer game with them [a group of colleagues]. (Denny, EFL)*	• Solve conflicts • Engage in personal exchange • Consider other individuals' needs *When there is a conflict, it has to be solved behind the curtain because otherwise it would be very unprofessional. But when they solve it voluntarily, they basically want it to be okay again. (Megan, MFL)*	-/-	• Consider other individuals' needs • Solve conflicts • Engage in personal exchange *I organized a reunion for former employees and former apprentices. That was like a family gathering. (Sam, MFL)*

5.1.5.1 CONSIDERATION

This sub-theme contains all behaviours that are based on the consideration of another individual's feelings or needs. Daisy (EBO) describes: "When I perceive that he [her manager] is stressed, I bring him a coffee. Or I approach him and ask, ‘Is everything okay?’.” She specifies:

> I noticed that he wanted to talk, and then I stopped what I was doing, even though it was not a convenient moment, and listened to what he needed to get off his chest... . I know that feeling that you just need to get something off your chest, and then you are happy when somebody has a friendly ear. It is not even about giving advice. It is just sufficient to listen.

Rick (EFL) cares for his colleagues who cannot leave their workstation due to the nature of the task and caters for them with drinks and food. The behaviours reported by Daisy (EBO) and Rick (EFL) seem to be simple, but they require empathy and the ability to perceive the needs of others. Therefore, they are the result of a more complex social process.

The necessity to perceive others’ needs is also reported by Megan (MFL) who noticed that one of her employees did not recover enough on her days off and considered the employee’s needs while finding a solution. “I realized that she needs more free time, more time off. Then I thought: ‘What can I do?’ and I suggested to swap her days off so she can have two days without work in a row.” Caitlyn (EFL) experienced a similar situation. She has a long commute, and her manager considers her wishes for early or late shifts when planning the work schedule. In addition to the ability to perceive another persons’ need, Megan’s (MFL) and Caitlyn’s (EFL) stories contain a supplementary component: the willingness to contribute to changing the status quo. Megan (MFL) could have talked to her employee about their insufficient performance, and Caitlyn’s (EFL) manager could have asked her to work the shifts as agreed in the work contract. By offering alternatives, they communicated their willingness to invest in the relationship beyond legal agreements.

While the examples above aim at a person’s individual needs, consideration can also be associated with the tasks of the job. Bill (MBO) says: “I always try to distribute tasks according to interest... . You always realize right away if you can fuel enthusiasm or not, when you address a topic.” Connor (MFL) has colleagues in the back-office who do their work with his needs in mind:

> When they do travel planning for me, they don't just throw the travel plan that meets the hard facts on the table, but they keep my needs in mind. They might say: "So, the customer is located here" and then they do not book a hotel 30 kilometres away, which would mean a long drive for me, but they spend a few euros more and say, "Now he can walk over or needs to drive for only ten minutes."

Considering the personal or work-related needs of another person can be exhibited by both employees and managers. While the behaviours seem simplistic, there are social processes in the background that are clearly more complex than might first be assumed. Therefore, relational processes seem to play an important role in these behaviours. Interestingly, managers and employees in front-line and back-office functions reported these behaviours, attributing them a high degree of importance.

5.1.5.2 CONFLICT-SOLVING

This sub-theme comprises all conflict-related behaviours. This behaviour was reported by managers who see conflict-solving behaviours in their team members and rate it as FB. For Megan (MFL), the timing of solving conflicts is crucial, as they should never be noticed by the customer "because a lot of the conflict happens non-verbally. You notice how they walk past each other, how they interact in a room, and how they react to each other." Jack (MFL) reports a situation in which a team member had a conflict with a colleague from another department. While he could have solved the problem formally, he encouraged the team member to solve it themselves "to have a chance to build up a good relationship."

Conflict behaviour has only been reported to a small extent. This might be because participants focus on positively evaluated situations rather than social tensions. Conflict behaviours could also be something participants avoid talking about because they themselves were not satisfied with their handling of the situation and do not want to admit this to make a positive impression. It is likely that participants would rate behaviour in conflict situations as voluntary, as they could avoid these behaviours by asking their manager for a decision.

5.1.5.3 PERSONAL EXCHANGE

While team members spend long hours with their colleagues, personal exchange is an FB. Lilly (MFL) describes that some team members organized a Christmas party for the team, and Sam (MFL) has organized parties for his employees. Kirby (EFL) sees participating in these events as FB, as she has witnessed discussions in her team about spending time with colleagues outside of working hours. Personal exchange can also take place outside the organization. Bree (EBO) has a colleague who regularly organizes after-work events such as dinners, and Denny (EFL) went to a soccer game with his colleagues.

In contrast to considering other individuals' needs and conflict behaviour, personal exchange takes the relational level a step further. This disclosure of further aspects of one's identity to individuals known from a work context might be perceived as potentially harmful to the image other persons currently holds of the individual and, therefore, a risk in terms of self-presentation.

5.1.6 *CONCEPTUALIZATION COMPARISON*

The findings reported describe FB as diverse, and it is evident that the concomitant conceptualization is influenced by the formal role and the job type (front line vs. back office) the participants hold. For example, back-office employees emphasize support behaviour aimed at colleagues and successful task completion whilst front-line employees focus on task-related behaviour that aims to deliver excellent customer service. Managers generally report fewer FBs themselves than for employees and there are minimal reports by employees for managers. Therefore, FB seems to be exhibited often, but not always, by employees. Potential explanations can be found in the expectations attached to the formal role or the lack of awareness of such behaviour.

As a basis to discuss the differences in the conceptualization of FB further, Table 20 shows divergence and concordance found in participants' descriptions.

Table 20

Comparison of Front-line and Back-office Managers' and Employees' Conceptualizations

	Employees exhibiting voluntary behaviour		Managers exhibiting voluntary behaviour		Cross-functional understanding	
	EFL x MFL	EBO x MBO	MFL x EFL	MBO x EBO	EFL x EBO	MBO x MFL
Task execution						
Task execution beyond expectation	○	●	◌	◌	◎	○
Improvement	◌	○	◌	◌	◌	◎
Preventing potential failure	○	◌	◎	◌	●	●
Problem solving	◌	◌	◆	◆	●	◆
Support						
Sharing information	●	●	◆	◌	○	◌
Helping with tasks	○	●	◌	◌	●	○
Substituting	○	○	◆	◌	●	◌
Taking on new tasks	◌	●	◆	◆	◌	◆
Individual advancement	●	◌	●	◌	●	●
Protecting individuals	◌	◎	◆	◌	●	◌
Additional roles						
Providing training	◌	○	◆	◌	●	◌
Representing the organization internally	◌	◌	◆	◌	○	◌
Representing the organization externally	○	◌	◌	◌	●	●
Take on informal leadership roles	◌	◌	◆	◆	◌	◆
Do volunteer work	◌	◌	◆	◌	○	◌
Social interaction						
Consider other individuals' needs	○	○	◌	◌	○	○
Engage in private exchange	○	◌	◌	◆	○	◌
Solve conflicts	◌	◌	◌	◆	◌	◌

Note. ○ mentioned by both sides, content agreement

● mentioned by both sides, partial content agreement

◎ mentioned by both sides, content divergence

◌ mentioned by one side but not the other

◆ not mentioned by both sides

E = employee, M = manager, BO = back office, FL = front line

In Table 20, the presence or absence of stories and the (dis)similarity of the stories' content were used as indicators for concordance or divergence in the conceptualization.

Interestingly, managers and employees in both front-line and back-office functions seem to have divergent conceptualizations of FB to a large extent. Some behaviours such as considering other individuals' needs or substituting show concordance between the employees and the managers conceptualization in the respective job field. Divergence at different levels can be identified for other behaviours. Especially in the theme of additional roles, employees mention more voluntary behaviours than their managers. In the theme of support, it becomes evident that employees and managers report such behaviours exhibited by employees, but their understanding of those behaviours differ. Therefore, the conceptualizations of managers and employees in both job fields differ significantly. This is surprising as the terms 'employee' and 'follower' are often used interchangeably, and a larger overlap would be expected if they were the same construct. Hence, the divergence supports the argument that employeeship and followership are distinct concepts.

The strongest contrasts are clearly evident in the behaviours of managers. Here, employees often report no voluntary behaviours, while managers portray such behaviours. In addition, many behaviours are unanimously not rated as voluntary behaviours. Nevertheless, managers report a variety of behaviours which they perceive as voluntary. Therefore, managers can exhibit FB even though the potential to do so seems to be more limited than for employees.

For both, behaviour exhibited by employees and by managers, three possible explanations for the divergence are proposed. First, the individuals involved might not perceive the behaviour. This may be due to few common tasks and an independent working style. For example, employees do not perceive what behaviours managers exhibit in meetings in which they are not present. Managers also do not perceive all the activities of their employees, for example, when they work on tasks independently and only present the results. Therefore, the knowledge of the behaviours is the basis for the individuals involved to be able to report the behaviours. Second, the behaviour might not be evaluated as voluntary but as part of the formal role. In this case, there would be a variance in the definition of the role and its responsibilities. Furthermore, this explanation reveals a potential lack of communication, as it seems that the individuals involved have not stated their expectations but rather hold them implicitly. Therefore, the other person might not be aware of the expectation, leading to a difference in the evaluation of voluntariness. Third, the behaviour might be noticed and evaluated as voluntary, but no value might be attributed to the act. While the behaviour is not expected, it is also not positively regarded and might, therefore, be excluded from the descriptions. Hence, a variety of reasons for not reporting voluntary behaviour are plausible.

When contrasting the cross-functional conceptualization it becomes evident that both employees' and managers' perspectives differ. While a larger overlap can be found in mentioning examples for the respective behaviours, the contents characterizing the behaviours differ. Therefore, individuals in front-line positions seem to have a different understanding of the same behaviour groups than individuals in back-office functions. This indicates that the job type plays a significant role in the conceptualization of FB.

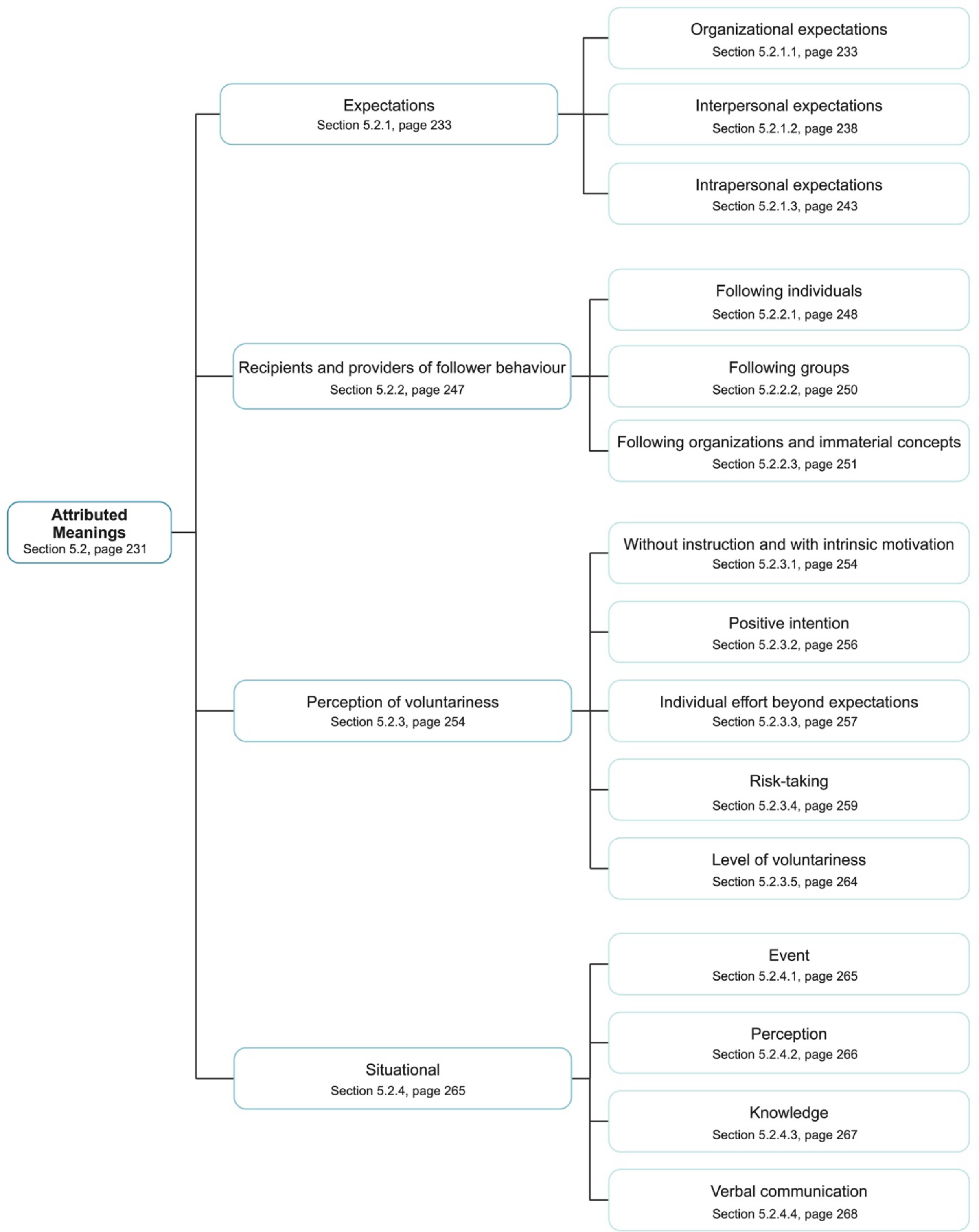
Overall, more differences than similarities were found in the conceptualization of voluntary behaviour. Within the job profiles, this indicates differing expectations and a lack of communication. In the cross-functional comparison, the differences reflect the influence of the job profile in the attribution of voluntariness and value to specific behaviours.

5.2 ATTRIBUTED MEANINGS

In this section, the meanings attributed to FB are discussed. In contrast to section 5.1 (see p. 176 et seq.), which mainly contained manifest descriptions, this section explores the latent aspects described by the participants. First, expectations as an integrative theme are presented. Second, the understanding of the informality of the follower role is discussed. Next, different dimensions of the notion of voluntariness are presented. Furthermore, FB is identified as situational. Figure 32 provides an overview of the themes explored in this section.

Figure 32

Overview on First and Second Level Sub-Themes on the Attributed Meanings of Follower Behaviours



5.2.1 *EXPECTATIONS*

"A person's expectations are strong beliefs which they have about the proper way someone should behave or something should happen" (Collins Dictionary, 2023). Expectations are a vital aspect in the understanding of FB and have been found to be an integrative theme. Integrative themes "infuse much of the discussion whatever the foreground issue" (Brooks et al., 2015, p. 204). Expectations will be discussed again in the perception of voluntariness (section 5.2.3, p. 254 et seq.) and situations (section 5.2.4, p. 265 et seq.). They also play a role in self-affirmation (section 5.3.3.1, p. 280 et seq.) and self-regulation (section 5.3.3.2, p. 282), and psychological contracts (section 5.3.4, p. 283 et seq.). It becomes clear that expectations play a significant role and form the basis for practitioners' understanding of FB and, therefore, meet the permeating criteria for integrative themes. In this section, the basic understanding of expectations and their origins is provided, and the concept is taken up again and specified in the following sections.

Different layers of expectations were found. First, organizational expectations are rooted in the institutional setting of FB. They are based on the organizational hierarchy and can be communicated through organizational structure or the embodied organization in the form of managers. Second, relational expectations were found. Those are not linked to the hierarchical setting but to group processes. They are represented in the expectations towards other organization members through reciprocal relationships and organizational culture. Third, intrapersonal expectations include the self-image and the ideal self. In addition, expectations are time-sensitive and volatile, meaning they can change over time.

5.2.1.1 ORGANIZATIONAL EXPECTATIONS

Organizations vary in their expectations. The communication of expectations can occur through organizational structure or the embodiment of the organization by managers. Organizational structure manifests clear rules through the work contract, job descriptions, and processes. Managers, who embody and represent the organization, can communicate expectations through verbal expression and role modelling.

How organizational expectations are conveyed in a specific context regularly depends on the understanding of the management function and the intensity of social exchange. Allen (MBO) states:

> There is a need to differentiate management tasks. Is it mainly about interpersonal exchange, that employees seek? Something they might have with other employees, who are not in a management function... . Or is it mainly about these HR topics, meaning: I sign vacation requests, time changes, report sick employees to HR, and contribute to company organization.

Allen (MBO) refers to a variety of tasks attributed to the management role. This is interesting as he discusses the difference between management and leadership without saying as much. In the interview, he used the term 'Führungskraft', which can include both aspects. He first describes leadership aspects of the formal manager and states that being a leader is partly expected from managers. He also describes leadership as something individuals without a management role can do. Additionally, he describes tasks that are attached to the management role, which are administrative in nature. The expectation of a manager seems to be to include both, leadership and management functions.

Regarding the intensity of social exchange, Liz (EBO) describes regular meetings with her manager. Matthew (MFL) regularly takes time to talk to his employees and primarily supports new employees during their first years. Lilly (MFL) reports that she includes her employees in decision-making. In contrast, other participants report little contact between manager and employee. John (MFL) is unsure how many employees he has and says, "well, if I just had an overview on that. We have round about 25 brokers, plus assistants, plus apprentices. I'd say I have round about 35 people." This insecurity about the number of people indicates that he rarely talks to each of them. Rick (EFL) reports that he was not in contact with his direct manager throughout the last year. He says, "If you maintain a low profile and just do your job, nobody will call and nobody will ask how you are." He states that there is a performance review every two years. Denny (EFL) also reports that he had only met his last direct manager in group meetings. Currently, he has regular meetings with his manager, but as a consultant, he mainly works at the customer's site, making more exchange problematic. It becomes clear that there are different understandings of the role of formal managers and different intensities of social exchange between manager and employee. Expectations can be conveyed through formal structures without personal interaction, while other means such as role-modelling or verbal communication necessitate social exchange.

5.2.1.1.1 *FORMAL STRUCTURE*

Expectations can be communicated through the work contract, formal job descriptions, internal regulations, and processes.

The work contract and the formal job description are an explicit form of expectations. Henry (MBO) says: "We have a very narrow set of rules. This contains collective agreements, company agreements, and obligations based on the work contract." He describes these formal requirements as "the minimal performance agreed on." Allen (MBO) sees that different formal jobs with their descriptions are linked to distinctive implicit expectations. He differentiates case workers and advisors. Caseworkers "have a clear framework they act in", and their work can be assessed regarding quality and quantity. In contrast, advisors have fewer indicators for their work, and the scope of their work is not entirely defined in their job descriptions. Allen (MBO) says: "It is more about my feeling of having accomplished more than expected" rather than a measurable outcome. Holly (MFL) supports this argument. As a C-level manager, she expects different behaviours from employees in management functions than those who do not hold formal management positions. Steven (MBO) adds that he has higher expectations towards his executive employees.

Internal regulations add to the work contract and formal job descriptions. For example, Jeffrey (MBO) works in an organization where all employees track their time in an official system. He says that "nobody has to work half an hour longer unpaid. You always have the possibility to start work later on Monday when you have worked until eight pm on Friday." These regulations impact the evaluation of behaviours, as the expectation of working overtime is perceived differently than in settings where these hours are unpaid. While employees at Jeffrey's (MBO) employer instead shift their free time to another day, Sarah (EFL) works for a company that does not compensate for overtime. Therefore, the expectations are different. Hence, the expectations toward a person are influenced by formal aspects, such as work contracts and internal regulations, which are explicit. Simultaneously, the evaluation of the potential outcome shapes implicit expectations towards individuals holding specific jobs.

Conversely, the industry constitutes the framework for a company to act and allow behaviours. These are limited by external regulations applicable to the industry. For example, Henry (MBO) states that he used to invite passengers afraid of flying to the cockpit to "convince them that there are normal people sitting there and that we know what we are doing." He often made them feel more comfortable by offering explanations and answering questions. After 9/11, regulations were put in place prohibiting passengers from entering the cockpit during a flight, limiting Henry's (MBO) behavioural options.

Processes are written down expectations. Rick (EFL) describes that a lot of the processes are very detailed. "I then comply with the process and do exactly what is requested." Bill (MBO) supports that as the processes in his department are very clear. Liz (EBO) states that processes limit independent thinking and working as they pre-set the course of action. Edith (MBO) supports Liz's (EBO) argument and adds that processes are efficient when large numbers of tasks need to be handled. Isabel (EBO) contributes that processes need to be known by the employees so they can "comply with the regulations and know which departments need to be involved."

In some cases, job descriptions and processes are not defined and communicated, which leads to a lack of clarity in expectations. "Our department is so new that there are nearly no expectations. We currently define what our role is, what we want to do, what the expectations could be" (Cora, EBO).

Overall, work contracts, job descriptions, and internal and regulations function as a means of communicating expectations. Through this communication, the possible behaviours in a certain context are defined. Furthermore, those expectations clarify the expected behaviours and determine the potential for voluntariness – as discussed below.

5.2.1.1.2 *EMBODIMENT OF THE ORGANIZATION*

Managers formally embody and represent the organization, as they are entitled to speak in the name of the juristic person. Therefore, they convey organizational expectations through verbal communication and their behaviour, which can be interpreted as role modelling.

Managers' expectations can either be implicit or communicated verbally, making them explicit. Implicit expectations occur when there is no communication, or the actual expectation and the verbal demand made differ. Steven (MBO) describes a situation where one of his employees needs to pick up their child from kindergarten, but there is still work to do:

> That person will find a way to get the job done anyway... . For example, they could find somebody else who picks up the child from kindergarten, so they don't need to do it themselves, as an example. But I would not demand that the person finds somebody else to pick up the child.

Steven (MBO) states his expectation in the interview but adds he would not verbalize it towards his employees. This might be the case as prioritizing work over picking up a child would not be socially accepted. At the same time, his unexpressed expectation remains without his employees being aware of it. Due to this lack of knowledge, his employees may behave contrary to his expectations. Therefore, implicit expectations imply an increased risk of conflict due to the different levels of awareness.

Another way of communicating expectations is role modelling. Managers convey their expectations through "their outward appearance, their presence, and their wording" (Nell, MFL). John (MFL) provides an example, as he says that he is willing to sacrifice and does more than he needs to as a manager. He says about his employees: "They adapt that... . By setting an example, people automatically follow you and identify with it. That also has to do with success, as they always orient themselves by the successful." Sam (MFL) refers to role-modelling regarding apprentices. He believes that the values are already given due to their upbringing, “but we can develop them. We can live these values and also demand them.” Nell (MFL) describes the general mechanism: “The more somebody is willing to give, and the more this happens in a space where others witness it, the more it is contagious. Somebody always has to set an example.” Through these examples, it becomes evident that managers can see themselves as role models for their employees. They assume that their employees learn about their expectations towards them by observing the managers’ behaviour. Therefore, expectations are not expressed verbally but by exemplification. These expectations can be described as semi-explicit, as they need to be interpreted by the employee and misinterpretations or transmitter-receiver problems are more likely in such settings.

5.2.1.2 INTERPERSONAL EXPECTATIONS

Interpersonal expectations describe how organizational culture is expressed by the team. While organizational expectations set the frame for what is accepted from an organizational viewpoint, this framework can be brought to life in different forms, depending on the individuals included. The expectations can be conveyed through mutual reciprocity or organizational culture.

5.2.1.2.1 *RECIPROCITY*

Interpersonal expectations are based on reciprocity. Participants call the foundation of FB “giving and taking” (Thomas, EFL; Megan, MFL; Jack, MFL; Lilly, MFL; Connor, MFL). “Nobody is willing to give voluntary all the time, when they have the sense that it is for nothing” (Megan, MFL). Reciprocal expectations can be found on a hierarchical and a horizontal level.

Hierarchical reciprocal expectations exist between formal managers and employees. Lilly (MFL) reports: “A part time employee could work for us in the afternoons, but if she had a private appointment on Friday morning, she could easily shift her working time without consulting her manager.” Isabel (EBO) describes the reciprocal relationship with her manager: “He supports me in many situations. But I also see it in a way that I, as an employee, can support him when my skills allow it." Henry (MBO) actively works on the reciprocal relationship while he embodies the organization:

> We try to accommodate their needs in return, like shifting vacation time or an additional free day. That is, if you want to see it like that, voluntary behaviour shown by the organization. We try to compensate a little for their efforts.

Megan (MFL) elaborates on what she thinks reciprocity can be: "I give the organization time, effort, thoughts, ideas, but I get great colleagues, an amazing team, and a great working atmosphere. I also get a safe job."

Horizontal reciprocal expectations can be found between colleagues. Jess (EFL) reports that she and a colleague have a reciprocal relationship, as they help each other "in the sense of collegial coaching." Mick (EFL) understands his relationship with his colleagues as reciprocal: "When I take on additional work for my colleagues, I know that they would do it in return." Evan (EBO) adds: "Of course, it also works the other way around. When I need help, the colleagues are naturally there to support me."

Reciprocity is often linked to a time lag as expectations are not met at the time of their occurrence. Megan (MFL) compares reciprocity with a diet:

> When I keep a diet for a while, and I don't lose weight, I might be able to stick it out for a while and think, "at some point I will lose weight," but when nothing happens for a while, I'll think, "Fuck it, I'll order a pizza". But if it works and I lose weight I'll think, "Awesome! Now I'll go to the gym, and I'll drink my protein shake." And it is the same in this case. When I give voluntarily, ... I might give more without gaining anything and getting something back might take a while.

Through her comparison, Megan refers to trust in the reciprocal relationship. She states that voluntary behaviour is exhibited as long as the trust for reciprocal behaviour is present. At the same time, the patience to wait for the reciprocal behaviour is limited. Therefore, reciprocity is described as time-sensitive and trust-based. In a similar vein, Jeffrey (MBO) adds that "this win-win situation is surely not to be taken for granted." David (MBO) voices mutual trust as the basis for reciprocity more explicitly. The notions of time offset and potential uncertainty in the reciprocal relationship are supported by Abby (MBO), who feels she has provided a credit of trust to her employees by supporting them: “I think they just didn’t have to do it so far. But I hope, when the time comes, they will show support for me, too.” The term ‘hope’ indicates that she is not entirely convinced that her employees would show the expected reciprocal behaviour. This could be due to the short time they have worked together. Her example shows that reciprocal trust is built through the experience of met reciprocal expectations. Evan’s (EBO) trust in the reciprocal relationship with his manager is stronger as he says: “I know that there are situations in which they will return it... . I know that there will be something in return.” Mick (EFL) also trusts the reciprocal relationship with his colleagues, saying “I know that I can count on my colleagues to do my work should I get sick. And therefore, I do exactly the same for them.” The use of the term ‘know’ again indicates a stronger trust in the reciprocal relationship.

5.2.1.2.2 *ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE*

Expectations on a horizontal level are also influenced by organizational culture. These expectations are not always explicit but have been voiced by participants repeatedly. Melinda (EBO) states that “organizational culture is a huge reference point for voluntary behaviour.” The reference point can be interpreted as expectations. She also thinks that, especially in larger companies, sub-culture can exist. “It then seems like you work in two different companies. It is then the culture of the department, rather than the culture of the organization.”

Handling errors is discussed as one aspect of organizational culture that conveys expectations. Jack (MFL) says: “With us, you may make mistakes. Of course, we don’t want a mistake to happen five times but when somebody hides mistakes, I lose it completely.” The expectation in the organization is that mistakes are communicated, and solutions are found. Melinda (EBO) reports a similar expectation regarding ideas that are voiced. “We have the possibility to show voluntary behaviours but there is no expectation in the sense of pressure to succeed.” She feels that “it is clear that we try three ideas and only one of them will work and we will celebrate that together. But you don’t need to be afraid that your idea might fail.”

Sarah (EFL) reports the opposite expectation. “It is all about details. And it is the same every time: the negative aspects get noticed.” She reports getting negative feedback from customers and consequently from her superiors.

Another aspect of organizational culture that conveys expectations is openness. Isabel (EBO) says: “A certain degree of openness is generally necessary, because otherwise I will never receive feedback.” Liz (EBO) sees openness in contrast to separation. She says, “the general culture here is very open, positive, and supportive. ... Helping is not person-related. It is not about liking each other or tenure. It is just part of the culture.” For Isabel (EBO), openness also includes transparency. “Communication is very open, so I have all the information I need and there are no communication problems.” Melinda (EBO) compares her former and current employers and says: “that was extreme silo mentality in the departments. That was difficult, because in current times people are more interconnected and organizations need to be more interconnected between departments.” She states that silo thinking led to organization members acting on political agendas, and she felt that her ideas for improvement were unwanted. With her current organization, she sees more openness to new ideas. Mary (EBO) contrasts that idea and states that her organization expects employees to stick to their responsibilities. For her, openness means to ask others before overstepping one’s boundaries.

Another aspect of organizational culture is the level of hierarchies. Jack (MFL) says he leads with flat hierarchies and “a trust-based and cooperative leadership style.” He directly links an expectation towards his employees to his leadership style: “I give all kinds of freedom, but I don’t want them to exploit these... . It is very important that they know how to handle that freedom and where the boundaries are.” Interestingly, Jack (MFL) does not explicitly state these boundaries, making the expectations implicit. Flat hierarchies can also be related to the involvement of all hierarchical levels in decision making. Jess (EFL) states: “We have flat hierarchies and therefore are involved in decision making processes. Generally, all kinds of processes are very quick here.” Lilly (MFL) describes a similar approach: “Of course, managers do have responsibility. But we are 13 people on the team.

And each of them can has a say for that 13th part." Through this definition of flat hierarchies, expectations about the contribution of organization members are communicated. Bill's (MBO) understanding of him as a manager is: "Guide your team in a way that nobody knows who the leader is." He, therefore, defines himself as part of the team. As a C-level manager, Sam (MFL) conveys expectations towards his management staff, as he takes over everyday employee tasks from time to time and breaks with general hierarchical expectations. He voices that he expects the managers to follow his role model of being part of the team: "As a director I can walk through a full restaurant, have a look, and leave. With the employees that leaves the impression that I don't belong with them." Other cultures are more hierarchical and based on control. Bree (EBO) says: "Our management board has a hard time handing over control and letting employees decide for themselves," and Steven (MBO) says: "We generally don't allow Home Office anymore."

Sarah (EFL) refers to group pressure for the communication of horizontal expectations. She notices that all her colleagues work unpaid over hours and says: "As everybody in the team does it, I don't want to be the only person that says 'no, I am out'." The expectation is transmitted through the behaviour of the team members. Melinda (EBO) reports a similar situation she experienced with her former employer. "There was a certain expectation, that when you are sick and at home and you have a cold or just don't feel well, but your head is still working, you should still answer some e-mails. The expectation was that you should still be available, as long as you are not seriously ill."

Abby (MBO) and Robert (MBO) point out that organizational culture is also influenced by national culture. "People are so different. That means that you have to try putting yourself into your counterpart's shoes, in their way of thinking, in their value system" (Robert, MBO). Abby (MBO) specifies her experience with Asian cultures and describes the influence of national culture on organizational culture: "They place high importance on hierarchies. Therefore, they are quickly intimidated." It becomes clear that organizational culture and national culture are interconnected as national culture sets the boundaries of accepted behaviours, which are assimilated in organizational contexts.

5.2.1.3 INTRAPERSONAL EXPECTATIONS

Expectations can originate in the individual. They are linked to the self-image, the current perception of oneself, and the ideal self, which aims at future states.

5.2.1.3.1 *SELF-IMAGE*

Intrapersonal expectations regarding the self-image can be described as one's personal standards. They describe expectations towards a person's behaviour at the current time and are often formulated in a general way. As the stories in the interviews were self-reported, it can be assumed that participants described their self-image and, therefore, their expectations towards themselves. Allen (MBO) states:

> For me personally, extrinsic recognition doesn't get me anywhere. My own recognition for my achievements is much more important to me... . I benchmark myself against my own belief of how a task is done well.

Liz (EBO) says: "When I am responsible for a task, I want it to work perfectly, without mistakes... . That's my standard for myself." Lilly (MFL) describes an employee as: "somebody who has the aspiration to do the customers justice," and Bree (EBO) confirms, "you also have a certain ambition towards your work." Matthew (MFL) sees "the volition to do a good job" as the basis for FB. Isabel (EBO) sees herself as "being responsible," as she is "not only a case handler, but better qualified with more competencies." Cora (EBO) describes herself as "the supporting type." Edith (MBO) states she likes "doing extra tasks and being the contact person." She thinks that "this is just one of my motivators. I can't tell you why. But I got a tendency towards that." She describes herself as a curious person and calls herself an "idea collector."

Those participants who describe their self-image congruent with their task say: "I wouldn't call it voluntary, it is self-evident for me" (Tom, MFL). Evan (EBO) adds that "it is part of my job. So, this behaviour is part of my self-understanding. I don't say 'Now the workshop is done, and my worktime is over,' but that is participant-orientation for me." Henry (MBO) makes a similar statement: "Honestly, it is part of my professional understanding." These participants also show high levels of customer orientation, as Cora (EBO) states

> My colleague and I, we do have a very, very high customer orientation. We have both worked front-line jobs before. And when the customer called, you just did it right away, and that's still in our skin We can't just break that habit... . That has shaped us both immensely.

Caitlyn (EFL) contributes to this notion by saying that she sometimes thinks, "I do this because I want to do it. Because I want to change those nose pads or do something nice for that person." Thereby, she attributes the behaviour to herself rather than an external expectation. Rick (EFL) sees himself as customer- and colleague-oriented. He says: "Of course, I always try to be a good host for the passengers." On the other hand, he sees himself as reliable and process-oriented towards his employer. He also describes himself as empathetic and can relate to the needs of his colleagues and customers. As a works council representative, he sees himself in an important organizational position and feels joy when he can help colleagues solve a problem.

Ambitions and standards can also be described through importance. Jeffrey (MBO) says, "To me it is important that my work area runs smoothly." Bill (MBO) talks about his responsibilities and says, "when people are important to you, then you always have the intrinsic motivation to do something positive for these people." Liz (EBO) sees "that I have my own topics which I work on by myself. That is extremely important for me. I really don't like it when I am bound by instructions." Bree (EBO) says, "positive feedback is more important to me than reading quickly."

The current self-image can also be related to one's values. This becomes clear when Mark (EFL) talks about providing financial education in schools and on social media and states that he made it his mission to raise awareness for the importance of that knowledge. Another example is Carrie (EBO), who engages in volunteer work due to her inner urge to help.

Other examples show that potential FB providers can also see themselves as uninvolved in tasks. Holly (MFL) asked an employee to take over a task for a sick colleague, and the employee refused. Holly (MFL) describes: "The colleague who was sick was hierarchically below her and she couldn't be bothered to take on that task." Sarah (EFL) adds: "I would rather say I work to rule." At the same time, Sarah (EFL) has "the feeling that I have higher aspirations for the quality I deliver ... nobody will notice in the end. Everybody will just see the negative."

It becomes evident that the self-concept can be voiced through attitudes, the direct attribution of characteristics to oneself, or less explicit remarks such as the expression of values or importance. It appears that expectations regarding the self-image are relevant to most participants, as a variety of descriptions could be identified. This is supported by the repetition of these statements throughout the individual interviews, highlighting their importance for participants.

5.2.1.3.2 ***IDEAL SELF***

The ideal self describes potential future realities that a person strives for. Participants report development orientation, seeing themselves as earning above average, and maintaining and increasing their status.

Mark (EFL) and Isabel (EBO) strive for career development. Mark (EFL) explicitly speaks with his manager about his professional future. Even though he does not know yet what path he wants to take, he seeks to gain insights into the tasks of a manager to decide whether this might be a suitable career.

Jess (EFL) says: "I strive for success." She defines success as making revenue, as "we are working in a result-based remuneration system." Therefore, her success also has a direct impact on her income. John (MFL) and his employees strive for the ideal of being a person who earns above average. He states that all sales-oriented jobs are somehow bound to an urge for success and that "your own motivation is ALWAYS making more money," but he also states that success-oriented people strive for the feeling of satisfaction through success, which is not related to extrinsic motivators. Bill (MBO) adds: "I believe that every salesperson has some voluntary, intrinsic position... . For some, it is the passion to hunt and to say, 'I will get this customer.' ... That's the inner drive." Financial success can be part of the ideal self but is often accompanied by additional motives. Therefore, the ideal self seems to be a multi-layered concept even in positions that offer a strong motivational factor.

Rick (EFL) aims to maintain and expand his status in the company. In his role as a works council representative, he regularly meets high-ranking managers and says: “For me it is an incentive to say ‘I know Mr. [Name], and that is our boss... . And I am on a first name basis with him’.” Rick (EFL) states he wants to be a role model for his future children: “When I might have kids later on, I could tell them: ‘See, Daddy was there and did contribute to this.’ And those are very beautiful thoughts.” Robert (MBO) also wants to maintain his status and the necessity of his department. He states that building new business areas in his area of expertise is investment-intensive. In times of economic uncertainty, “the question about the right to exist comes up more often: are we, as a function, not as employees, still meaningful? Do we still want to AFFORD that department?”

Ideal self, as discussed by the participants, appears to refer to future status, career, and success. Interestingly, these are the visible components of the ideal self, while immaterial or intangible aspects of the future self-concept have not been discussed. For example, individuals might strive to contribute to a purpose or do meaningful work. This might be the case as revealing such thoughts are based on the German cultural characteristic that individual success is highly valued and individual wishes might be evaluated as unambitious. It can, therefore, be expected that further aspects of the ideal self have not been revealed in the interviews.

5.2.1.4 VOLATILITY OF EXPECTATIONS

Behaviours described as FBs in the past are not necessarily declared as such in the future, as expectations can change over time. Lilly (MFL) describes a situation where an employee developed a hygiene concept for the office during COVID-19 without instruction. She discusses if a connected behaviour is still voluntary, and therefore FB, at a later time.

> Suppose we say later on: “Great, a hygiene concept. Please have a look if we are still adhering to the law, the regulations have changed again,” then it is a responsibility and not voluntary anymore. Or is it? She has started doing it voluntarily.

> But it has established in a structure, and she is now the person responsible for it. (Lilly, MFL)

Abby (MBO) sees a change of expectation when behaviours are shown repeatedly. One of her employees took a risk and completed a task without letting Abby (MBO) know. “She now knows that her actions were perceived positively.” Through this knowledge gain, the risk is no longer included in the action, and Abby (MBO), therefore, now expects the behaviour.

Daisy (EBO) reports a similar perception. She says that she does not know if her manager expects her to ask how he is doing, but she thinks that it is an inherent expectation based on former experience “because I have been doing it for such a long time. If I would suddenly just sit at my desk, do my work, and not talk about myself or ask him about his life, that would be weird.”

A possible explanation for the change of expectations related to the psychological contract will be discussed in section 5.6.4 (see p. 323 et seq.).

5.2.2 *RECIPIENTS AND PROVIDERS OF FOLLOWER BEHAVIOUR*

This section deals with the informality of FB, meaning the conceptual disconnection of formal employee/manager and informal follower/leader roles. The diversity of FB recipients clarifies that the concept of FB does not only occur within the formal role’s boundaries but extends beyond hierarchies. All participants but two reported FBs for themselves, regardless of their formal role as C-level managers, middle managers, or employees. The multifaceted view on FB providers and recipients shows the broad range of the meaning of the FB concept for practitioners.

Regarding the recipient or the focus of FB, three different sub-themes could be identified: individuals, groups, and organizations/immaterial concepts. The FB recipients are used to structure this section, and the FB providers are discussed in each sub-section. It is regularly stated that not only one person, group, or entity is followed. One behaviour can also aim at several recipients. Megan (MFL) says: “Two third organization, one third personal. But there is definitely a personal portion in it.” Attributing motivations to his employees, Tom (MFL) says, “I can only speculate. I think they do it because they enjoy it and maybe also for me." Lilly (MFL) also combines organizational and individual focus and says, "The reason is definitely ALSO for the organization. But it also is about enhancing the colleagues' personal knowledge." While the foci are presented separately in this section, it needs to be acknowledged that they are not exclusive but can occur simultaneously.

5.2.2.1 FOLLOWING INDIVIDUALS

In the sub-theme of individuals followed, colleagues, the formal manager, and formal employees can be distinguished. Following the formal manager is closest to the formal roles adopted in an organizational setting. Liz (EBO) states that her behaviour is "definitely aimed at the manager." Melinda (EBO) describes that she and her colleagues try to work as independently as possible, so they do not need to bother their manager:

> We try, as a team, to take the load off her... . She also is a normal human being with a limited amount of time... . And when you realize that she has a really intense day and an unreal agenda, you just treat her humanely. And then you are empathetic.

Mark (EFL) supports his manager by taking over some of his tasks regularly, while Isabel (EBO) does so during absences: "Just to relieve him when he gets back... . and generally, I don't want to leave him out in the cold. I know how much he has on his table." David (MBO) states directly, "I am doing it for my manager." Sam (MFL) is convinced that the manager is the main focus of FB in the hospitality industry. He describes a situation in which he left his former employer.

> I would say that employees who stay with a company for a long time have a high level of identification with their manager. And when the manager changes, what happens with the employee who had that identification with their manager? I got a good example. When I left, there was a high blood loss among employees, who left directly after me.

Other voices were critical about following formal managers. Jeffrey (MBO) and Carrie (EBO) state that they do not follow their managers. "Definitely not the executive board. I'm rather critical about them" (Jeffrey, MBO). Lilly (MFL) thinks that her employees act "not directly for the manager, rather for the team."

There seems to be a group of followers that sees their manager as a leader whom they follow, whist another group differentiates manager and leader roles and states they do not follow their manager. Therefore, the roles of managers and leaders can be attributed to the same person, but this is not a given. This finding supports the notion that leadership and management are distinct concepts.

A second sub-theme deals with following colleagues. This behaviour is shown by formal managers as well as formal employees. Jess (EFL) states, “For me, followership does not necessarily need to be focused on a formal manager but can also aim at a colleague.” The following examples refer to individual colleagues rather than a whole group of colleagues which is discussed in the following section.

Abby (MBO) describes her employees as “a close-knit team, even before I came.” She explains that team members support each other and show protective behaviour towards each other. When Evan’s (EBO) colleagues take over one of his workshops, “they do it to make my day and enable me to stay at home a longer without having to drive the next day. Rather personal reasons.” Connor (MFL) sees FBs towards colleagues and states: “At the end of the day, it might be some kind of affection, that you say we get along well with each other.” Lilly (MFL) describes a situation in which a part-time employee agrees to a meeting with a customer outside their agreed working hours:

> If they would not keep the appointment in the afternoon, a colleague would have to do it, and they would have to coordinate that, and the colleague would have to become acquainted with the topic to be able to communicate at eye level with the customer.

Following colleagues often results in social interaction or support behaviours and aims to reduce effort for colleagues or to improve their individual wellbeing. Therefore, such behaviour is based on the perception of individuals’ needs and their willingness to contribute to a positive outcome, even if this means additional effort for them.

Following employees is shown by formal managers. Here, FB aimed at individual employees is described, while employees as a group will be discussed in the following section. Managers as followers can regularly be found in support behaviours that include protection or foster individual advancement. David (MBO) shows protective behaviour towards an employee who has made a mistake. Mark (EFL) and Isabel (EBO) report that their respective managers support their career advancement. While Isabel (EBO) sees that as voluntary behaviour, Mark (EFL) sees his manager's support as a reaction to him supporting his manager first and, therefore, is not entirely sure if he would call it FB.

> Nevertheless, it could have been like that: I approach him, I take over his tasks, and he still doesn't support me in return. From that point of view, ... it is voluntary behaviour on his part.

Behaviours based on following individuals have been reported for employees and managers. Therefore, the necessity of a distinction between leadership and management, as well as employeeship and followership, is supported.

5.2.2.2 FOLLOWING GROUPS

In this sub-theme, all groups that can be followed are discussed. Participants state they perceive following teams in the organization, customers, or groups of employees.

Regarding teams, the own team or other teams can be followed, and managers and employees can show the behaviour. Lilly (MFL) describes that one of her employees "did not have a personal interest but did it for a good team atmosphere." Bree (EBO) mentions a situation in which she distributed information to other teams with the aim that "me and my colleagues did not need to talk ourselves blue in the face anymore." Following other teams in the organization means doing "normal work and supporting colleagues, not only in our department but also in other departments" (Elise, MBO).

Another group that can be followed, are customers. The behaviours can be shown by managers and employees but have been reported more often by employees which might be the case because front-line employees are in direct contact with customers more often. Cora (EBO) describes that she screens her e-mails for customer e-mails. She switched jobs internally a year ago and is no longer working in a front-line job.

> I still receive an amazing number of e-mails from customers, real paying customers. And of course, I forward them right away. That has nothing to do with the person I'm forwarding them to, but I want the customer to be a loyal and satisfied customer in the future. (Cora, EBO)

Denny (EFL) sees his colleague explaining a task to him as customer-focused and says, "I think he has the progress of the project for the customer in mind." Henry (MBO) states that he and his colleagues "owe doing that to the customers." Mick (EFL) decided to work on a weekend "in the interest of the people who live there." When Mark (EFL) receives a call to concentrate on selling insurance, he follows that call from his organization. However, he says, "I do it ... simply because I think 'Okay, this could actually fit with this, and that customer and I'll invite them over'." Even though the initiative comes from the organization, Mark's (EFL) decision to follow that call is based on him prioritizing the customer's needs.

Employees can also be followed as a group by the formal manager. Jack (MFL) states: "I provide all kinds of freedoms. That is a voluntary behaviour." Megan (MFL) adds: "From an employee perspective, I do provide lots of voluntary benefits." She elaborates: "I go beyond the legally fixed and beyond what we agreed on in the work contracts, and they get lots of goodies which are not documented."

5.2.2.3 FOLLOWING ORGANIZATIONS AND IMMATERIAL CONCEPTS

Following organizations can be shown by managers and employees and is regularly described in relation to identification. This identification can be linked to the product of the organization. Jeffrey (MBO) works for an organization in the form of a cooperative. According to him, identification with the organization influences his behaviour. He says: "It is hard for me to name any people, but, using social media language, I would say I follow the cooperative, because I support it." He further states: "I identify with the product; I fully support that." Henry (MBO) reports a similar notion and says that "the aviation industry is full of emotion. It is a sexy business field." He explains why individuals stay with the organization by seeking a comparison with the automotive industry:

> I think it's similar when an engineer who works for Porsche gets an offer from Opel. Even though he could earn more working for Opel, he will have a hard time leaving Porsche. Because he will enjoy telling others "I work for Porsche" rather than for Opel.

Jeffrey (MBO) and Henry (MBO) describe identification based on the fit between the organization's and one's own values. While Jeffrey (MBO) sees a socially responsible employer as an organization he wants to work for, Henry (MBO) describes identification based on social status and the potential for impression management. Sam (MFL) describes identification as "employees who feel comfortable in a company." This is interesting, as the examples presented above seem to add to this feeling of comfort through the concordance in values. Therefore, identification as a prerequisite for following an organization seems to be rooted in the concordance of organizations traits and individuals' values and needs. In addition, Sam (MFL) highlights a benefit of following organizations rather than leaders from a company perspective, as he experienced many employees left the organization when he stopped working there as a manager. Hence, the identification with the leader rather than the organization holds the inherent risk of a domino effect when that leader resigns. Therefore, organizational identification as the foundation of FB might be more desirable from an organizational perspective.

Rather than following the whole organization, the goal of the organization can be followed. Isabel (EBO) sees potential for improvement and claims that she "wants to support that, for the goals of the organization." Bree (EBO) sees situations where she can "provide added value for the organization." Cora (EBO) states that her behaviour is influenced "by the loyalty towards the organization." In contrast to following the entire organization, these behaviours aim at a more specific target based on a shorter time frame. Hence, both organizational characteristics and goals can lead to FB aimed at organizations.

Lilly (MFL) looks at identification from a different perspective and describes how it can be displayed. She thinks that small start-ups often "have a real employer brand", which is shown by “merchandise like cappies, shirts, branded notebooks”, which leads to “employees being real fans of the organization.”

Through these examples, it seems that following organizations is linked to the knowledge about the organizational goals, individual attitudes of loyalty and the social process of identification. Therefore, the FB is not linked to a person but to a broader, non-living entity.

Following an immaterial concept such as a purpose can regularly be found in behaviours that include taking on additional roles and are exhibited outside the organization. Carrie (EBO) took on charity work and says, “I definitely follow a cause. The cause to help people. This is not bound to a person; this is bound to a purpose.” Mark (EFL) agrees as he teaches financial knowledge at schools and thinks “that the students get absolute value from it.” He elaborates that he follows his purpose to make individuals in his surrounding more aware of the need for financial knowledge as he says:

> I know many who are leaving school, finishing their studies and unfortunately, as far as the financial aspect is concerned, have no idea what they should actually do now... . And sometimes live beyond their means... . And that’s why I’ve made it a bit of a task for myself.

David (MBO) agrees and states that “sometimes, it’s more about the matter, and not really about the result.” Hence, FBs can be aimed at a purpose that is not directly linked to the organization but triggered through it. In contrast to following the organization, such behaviour does not directly contribute to an organizational goal. Supporting such behaviour rather leads to the feeling of appreciation, which can in turn enhances identification with the employer.

Following organizations and immaterial concepts differs from following individuals or groups as the followed entity is more abstract and non-living. Therefore, no direct communication is possible, and the sense-making happens internally and not in a relational setting. Nevertheless, following organizations and immaterial concepts plays an important role in organizational FB as it is not bound to another individual, which reduces the risk of behaviour decrease if that person leaves the organization by decoupling employee and follower behavioural antecedents.

5.2.3 *PERCEPTION OF VOLUNTARINESS*

In this section, the notion of voluntariness is discussed based on the criteria by which practitioners distinguish voluntary and involuntary behaviour. Throughout the discussion in this section, it becomes clear that the definition of voluntariness is a complex undertaking. Tom (MFL) describes it as follows: “This is an absolutely valid and hard to answer question, because voluntariness always comes within a whisker of what is compulsory.”

Participants discussed four aspects that define if a behaviour is considered voluntary or not: the behaviour is shown without instruction but out of intrinsic motivation, it goes beyond expectation, the person showing the behaviour has a positive intention, or there is personal investment involved. The criteria for voluntariness are not to be considered as a checklist that defines that FB is voluntary if all boxes are ticked off. Instead, it describes the main reasons why participants described behaviours as voluntary.

5.2.3.1 WITHOUT INSTRUCTION AND WITH INTRINSIC MOTIVATION

Voluntariness can be perceived when a task is conducted without instruction from a hierarchically higher person. For Melinda (EBO), acting without instruction requires “taking over something actively,” and Isabel (EBO) sees her behaviour as voluntary as she “was not actively approached.” Megan (MFL) describes voluntary behaviour in her employees as follows:

> You don’t need to say a word. They see things that need to be done, and they think for themselves ... without me as their boss ever giving them an assignment or saying, “Hey, please do look after that.”

Bill (MBO) describes the way a job is done as voluntary behaviour.

> I did not say, “Please do your job this way and write the e-mail that way,” but “Hey, we have a need here, let’s see how you can resolve that.” There is no voluntariness in filling a position but the voluntariness in deciding how to approach the task. How do I conduct a job interview.

Connor (MFL) sees “everything where you have to see beyond your own nose” as voluntary. Robert (MBO) elaborates: "When the team functions by itself and you don’t need to say ‘Jane Bloggs, please help me along, don’t you have experience with that?’ but it emerges from the team.”

An aspect of voluntariness is intrinsic motivation. Edith (MBO) describes intrinsic motivation as a state in which “you do not need to motivate or push them to do something all the time.” Participants also tried to paraphrase how intrinsic motivation feels for them. Megan (MFL) describes it as “deeply from within myself, because of a profound wish,” Carrie (EBO) describes her intrinsic motivation as “my own free will”, Daisy (EBO) says, “I’m doing it gladly. It comes from within me”, and Melinda (EBO) states: “It touches my personal purpose deeply.” Edith (MBO) describes that her employee “has a fable for such topics,” and Bill (MBO) tries to “strike a spark” in his employees to foster voluntariness. Steven (MBO) describes intrinsic motivation as “the inner attitude, if somebody puts one’s heart and soul into the work.” It becomes evident that all these statements include a motivation originating in the person without being triggered externally.

Another discussion revolves around the link between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. While Rick (EFL) says that his behaviour is “definitely not linked to money,” John (MFL) thinks that “making money is always the stimulant” in sales departments. However, he adds: “There is always a certain percentage of motivation that is based on money. But then there is also the inner urge for success.” Bill (MBO) confirms that intrinsic motivation can exist alongside sales-based external incentives:

> I believe that every salesperson has some voluntary, intrinsic position. For some it is the passion to hunt and to say, “I will get this customer, I’ll turn everything topsy-turvy, and if I get thrown out, I’ll come back through the back door and will try talking to another department.” So, when you set a goal, that persistence... . That’s the inner drive.

Lilly (MFL) discusses the link between intrinsic motivation and ambition and concludes that ambition is not necessary to show FB. “To say that those who are less ambitioned are less of a follower would definitely not be fair and right." She sees different forms of behaviour provided by ambitious and less ambitious followers: "A colleague who has been with the company for a long time is an amazing follower ... but she would not bring in new views. But she provides consistency and calm which keeps the team together".

Participants described voluntariness as based on the origin of motivation. A behaviour is voluntary when it is not encouraged by an external trigger, such as communication from a manager but is exhibited based on the volition to act originating in the individual.

5.2.3.2 POSITIVE INTENTION

In this sub-theme, participants describe the intention behind the behaviour as characterizing voluntariness. The positive intention aims at the FB receiver. Lilly (MFL) says: "The voluntary behaviour isn't a diversion, but the person thinks that they do something positive for the team."

While a positive intention is considered an attribute of voluntariness, it does not necessarily need to lead to a positively evaluated outcome. Lilly (MFL) reports that an employee cleaned the office every Friday. While the intention was positive, as

> the person likes it clean, cleaner than the cleaning service does it, and we all like it that way... . They do it for the organization, but I, as a manager, had to say, "That's really nice, but unfortunately not effective." (Lilly, MFL)

Abby (MBO) reports a similar situation in which an employee provided information to another department. She says that "from his perspective, it was meant in a positive way with no hidden agenda," but from her perspective, the outcome was negative, as "he gave them a bit too much information. He agreed to take on an additional task and they exploited him as he is new."

In this theme, the intention and outcome need to be viewed separately. While the intention is considered to describe voluntariness, the outcome does not necessarily need to be positively evaluated.

5.2.3.3 INDIVIDUAL EFFORT BEYOND EXPECTATIONS

Showing efforts that go beyond expectations is a third characterization of voluntariness. First, efforts made are discussed. These efforts can be distinguished into task involvement and time-bound efforts. All these efforts have in common that they exceed expectations. The foundation of these expectations is discussed in section 5.2.1 (see p. 233 et seq.).

High task involvement is also described as “going the extra mile” (Henry, MBO; Connor, MFL; David, MBO; Jess, EFL & Cora, EBO). David (MBO) differentiates high task involvement from time-bound efforts as “it is not necessarily a matter of working overtime. That’s not what I want to say.” Edith (MBO) says: “If I do something, I do it right. And that often burdens me as I go to or even cross my limits to do it in a way that I find satisfactory.” Isabel (EBO) describes that “people fight a lot for the customer and try to convince them to stay.” Evan (EBO) states that his decision to accept an additional workshop “meant additional stress and extra work.” Through these examples it becomes clear that practitioners see extra effort involved in voluntary behaviour. Therefore, the perception of additional effort can lead to a behaviour being evaluated as voluntary.

High task involvement can also be found in the adoption of unwelcome tasks. Bree (EBO) reports: “There was manual work to do, and somebody had to sort those documents. And nobody wanted to do it. So, I attended to the task.” Megan (MFL) sees many small but unwelcome tasks “like taking out the rubbish or re-arranging a display shelve.” Isabel (EBO) reports that giving feedback can lead to unpleasant feelings and “that many others think ‘Oh no, I’ll rather be quiet, I don’t want to give negative feedback’.” While the effort described above includes the perception of stress, the adoption of unwelcome tasks is often easily done but includes potential negative evaluations by the follower, such as the fear of negative outcomes or the negative evaluation of the task itself.

Time-bound efforts are often related to working outside agreed working hours. The situations include working on weekends, vacations, sick leave, or longer hours. The example in which Mick (EFL) provides excellent customer service for his tenants who would have had to endure at least two days without heating also includes working on a weekend. Holly (MFL) has seen her team member finish a project presentation over the weekend, and Denny (EFL) reports having finished a task for a customer on the weekend. Allen (MBO) describes an incident in which he and his colleagues worked on a weekend as an external contractor did not finish a task: “And I, therefore, sacrificed private time that I could have spent with family and friends.” Cora (EBO) sees colleagues writing e-mails during their vacation but tries to avoid that herself. Jess (EFL) and Jeffrey (MBO) worked remotely while they were on sick leave. Sarah (EFL) reports working longer hours for an event: “I invested a lot more time than agreed on in the work contract. When I worked on larger events, I sometimes invested an incredible amount of overtime hours, working at the event and cleaning up the next day.” For Melinda (EBO), work does not necessarily end when she stops actively working: “I have a very creative mind. It can happen that I have ideas while walking through the forest on a weekend.” Jess (EFL) has customers who are only available in the evenings. She says: “Our regular working time is from nine am to six pm. But when a customer says that he is only available at eight pm on a Friday, I make that possible anyway.” Henry (MBO) and Evan (EBO) both answer questions from their passengers or participants after the agreed service has been delivered.

> My job is nowhere near nine to five, but each workshop is very individual... . I regularly extend my working hours when participants approach me after the workshop and say, “I do have a problem, do you have some suggestions for me?” (Evan, EBO)

Lilly (MFL) sees additional efforts with part-time colleagues: “For them taking part in an afternoon means a higher effort organizing because they normally have kids who need to be looked after.” These examples illustrate that adapting one’s working hours, working overtime or during off-time are behaviours that are regularly shown by managers and employees. As working time is clearly stated in work contracts, the demarcation between voluntary and involuntary behaviour on a time-based evaluation is unambiguous. Alternatively, expectations, especially implicit ones, could lead to discrepancies between the evaluation of voluntariness by FB provider and receiver.

5.2.3.4 RISK-TAKING

Risk-taking is inherent to voluntariness. Participants report different levels and forms of risk. The level of risk depends on the realistic possibility of declining to show a behaviour. The form of risk can be divided into social, monetary, and reputation risks.

5.2.3.4.1 *LEVEL OF RISK*

The level of risk is defined by the possibility of denying the behaviour and the potential consequences attached to declining. Regarding the possibility of saying no, Henry (MBO) describes a situation:

> We fly from A to B and can't land in B because of bad weather, so we have to divert to C, refuel and then try to fly do B again. Sometimes this severely goes beyond working time regulations. Due to a collective agreement the colleagues could say, “I am tired, and I can’t go on to the next destination. I need to go to a hotel and rest.” ... Instead, most colleagues say, “No, we owe it to our customers to leap over tiredness, we’ll pull ourselves together and bring the customers to their intended destination.”

As Henry (MBO) describes, he and his colleagues are granted an option to decline by the law. Mark (EFL) reports a similar situation where his employer suggested focusing on insurance products. He rates his behaviour of following these suggestions as voluntary as “there aren’t any consequences.” In contrast, a situation with no option to decline is described by Steven (MBO), who states that if a colleague declines to cover for a sick colleague, “I could give the person an order and tell them what to do. I am sorry but that’s an instruction and from a labour law perspective you do not have a chance as an employee.”

In some cases, the risk is connected to not showing voluntary behaviour. When Sarah (EFL) talks about unpaid additional hours, she feels socially pressured to show FB outside working hours and says: “This is rather group pressure than a hundred percent voluntary. I said to myself a few times: ‘I don’t get paid for this huge amount of overtime, but hey, everyone does it’.”

5.2.3.4.2 *FORM OF RISK*

Even though the possibility to decline is often generally given and participants describe the feeling that they are genuinely free to decide, social expectations can restrict the decision. Sarah (EFL) says: “We worked a lot more ... Of course, you don’t get paid for it but everybody in the team does it and you don’t want to be the only person who says ‘No, I’m out’.” Kirby (EFL) also remembers a situation in which declining “has led to a tiff”. Evan (EBO)reports a situation in which he was asked to deliver a new workshop on short notice. He states, “In this case I had the feeling that it wasn’t a rhetorical question but that I could genuinely decide yes or no. It would not have made the relationship with my manager any worse had I declined.” Sometimes, Isabel (EBO) is not sure if she should volunteer for a task. “I sometimes don’t know if that goes down well with my colleagues”. Evan (EBO), Sarah (EFL), and Isabel (EBO) report social risks. At the same time, Mark (EFL) adds a monetary risk by describing: “I don’t have a disadvantage as far as my salary is concerned.” Robert (MBO) reports a reputation risk in a situation in which two team members spoke up: “They exposed themselves. They took the risk that somebody distinctly higher up in the hierarchy could say ‘Your view makes no sense here, I know it much better than you’.”

Another risk involves the risk of divergent evaluations. As described in section 5.2.3.2 (see p. 256 et seq.), voluntariness is defined by the positive intention rather than the evaluation of the outcome. At the same time, the examples provided show the risk of differences in evaluation. It also becomes evident in the following narrative by Abby (MBO):

> A team member knew from a meeting that I was working on the budget presentation for the strategy meeting. She really quickly, within two days, prepared the presentation. She knew that I would not get round to it because I was always in meetings... . My first reaction was that I had not asked her to do that. Initially, I really felt a bit taken by surprise. Afterwards, I was glad that she did it... . But first I thought, “Ooops, is she doing my job now?”

While Abby (MBO) ultimately evaluated her employee's behaviour positively, the risk regarding the evaluation becomes apparent, as her employee did not know how Abby (MBO) would react and if she really did not find the time to prepare the presentation.

To be able to evaluate behaviour, it needs to be noticed first. Henry (MBO) states that managers are informed when something goes wrong but positive behaviours do often not come to manager's attention. "Us managers, we normally do not realize when somebody has done something positive or has made a good or courageous decision... . That also doesn't appear in any statistics." Liz (EBO) has a similar perception and says, "Sometimes people are very engaged, really give 100 percent and then managers do not notice." The behaviour can be evaluated by the outcome and the effects if the behaviour was not displayed. David (MBO) sees that FBs can have "extremely positive effects," but Rick (EFL) also sees the risk that "a behaviour could be too much." FBs are evaluated as positive when negative effects would be the outcome of not showing the behaviour. These behaviours are mainly behaviours that prevent harm.

Another risk is related to reciprocity and the psychological contract. Reciprocity often involves a time gap, and trust in the relationship is needed to believe that the favour will be returned. Therefore, voluntary behaviours do not have a direct benefit. Edith (MBO) describes her investment in the task as stressful and going beyond her limits and states, "If that is just regarded with favour, that is not enough for me." She describes the risk that the appreciation for her effort is not shown and that others take the credit for her work. She says: "I can't stand it when others steel my ideas. In that regard I'm sensitive." Cora (EBO) reports a similar situation:

> I was surprised when the HR department celebrated themselves for my achievements. During the planning phase it felt like they kept themselves out of the picture... . It was weird that people who had basically contributed nothing suddenly were celebrated.

5.2.3.4.3 *COPING WITH RISK*

Participants report three strategies to handle the risk involved in FB: seeking information, seeking approval, and trust. While seeking information and approval lead to a reduction of risk based on the comparison of expectations, trusting does not reduce the risk. However, it enables the decision to show the behaviour despite the risk.

Seeking information refers to actively enquiring relevant information that reduces the risk of negatively evaluated outcomes. Mary (EBO) describes that “communicating when I need help ... and better asking others who are responsible means that I don’t overestimate my limits.” John (MFL) describes that especially new employees sometimes lack knowledge about “legal issues... . They then go to their team lead who might even approach me and in really, really tricky cases, in which I want to cover my back, I might consult an attorney.” By actively asking for information and knowledge, John’s (MFL) employees reduce the risk of showing FB with good intentions that lead to negatively evaluated outcomes. Abby (MBO) reflects on a situation where her employee provided another department with too much information:

> It also was an error on my part because I sent the colleagues directly to him... . It would have been my job to inform the new colleague “Hey, please don’t provide more information”. I should have communicated that.

In her reflection, she shows that information for risk reduction can be actively provided.

Risk reduction can also be achieved by seeking approval. By doing so, followers ensure that their behaviour will be evaluated positively. As described in section 5.1.3 (see p. 198 et seq.), support is regularly offered before it is provided. While exploring support options can be interpreted as FB itself, it also serves the purpose of comparing and aligning expectations and evaluations. Exploring support options regularly includes offering a behaviour such as covering for a colleague or asking: “Do you need help?” (Daisy, EBO). Isabel (EBO) and Melinda (EBO) describe voicing ideas before implementing them. Melinda (EBO) voiced the idea to digitalize business cards and says: “I did not know yet how that works, and I just said, ‘Digital business cards, should I investigate that further?’ And she [the manager] said: 'Yes, definitely'," providing Melinda (EBO) with the security that implementing her idea would be positively evaluated. Isabel (EBO) uses her internal network to present her idea to relevant decision-makers:

> We spoke to the person in charge and then extended the circle of people involved... . We need to go through some more official channels to get approval, but I am confident that it will work out.

In her description, Isabel (EBO) implies that she knows the hierarchical structures of her organization well, which supports her in seeking approval.

Trusting in the reciprocity of psychological contracts, which Nell (MFL) calls "credit of trust," is another form of handling risk associated with FB. Participants report that they decide to show a certain behaviour because they trust in the reciprocal actions of their psychological contract partner. This trust is based on "the knowledge that I will get something in return" (Evan, EBO). Evan (EBO) calls it knowledge, even though his assumption has no legal basis. He speaks of "basic trust that has to develop through situations that you live through together and challenges you mastered together." Megan (MFL) describes trust as "giving credit," and states that "it might take a while until you get something in return." Edith (MBO) confirms that trust needs to be built mutually: "You need to work hard on earning that trust." Her case also shows that lacking trust can lead to withholding FB. "I became very mindful about the benefit I have from a behaviour... . If you voluntarily do things for years and nothing changes, ... at some point it bears no proportion." Abby (MBO) thinks that her employees have not shown protective behaviour towards her so far "because the bonding is not strong enough, yet." From her perspective, she "already showed a few times that I have their backs a hundred percent. And in the end, this will lead to them doing the same for me." Bill (MBO) has already gone through the process of trust building with his managers and says that he "would go through hell and high water for them."

Trust can also be built through perceived support. Mark (EFL) states that he perceives support from marketing and training departments for his involvement in public relations activities. Regarding his manager, he states: "My superiors are totally supportive, thank God, that I'm allowed to do it besides of normal consulting." Liz (EBO) describes that she receives support from colleagues who provide her with internal knowledge and "would never let anyone go into a situation unknowing." Carrie (EBO) states that the managers of some colleagues gave their employees paid leave from their duties to engage in company-supported volunteer work.

Another source of trust is organizational culture. Melinda (EBO) states: "Culture has a large impact on voluntariness." Bill (MBO) describes that "people here are very down-to-earth, appreciative, and on eye level." Jess (EFL) feels comfortable in her company, experiencing "really, really great flexibility from my manager, for example regarding contract design with customers." She sees hierarchies as flat and decision-making processes as quick and inclusive of her opinion. In contrast, Bree (EBO) sees less trust in her organizational culture. "We are a traditionally led, small company. Managers really, really, really struggle to hand over control."

5.2.3.5 LEVEL OF VOLUNTARINESS

Several participants voiced that staying with the company is the only fully voluntary act. When asked about the voluntariness in the behaviour of one of his employees, Sam (MFL) states that an employee "doesn't need to work for us... . But when he works for our organization, he must adhere to certain rules. But as I said, that's voluntary." This implies that working for and staying with a company is the only truly voluntary behaviour. At the same time, this voluntary act of being part of an organization leads to the necessity of accepting rules, which makes other behaviours in the organizational context moderately voluntary at most. The notion of pure voluntariness is supported by Sarah (EFL) and Thomas (EFL) from an employee perspective. Sarah (EFL) states that she gets paid for her job, which makes it only partly voluntary, but that she has signed the work contract voluntarily. Thomas (EFL) thinks he could easily switch jobs as he "would just need to stroll down the street and would have a new job... . So, I think working here is voluntary." Evan (EBO) analyses the situation on the job market in more detail and states: "Currently, we have a workers' job market, and everybody has the chance to find a job at another company because all companies are recruiting. So, in that sense, it is voluntary to say, ‘I stay here voluntarily’.” The statement that staying with a company is the only fully voluntary behaviour needs to be set into the context of the German labour market, which is currently lacking skilled staff, offering employees and managers the possibility to change jobs easily.

The discussion of different levels of voluntariness is interesting, because it indicates that practitioners distinguish between fully and moderately voluntary behaviour. Additionally, it seems like the four aspects relevant for evaluating a behaviour as voluntary discussed above are of different relevance for the participants. Therefore, not all four aspects need to be met but rather the issues revolve around those that are relevant to the individual.

5.2.4 *SITUATIONAL*

FB is situational, meaning that FB is not shown without an event, verbal communication, perceptions, or knowledge of a circumstance but is always related to the opportunity to express such behaviours. The awareness of the opportunity for FB is necessary to express it. This also contributes to the time-displaced character of reciprocity, described in section 5.2.1.2 (see p. 238 et seq.).

5.2.4.1 EVENT

Events are singular occurrences that lead to the opportunity to show FB. These events are often linked to another person’s inability to fulfil their job. This might be a colleague who is sick (Megan, MFL; Evan, EBO; Amanda, EFL; Abby, MBO; Elise, MBO; David, MBO & Henry, MBO). These situations were intensified during COVID-19. “During COVID times, the sickness rate went up, therefore we had these problematic situations more often” (Henry, MBO). David (MBO) reports a similar incident: “And then we were only a handful of people left and the situation was so bad that it was clear that we were not going to cut it.” The absence of a team member, not only due to sickness but also other reasons including part-time employment (Lilly, MFL), other obligations (Monica, EBO) or vacation (Isabel, EBO; Melinda, EBO & Cora, EBO) is regularly a situation in which support behaviours (see section 5.1.3, p. 198 et seq.) can be shown.

Other events that enable FB include additional tasks that come up (Bree, EBO & Holly, MFL), customers that have a complaint (Carrie, EBO & Mick, EFL) or special needs (Rick, EFL & Sam, MFL), the occurrence of a conflict (Megan, MFL), a potential threat to the team (Robert, MBO), the error of another person (Thomas, EFL), the realization of a big event (Elise, MBO & Melinda, EBO), project work (Holly, MFL & Matthew, MFL), or external circumstances such as bad weather conditions (Henry, MBO).

5.2.4.2 PERCEPTION

Perceptions are less evident than events. Perceptions lead to the expression of FB based on a trigger that must first be interpreted. These interpretations are regularly called noticing, feeling, sensing, realizing, or internal debate.

Such interpretations can aim at circumstances. David (MBO) reports about one of his employees: “And then she realized that her counterpart was also Italian,” which led to the employee taking on the additional task of translating in the meeting. Rick (EFL) describes another situation where he noticed a customer struggling to load a pram into the train. An internal debate has been going on for Bree (EBO), who quarrelled with herself if she should voice an idea:

> There were situations in which I felt that the colleagues had not been given enough explanation... . The situation that we had to explain to customers what was possible and what wasn’t came up so often that at some point, I thought: “Why do we explain it to the customers? Why don’t we explain it to the colleagues who are the first contact person, so it gets done right there already? That would relieve everybody.”

Less debate can be found in Isabel’s (EBO) statement: “I just see the task and directly say I’ll do it; I’ll take care of it.”

Other perceptions aim at the feelings of other individuals. Amanda (EFL) decided to support a colleague and says: “I noticed that my colleague was a bit nervous before the customer appointment.” Thomas (EFL) describes a similar situation: “I sensed by his body posture that he was insecure.” Megan (MFL) says: “I sensed that the person was a bit overwhelmed,” which led her to suggest different work schedules. Melinda (EBO) adds to perceiving that somebody else is overwhelmed: “Obviously, she was extremely overchallenged at the beginning. She was willing but she didn’t know where to start.” Jess (EFL) supports the notion of hardship perceived in others by saying, “Sometimes, it is difficult for him to find the right words to address customers.” Another feeling is the stress an individual might experience. John (MFL) says that his employees “realize that we have a shortage of staff” and both Sarah (EFL) and Elise (MBO) noticed that there was a lot of work to do. Mark (EFL) realized his manager had much to do “as he came early and left very late.” Melinda (EBO) and her colleagues make collective efforts as they realize that “today is a really tough day with a tough agenda for her.” She states that she can perceive the stress level of her manager because they sit in the same office and are not separated. This gives her “the option to show voluntary behaviours that take the load off her back.” As she perceives the stress level, she and her colleagues treat the manager more empathetic.

5.2.4.3 KNOWLEDGE

Knowledge is needed as a complementary factor to events or situations to enable FB.

> We have regular team meetings. I had mentioned two days before that we would have a management-level strategy meeting and that I would present there. I then informed my team about what I’m currently working on. And she picked up that the social media campaign would be the last part I could prepare... . She presented the slides to me the next day. But she knew about the topic and that I would probably be unable to finish the slides on time due to my travel plans. (Abby, MBO)

Other participants report similar situations. Nell (MFL) says they can often deliver extraordinary customer experience with additional knowledge. For example, knowing a passenger’s birthday is necessary to surprise them during the flight. Carrie (EBO) knew that her employer was looking for additional office space, which enabled her to voice an idea for a potential solution. Isabel (EBO) gained experience through a digitalization project she led. Through this experience, she was able to voice an idea to improve general project management in the company. She had to have additional internal knowledge about implementing new processes to do so. “There are rules that you have to adhere to and certain departments that have to be included.”

Knowledge can also refer to time-related issues. Evan (EBO) states that his colleagues offered to take over workshops for him:

> That’s because they see in the employee roster that things have shifted and that really weird constellations came up that were not planned... . It can happen that a colleague would have to drive crisscross through the country, but when a colleague sees that, they come over and say: “Listen, I was not planned on that workshop, but I have the easier way as I am already around the corner.”

Caitlyn (EFL) reports that her manager knew she had a long commute and changed her working days so she would not have to stay late.

5.2.4.4 VERBAL COMMUNICATION

FB can be initiated by verbal communication. When support is sought, support behaviours can be shown. Sarah (EFL) states: “My colleague helps me when I ask him to.” Megan (MFL) adds that she can only support her employees when they talk to her and “bring up those small topics like ‘the chair is too high, could we buy a lower chair?’.” Robert (MBO) explicitly asks for FB when he says, “What do you think? What are your ideas? How could we get this done?” Evan (EBO) is often thought out after workshops to support individual cases further. Especially taking over additional tasks is often related to verbal communication. For example, Edith (MBO) states that she was asked to represent her employer on an economic committee. Monica (EBO) reports that she was asked if she wanted to take over additional tasks during the absence of a colleague due to parental leave. Bill (MBO) actively asks his employees if they want to take over a task before assigning it to them. Mark (EFL) got his additional role as a finance-influencer through a general call to the employees. Isabel (EBO) sees a different level of voluntariness when individuals need to be asked to do something. “Some people need to be addresses as in ‘Mr. Smith, Jones, Williams, whatever, would you be interested to take over these tasks?’ and then they might do a good job," but she sees that there is less self-initiative than taking on a task without verbal communication.

Excellent task execution can also be triggered by verbal communication. For example, Mark (EFL) reports that the company asked to focus on a certain topic during customer consultation. Bree (EBO) also sees social interaction as based on verbal communication. "There always has to be somebody who takes the initiative and says, 'Let's meet in a non-corporate setting or go for a drink'."

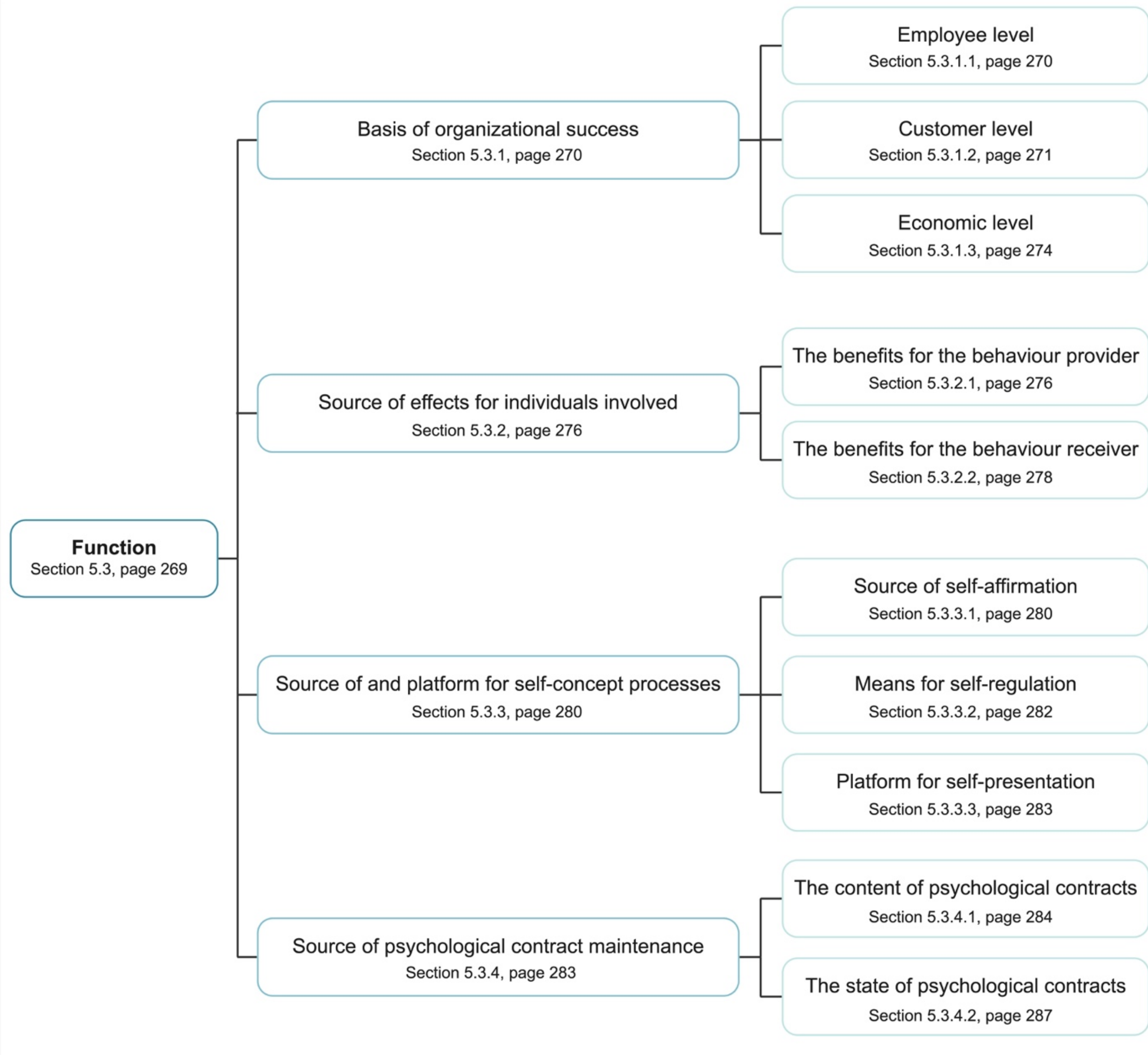
As discussed in section 5.2.3.4.3 (see p. 262 et seq.), verbal communication can reduce the inherent risk of FB. While verbal communication can trigger FB by itself, reducing risk is linked to the identified FB potential. The behaviour is not shown due to the uncertainty. Verbal communication is then linked to an event, a perception, or individual knowledge.

5.3 FUNCTION

This section covers the organizational, individual, and relational functions of FB. First, the organizational function in which FB contributes to organizational success on employee, customer, and economic levels is discussed. Second, the function of self-affirmation and self-regulation, focusing on the self-image as well as the ideal self, is explored. Last, the relational function of maintaining psychological contracts is discussed. Figure 33 provides an overview on the themes discussed in this section.

Figure 33

Overview on First and Second Level Sub-Themes on the Functions of Follower Behaviours



5.3.1 *BASIS OF ORGANIZATIONAL SUCCESS*

Participants describe FB as relevant to organizational success on three levels: employee, customer, and economic level.

5.3.1.1 EMPLOYEE LEVEL

As discussed in section 5.1.1 (see p. 178), the current situation on the German labour market allows skilled staff to switch jobs easily. Due to the labour shortage, which Edith (MBO) thinks is “the order of the day in current times,” employee retention is a critical success factor for companies. Statements by participants including Evan (EBO) and Thomas (EFL) clarify that employees are aware of their position of power. This supports the notion that staying with the organization is the fundamental voluntary behaviour that enables all other FBs. Bill (MBO) describes that voluntary behaviour expressed by managers as a representative of the organization leads to retention. “We can now reap what we had sown in 2020. You see that the people are still there. You were able to develop colleagues, give them promotions, and make a step forward yourself.” Sam (MFL) reports: “I did pamper my employees during the time I was there. And if it was only a weekly e-mail during the pandemic.” Therefore, retention is an organizational outcome of FB that contributes to organizational success by enabling the completion of tasks and the display of FB.

Contributing to organizations need for sufficient staff, FB can also lead to candidate awareness. Mark (EFL) states that his teaching activity in schools “helps, just as it helped me back then, that you ultimately get new employees within the bank, that you get to draw attention, this job still exists, and it can be fun.” While Mark (EFL) reports candidate awareness for potential apprentices, such outcomes are also possible when current employees talk positively about their employer and family and friends perceive the employer as a potential choice for an application.

Retention and attraction of staff play a major role in company success, especially in the context of the current job market. Therefore, the outcome of retention contributes to organizational success, as expenses for recruitment and non-filled positions are avoided.

5.3.1.2 CUSTOMER LEVEL

On a customer level, FB is connected to customer awareness, acquisition, experience, satisfaction, and retention.

Through FB, the level of customer awareness can be increased. John (MFL) describes: “Of course the company is always interested in promoting its name” and Matthew (MFL) adds:

> It is a people business. The person who is known is getting referred. When I put up a sign at my door saying ‘Lawyer’ and I don’t to any marketing in any form, then I can wait long until somebody finds me.

Mark (EFL), who gives lectures on financial knowledge in schools thinks that “it also helps on the bank side, on the organizational side, as the bank also gains a higher level of awareness, which ultimately has the advantage of winning new customers,” as the students can turn into customers later. Lilly (MFL) thinks that through her activity as a lecturer, “that conveys domain expertise, especially when I present myself during customer acquisition.” Matthew (MFL) adds: “Our employees don’t have a direct benefit from representing the company at events, but those are customer acquisition activities, which lead to new customers. That means we can make money.”

Nell (MFL) describes customer experience as “feeling welcome.” Allen (MBO) links problem solving to customer experience.

> It is always a chain reaction. You have to see the connections. It starts with the smallest things, and I think that’s often underestimated. Where do the problems start and how do they get to our customers? When I have faulty processes or small disturbances, it will, in the end, affect the customers.

Allen (MBO) describes the effect of missing FB in back-office functions trickling down to customers’ awareness. Therefore, he describes that FB, or its absence, has an indirect impact on customer satisfaction. Mary (EBO) sees supporting colleagues as an important aspect leading to customer satisfaction. “We sometimes help at the reception... . The goal is that the guests don’t need to wait for hours because there's just one person at the counter and they can’t check out.” In contrast to Allen’s (MBO) narrative, Mary (EBO) reports a situation in which she showed FB that led to customers’ positive evaluations. Both stories include the impact of a back-office employee’s or manager’s behaviour on customer satisfaction. This is interesting, as it indicates that both front-line and back-office FBs influence customer satisfaction. Furthermore, customer satisfaction is often linked to the behaviour of task excellence (see section 5.1.2.1, p. 183 et seq.). Bree (EBO) describes that “we have satisfied customers, when we advise them tight from the beginning and when they don’t receive contradictory information.” Caitlyn (EFL) sees that “customers leave the store in a happy mood,” linking her behaviour to a perception of the customer’s satisfaction. Mick

(EFL) describes that even unpleasant situations can lead to positive perceptions by the customer. He regularly calls tenants when there is an issue in the apartment and even though the problem does not get solved immediately, customers are satisfied through his attention. In a B2B context, Jack (MFL) says, “these behaviours support ... that the customer feels noticed and taken seriously, and that we want to make business at eye level.”

A single behaviour does not necessarily lead to customer satisfaction. Denny (EFL) sees his FB as “a minimal influence of the perception the customer has of us as a company, an organization.” Isabel (EBO) supports that notion by describing her contribution as follows: “Even if it is only a small adjusting screw that I can turn, I still CAN turn that screw.” Especially in long lasting collaborations, customer relationships are evaluated as more important than short-term customer satisfaction. Connor (MFL) describes that customers “feel well looked after in the project. This, of course, adds to a strong customer relationship when they say ‘Okay, they were reliable partners, and everything worked the way we expected it’.” Through this strong customer relationship, customer retention can be generated. Tom (MFL) sees voluntary behaviours as “a means for customer retention.” Jack (MFL) describes the customer relationship:

> When you have treated each other well when there were problems, and you have talked, then you find a unified solution. But when you treat each other badly and the other person feels duped, then they will say: “Hey, you made a mistake, now I have more pull.” And that is not how I want to work with them... . Success is doing sustainable business and being viewed positively.

Nell (MFL) says: “It is the goal that they plan their next trip with [organization], if possible before they leave the plane.“ Rick (EFL) sees a similar goal and links his voluntary behaviour to customer retention: “When the customers are happy because they received great service, because they felt well cared for by ME, then they come back.” Connor (MFL) goes a step further and describes a cross-selling approach: “That offers even bigger, much bigger chances for the company to sell additional products.”

Overall, FB, especially in the form of excellent customer service, seems to have a positive impact on customer awareness, experience, satisfaction, and retention. While this seems plausible for front-line employees and managers, it becomes evident that FB or its absence exhibited in back-office roles indirectly influence these customer-oriented outcomes. Therefore, making the contributions of back-office personnel visible is an important aspect for evaluating their FB.

5.3.1.3 ECONOMIC LEVEL

On an economic level, participants see efficiency, gaining new customers, generating revenue, economic decision making, and ensuring quality as relevant outcomes of FB. FB can either generate additional revenue for the company or it can prevent the company from losing money. Generally, FB adds to the company remaining on the market. Connor (MFL) says:

> In my opinion, voluntary behaviours have become more important... . Due to globalization, there is more competition on the market and that leads to different circumstances. The VUCA world, which I guess rings a bell for anybody, has not made it easier. And I think that those voluntary, positive approaches of supporting each other in the company, just help with that. If everybody just mindlessly did their stuff in their department, I think the danger of being left behind as a whole organization, would be enormous.

Being efficient is seen as an important outcome of FB. “Working efficiently is one of the main goals. I am referring to employees who are deployed in a sensible way” (Elise, MBO). Monica (EBO) sees potential for efficiency in supporting each other. She regularly takes over tasks from colleagues and says, “I have access to the systems ... and then I said ‘I know where you need to look. But before you spend lots of time searching, I'll just do it for you’.” Matthew (MFL) sees efficiency in well-structured work systems, for which his employees provided suggestions. Jeffrey (MBO) thinks that the use of software can lead to more efficiency, but FB is often needed during the implementation phase. “They helped facilitate the process. Now we can also work remotely.” Organizational learning can also be made more efficient through FB. Lilly (MFL) sees that her colleagues would have to acquire knowledge by themselves. But "this way they get conveyed the knowledge in a compact form."

Another economic aspect is decision making. Robert (MBO) sees decisions that support the organization's goals as an outcome of FB. "It is crowd intelligence. Nobody knows it all, even though many think they do... . Other than alternatives, constructive questions can lead to validating or challenging the plan." Connor (MFL) also sees that economic success influenced by FB can lead to "being able to afford new labs or more developers." He calls these options "leeway for development of the organization and for growth." Thomas (EFL) thinks economically when he closes down the restaurant due to insufficient customer numbers. "When there are only two tables, they don't know how much that costs. When he is getting paid, when I am getting paid, electricity. And when two people drink a coffee at night, that is not profitable." Sarah (EFL) describes that her organization saves money as its employees do unpaid overtime. "When you have a bunch of people who do the preparations for free in contrast to employing somebody extra to do that, then of course, you aim to keep it all financially low." David (MBO) reports a situation in which one of his employees had an idea that "out of the blue ... saved the company about two third of the costs." Interestingly, the behaviours reported include economic thinking that often goes beyond a person's direct tasks. While such thinking is normally expected from managers, employees are, in many organizational cultures, not thought to be capable of basing their decisions on organizational goals and making them with these wider implications in mind. These stories indicate that employees involve organizational goals in their everyday decision-making to a greater extent than managers might assume. Therefore, it seems there is a larger potential for such FB available than is currently encouraged.

While Thomas (EFL), Sarah (EFL), and David (MBO) talk about situations in which the company saves money, Henry (MBO) reports a situation that would have cost the company money without the voluntary behaviour of a colleague. In a situation of short-term absence of personnel, he found a colleague who took over the tasks. Henry (MBO) says:

“This had a direct impact on the revenue... . If he didn’t do that, this flight can’t be run and 350 passengers make a long face and the company has high expenses, re-booking and accommodating them.” Mary (EBO) also sees long-term issues coming up if quality is not ensured. “If something goes wrong ... that can lead to huge problems... . It might pop up two years later and then the company is in real trouble.” Allen (MBO) sees similar outcomes of his FB. “When I perform better than expected, that is aimed at maintaining operations. I protect the company by keeping the infrastructure running.”

The examples above clarify that economic organizational goals can contribute to organizational success through the efficient use of resources and knowledge. Therefore, they directly contribute to organizational success. Furthermore, a higher potential to encourage behaviour that enhances economic success has been identified.

5.3.2 *SOURCE OF EFFECTS FOR THE INDIVIDUALS INVOLVED*

In addition to effects that contribute to organizational success, participants also see positive and negative effects for FB provider and receiver. The downsides in the form of social, reputation, and evaluation risks and personal efforts, such as time-investment and stress, have been discussed in sections 5.2.3.3 (see p. 257 et seq.) and 5.2.3.4 (see p. 259 et seq.). Therefore, only the benefits of FB are discussed in this section. The informality of FB clarified in section 5.2.2 (see p. 247 et seq.) is incorporated, as the FB providers and recipients are not labelled as managers or employees but can be both.

5.3.2.1 THE BENEFITS FOR THE BEHAVIOUR PROVIDER

Behaviour providers can benefit from their role by gaining positive feelings and positively evaluated attitudes towards their job and the work environment.

First, the individual can gain positive feelings. Feeling appreciated is a feeling followers can gain from showing FB. Megan (MFL) thinks that “the need to be seen and to be valued is deeply rooted in humans.” Allen (MBO) states that “this does not necessarily have to be money. It can be money, appreciation, social appreciation. It can be stability, or trust.” Monica (EBO) also sees that appreciation can be “remuneration, but I think often it is just a nice gesture. Maybe a colleague surprises you with an invitation to lunch ... . or a present I was given for organizing an event." Appreciation is often conveyed through positive feedback. Cora (EBO) states, "I was overjoyed that it was so well received." A customer told Rick (EFL): "That was really great service, I've been using the train for years and nobody has ever been as nice as you are." Isabel's (EBO) manager told her: "You are doing a great job; I like the way you work." Jeffrey (MBO) perceived being elected as a works council representative as a confirmation that he was socially accepted. Nell (MFL) thinks that positive feedback from customers is also perceived by colleagues and motivates them, too. The examples above refer to appreciation voiced by others. Therefore, it is external, and another person's verbal behaviour is needed to achieve the positive outcome.

Another positive feeling that can be gained from FB is satisfaction, often linked to joy and fulfilment. Liz (EBO) says: "Doing this gives me a feeling of satisfaction. ... Then I know that all the effort and stress beforehand was worth it." Edith (MBO) sees that "participating in a process can be very fulfilling" and thinks: "everybody has their own interests which make them happy." Kirby (EFL) is an apprentice instructor and says, "Seeing how they know nothing at the beginning and three years later they pass their exams, that makes my incredibly happy." In contrast to the appreciation experienced through positive feedback, satisfaction originates from the task or the outcome itself, without confirmation from others. Interestingly, more examples for the externally induced feeling of appreciation than for satisfaction based on the task or the outcome itself were voiced. This is important as it highlights the social component in the evaluation of FB. Therefore, the necessity to explicitly appreciate voluntary behaviour seems essential to enable the positively perceived outcome for the follower. Otherwise, a reduction of the behaviour is possible.

Other outcomes can concern the behaviour providers' job. Mark (EFL) states that his voluntary behaviours "offer me extreme versatility as far as my job is concerned." Isabel (EBO) likes that she "gets assigned new topics" and Liz (EBO) sees diversity in her tasks "which would normally not be part of the job description." The behaviour can also lead to development. For example, Abby (MBO) considers an employee who shows voluntary behaviours “to lead a small team of two or three people in a few years,” which would be a vertical development. Rick (EFL) also aims to develop into a management position. He says:

> I don’t want to be a passenger attendant for forty years, but I want to develop further. Maybe I will get into a management position, and you have to be prepared for that. ... And when they see that I have shown leadership qualities in the past and done the job well, they might appoint me as manager.

Matthew (MFL) sees that voluntary behaviour generally “offers the chance to grow and develop.” Monica (EBO) sees personal, on-the-job developments as additional tasks confront her with challenges, and she “learned a lot, as I had to deal with software I had not used before.” Sam (MFL) states that he learns about his employees’ obstacles by showing support behaviour.

Another outcome mentioned by the participants is a positive work environment. “It is about good teamwork, a good work relationship, also with colleagues” (Connor, MFL). Daisy (EBO) thinks a positive work environment is linked to “the interpersonal bond... . Not just strictly seeing the work context but relating to each other.” Kirby (EFL) states that a positive work environment means “having a good time. Because you appreciate your colleagues.”

Overall, FB outcomes influence how FB providers perceive and evaluate it. Communication is vital to enable the feeling of appreciation, which seems to be an important outcome due to its high prevalence.

5.3.2.2 THE BENEFITS FOR THE BEHAVIOUR RECEIVER

The behaviour receiver benefits from FB in several ways. While organizations and external individuals can be the focus of FB, this section discusses the benefits for individuals in the organization, such as colleagues or managers. The organizational outcomes have been discussed in detail in section 5.3.1 (see p. 270 et seq.) and include the customer perspective.

First, positive aspects directly relevant to the person can result from FB. FB receivers can gain positive feelings. For example, Abby (MBO) states that she felt joy. Joy can be proceeded by feeling surprised (Caitlyn, EFL). David (MBO) states: “I was surprised in an extremely positive way.” Evan (EBO) says, “Sometimes there’s some surprise. Somebody might not have counted on help from colleagues. And then there is naturally lots of thankfulness.” Another feeling is satisfaction and being proud. David (MBO) states: “That made me very, very proud” when discussing an employee’s behaviour. Bill (MBO) thinks he influenced his employees to show FB and states, “It makes me a bit proud when I see that I left my mark on these people.” FB receivers can also feel thankful, which they might express verbally (Monica, EBO).

A significant benefit of FB is the reduction of efforts and liberating time for other tasks. Elise (MBO) says that an employee covering for a sick colleague means she has less work organizing a substitute, which might otherwise be herself or external personnel. Tom (MFL) sees helping behaviour as “a specific relief for me, not for the organization.” He also says that he “has time for other tasks.” Liz (EBO) sees she relieves her manager from tasks “so she has time for other, strategic tasks.” Carrie’s (EBO) colleague has taken over some of her tasks permanently and she says, “It might only be a minute here, five minutes there, but I can use the time for other ..., not purely administrative tasks.” Through improvements and support behaviours, future efforts can be reduced. Connor (MFL) reports that his colleagues can save him time when they gather information from the customer in the early steps of the cooperation. He does the same for colleagues proceeding his process step and says: “I know that some things could be programmed in certain ways. So, I can give the customer two or three options ... and then the colleague has an easier task.” Evan (EBO) decided to accept an additional workshop as he knows this will add to positive numbers for his department and his “superiors might have an easier time defending the deficit due to COVID-19.” Mick (EFL) thinks that by taking special care for customer needs, “I save my manager work, as the customers would otherwise call her directly.”

FB receivers often gain information and knowledge through the behaviour. When Mark (EFL) reports the content of the meetings where he represents his manager to him, he provides him with additional information on the interaction throughout the meeting. Jack (MFL) gains information about the status of his employees’ projects as he needs to be able to report to his superiors. As an apprentice instructor, Rick (EFL) sees his junior colleagues gain knowledge “as I share my experience with them, and they can delve deeper into the topic.” Denny (EFL) also sees a knowledge gain, as his colleague took the time to explain a topic to him.

FB can also equip the receiver of the behaviour with the potential to grow. Isabel (EBO) gives her manager feedback and says, “When he doesn’t receive feedback, he can’t change his behaviour.” The behaviour of one of her employees made Abby (MBO) reflect on her behaviour, and she admits that the negative outcome of his behaviour based on positive intentions was partly her fault.

5.3.3 *SOURCE OF AND PLATFORM FOR SELF-CONCEPT PROCESSES*

FB is linked to self-concept processes. It can be a source of self-affirmation and leads to self-regulation by aiming to achieve self-affirmation or aiming for an ideal or ought self. Undesired and forbidden selves have been voiced less frequently. While self-affirmation and self-regulation are intrapersonal processes, self-presentation aims to influence other people’s impressions of an individual. Examples of these processes are provided in the following sections.

5.3.3.1 SOURCE OF SELF-AFFIRMATION

As described in section 5.2.1.3 (see p. 243 et seq.), expectations can also be intrapersonal and related to the self-image or the ideal self. By behaving in a way that aligns with their self-image, individuals gain the benefits described in section 5.3.2.1 (see p. 276 et seq.).

Liz (EBO) describes herself as meticulous and a perfectionist, saying, “When I am responsible for a task, I want it to work perfectly, without mistakes.” Liz (EBO) asks for help, takes over additional tasks, and shows harm prevention behaviour. These behaviours lead to positive outcomes, which are satisfactory for Liz (EBO). In turn, this satisfaction affirms her self-image.

Rick (EFL) provides rich insights into his self-concept, characterized by customer orientation and supporting colleagues. He says: “Of course, I always try to be a good host for the passengers." While he knows trains are often unreliable, he states, "We have enough delay, but the service can be first class." He sees himself as trustworthy and entertaining. On the other hand, he perceives himself as reliable and process-oriented towards his employer. He compares himself to colleagues and says: "others are not as eager as I am." He also describes himself as empathetic and can relate to the needs of his colleagues and customers. Regarding his work as a works council representative, he says: "I always liked to help, and I always liked to listen." In addition, he refers to an ideal self by stating that his behaviours contribute to his career development, and he perceives himself as an aspirational employee with high potential. His actions align with this self-image and work towards the ideal self, as he shows excellent customer service by providing information or taking care of passengers with special needs. He also took on the additional works council representative role and invests his free time. He states: "I follow the processes," but he adds that there are always parts of the process that colleagues handle with less care by "only doing the bare necessities."

Mark's (EFL) self-image includes benefiting others. He behaves according to this aspect of his self-image when he teaches financial knowledge in schools or takes over tasks from his manager. He describes the outcome of meeting his self-image as follows: "I enjoy it, because I think the students get absolute added value from it."

Participants see identification with the recipient of FB as an essential aspect of the self-image. This means that members of an organization "feel as an element of the whole unit" (Matthew, MFL). Jess (EFL) states, "A high level of identification with a person or an organization is needed to show voluntary behaviours." Her notion of the importance of identification can be explained through behaviours aiming at self-affirmation. When belonging to a group or an organization is already part of the positively rated self-image, the individual aims to maintain this sense of belonging. Henry (MBO) states that this leads to "being proud, and voicing it, to work for [organization]. And to BE ALLOWED to fly for [organization]. Rather than being OBLIGED to work". Jeffrey (MBO) also links identification and keeping up identification to positive emotional responses and states: “I identify with the organization, and I like working there.”

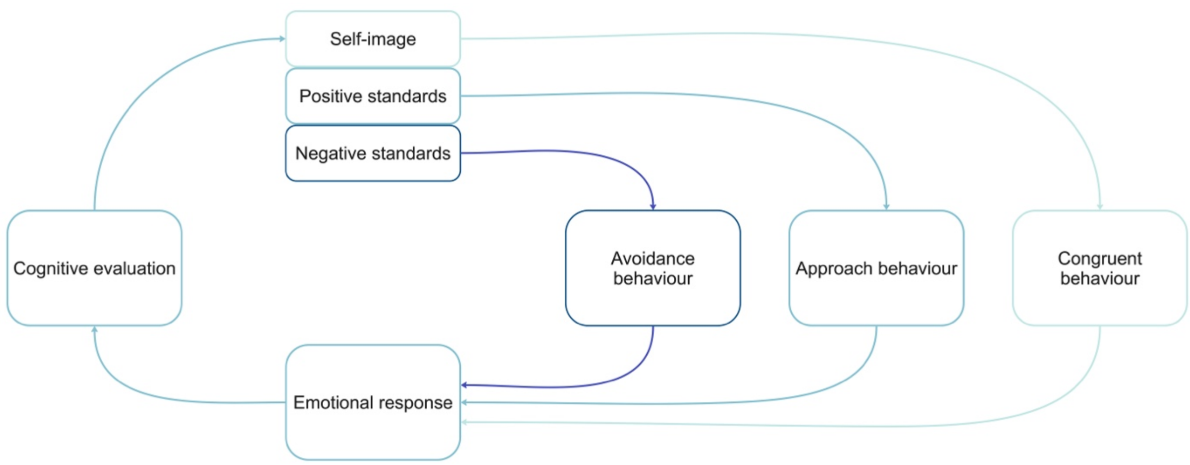
5.3.3.2 MEANS OF SELF-REGULATION

Most participants referred to a positive self-image and self-standards, leading to approach behaviour. Sarah (EFL) reports FB based on avoidance. During an event, she worked unpaid overtime because her colleagues did the same. She said she did it because she “didn’t want to be the only person who says ‘No, I’m out’.” She refers to a forbidden self that has the attribute of not contributing to a team effort. To avoid this negative standard, Sarah (EFL) decided to show FB.

A pattern can be found through the examples provided, which is displayed in Figure 34. Based on the self-image, positive or negative standards, decisions for exhibiting behaviours are made. While avoidance and approach behaviours aim at future, potentially changed states of the self-image, congruent behaviour aims to maintain the current state of the self-image. After exhibiting such behaviour, there is an emotional response and a cognitive evaluation, leading to a changed, or maintained, self-image.

Figure 34

Follower Behaviour as a Means to Maintain or Change the Self-Image



5.3.3.3 PLATFORM FOR SELF-PRESENTATION

In another self-concept-related process, FB states a platform for self-presentation, also called impression management. Self-presentation is based on an individual goal compared to the current self-image and aims to influence the impression somebody else has of the individual.

Carrie (EBO) voiced an idea to solve a problem. She says: "I wanted that it is seen that I think for myself, see opportunities, and try to find solutions." This goal is rooted in "the feeling that it is hard to measure or see my work." She perceives that her work is often not recognized by others. She wants others to say, "She is not only able to count together one plus one, but she can take care of things and find solutions." Aiming to be perceived as an independent and fully accepted team member with the potential for more demanding tasks, she shows FB by voicing ideas for improvement as a form of impression management.

Caitlyn (EFL) remembers similar situations from her time as an apprentice. She says: "As an apprentice ... you do things voluntarily because you want to be well received and because you do not want to hear 'The apprentice isn't good for anything'." Lilly (MFL) uses her voluntary behaviour as a lecturer as a platform for self-presentation towards customers. "Especially during customer acquisition, when you say that you are a lecturer for marketing and digital media. That highlights my expert knowledge." Rick (EFL) uses impression management for his career advancement. As a works council representative, he already takes over some management tasks and says:

> To know about a person that they have been in the company for many years, and they have shown good leadership skills in the past through works council work might lead to saying "we appoint him as manager." It will then fall into my lap, where others first have to prove themselves.

5.3.4 *SOURCE OF PSYCHOLOGICAL CONTRACT MAINTENANCE*

In section 2.2.4.3 (see p. 64), psychological contracts have been defined as "a cognitive schema, or system of beliefs, representing an individual's perceptions of his or her own and another's obligations, defined as the duties or responsibilities one feels bound to perform" (Rousseau et al., 2018, p. 1081). They have further been characterized as reciprocal, implicit, perceptual, and based on expectations. Participants report psychological contracts as they describe FB as reciprocal and based on expectations (see section 5.2.1, p. 233 et seq.). This is regularly voiced by calling the foundation of FB "giving and taking" (Thomas, EFL; Megan, MFL; Jack, MFL; Lilly, MFL & Connor, MFL). Two forms of expectations, and, therefore, psychological contracts could be identified in the interviews: vertical and horizontal. These psychological contracts differ regarding the contract partners involved. Vertical psychological contracts include contract partners on different hierarchical levels (e.g. employee and manager). In contrast, horizontal psychological contracts occur between colleagues on the same hierarchical level.

5.3.4.1 THE CONTENT OF PSYCHOLOGICAL CONTRACTS

The content of the psychological contract depends on the contract partners. In this section, possible contents of psychological contracts, as displayed by the participants, are discussed. The section covers the expectations displayed as perceived obligations. It needs to be noted that the informality of FB clarified in section 5.2.2 (see p. 247 et seq.) is incorporated in the overview. While managers often function as the organization's representative, they also hold psychological contracts in which they are in the follower role. Hence, there is no distinction between managers and employees in presenting the findings, but FB providers and receivers are addressed regardless of their formal role.

Followers as behaviour providers are assigned expectations. Those expectations include taking risks (see section 5.2.3.4, p. 259 et seq.) and exhibiting FBs (described in section 5.1, p. 176 et seq.) limited through organizational and interpersonal expectations (see sections 5.2.1.1, p. 233 et seq. and 5.2.1.2, p. 238 et seq.). FBs can be the content of psychological contracts. However, attitudes, competencies, knowledge, and working styles are also part of the contract as assumed prerequisites for FB.

Regarding attitudes, followers are expected to be loyal, customer-centred, and enthusiastic. Jeffrey (MBO) states: "I do it for the company. I am absolutely loyal." Bill (MBO) associates his loyalty with his managers, saying he "would go through hell and high water for them." Loyalty can also be linked to colleagues. Cora (EBO) says: "When I read e-mails that are linked to a person, I scan if I like working with the person. If I'm not interested in the person, I will not answer an e-mail during vacation or after working hours." The expectation to build loyalty is linked to coping strategies related to risk (see section 5.2.3.4.3, p. 262 et seq.), as loyalty includes some form of trust.

Customer centricity is especially important for behaviours that focus on the customer as the FB receiver. Caitlyn (EFL) says: "My first thought is to do something good for the customer." Henry (MBO) adds: "Our own needs are secondary in this situation. First, the needs of our guests, our passengers must be satisfied." Mary (EBO) states, "It is the aim to have satisfied guests ... The concern for the customer is really huge." Back-office employees can also have customer-centric attitudes. Monica (EBO) says, "I see my colleagues as my customers... . They receive a service from me."

Jeffrey (MBO) describes an enthusiastic attitude in individuals as "not seeing work as work, but rather wanting to move something forward. And then it doesn't matter if you stay half an hour longer." Bill (MBO) adds to that notion by saying, "Then you are in a situation where it does not feel like work. I would not go as far as saying it is my hobby, but it is a passion." Kirby (EFL) describes her additional apprentice instructor task as "a passion that developed over time." Edith (MBO) thinks "being enthusiastic also encourages others to go along with it."

Followers are required to contribute their competencies and knowledge, which are seen as necessary components to exhibit FB successfully. These can be based on prior work knowledge. Mary (EBO) states she can show FB as she has specific knowledge. A new reservation system was to be implemented, and she knew the necessary processes to choose the appropriate system. Elise (MBO) thinks that becoming an apprentice instructor is limited to people who "have experience." Mick (EFL) also acted as an apprentice instructor, and it was helpful that he "knew the processes" as he had been an apprentice in the company. Evan (EBO) also thinks it is easier for him, as an experienced colleague, to take over additional workshops. The experience does not necessarily need to be work-related.

Mark's (EFL) employer was looking for somebody who wanted to represent the company as a finance-influencer, and he was suitable as he used "to shoot private YouTube videos like this from time to time." Competencies and knowledge can also be related to personal interest. Bill (MBO) states, "Some of the colleagues just have a way with certain topics," and Lilly (MFL) says, "This is my personal interest. I read a lot of books."

In addition, participants regularly mentioned working styles, such as independent working, flexibility, and prioritising, flexibility, and prioritising as related to FB. Bill (MBO) describes an independent working style as "the freedom to decide how the job is done." Holly (MFL) says, "I find independent working really positive. When somebody does not know how to proceed, they can of course ask for input, but only after showing me what they have achieved themselves." Allen (MBO) sees the ability to make decisions inside one's area of responsibility as part of independent working. He says:

> When employees approach me and say, "Can we do it this way?" And I say: "Yes of course, but you have been given the competency to make that decision yourself ... Theoretically you don't need to ask me. I can confirm the decision, so you have the feeling that it is okay for me, too." ... But I try to encourage them to take on responsibility and make decisions themselves.

Through this statement, Allen (MBO) links independent working styles to risk-taking. While his employees seek risk reduction by obtaining approval in the hierarchy, he expects them to take that risk themselves and make decisions independently. David (MBO) describes a situation in which one of his employees has worked independently, as she used part of her working time "to analyse the costs of working with a supplier for the last months or years" and provided suggestions for cost reductions. Melinda (EBO) and her team also show collective independent working styles as they try to find solutions and make decisions before approaching their manager.

Flexibility is often related to time. As discussed in section 5.2.3.3 (see p. 257 et seq.), individual efforts shown in FB are often linked to working longer hours, outside regular working hours, or allowing to arrange working hours flexibly. Flexibility can be shown on all hierarchical levels, aiming at organizations or individuals. Bree (EBO) sees more room for flexibility that could be allowed by the organization. She refers to home office options, flexible break times, and work time frames. Lilly (MFL) sees flexibility as highly relevant for part-time employees as they make appointments outside their regular working hours possible. However, as a manager, she also provides flexibility for personal appointments.

Prioritizing is seen as a working style that is part of FB. Denny's (EFL) senior colleague has prioritized his questions over his own work. Denny (EFL) says, "He invested lots of time, even though he had a lot of tasks to do." Liz (EBO) explains that she regularly has competing tasks on her desk and needs to prioritize them, so they are all achieved on time. Melinda (MBO) prioritizes the topic she talks to her manager about and reduces them to the necessary aspects to take up less of her manager's time.

In return for FB, expectations towards the FB receiver emerge. The primary obligation of the behaviour receivers is to show appreciation. Several aspects of appreciation have been discussed in section 5.3.2.1 (see p. 276 et seq.), as they lead to positive feelings for the FB provider. It needs to be acknowledged that appreciation is perceived individually. For example, Mark (EFL) and Isabel (EBO) see the support of personal development as appreciation, Jeffrey (MBO) aims for stability, and Evan (EBO) mentions work-life balance as appreciation.

5.3.4.2 THE STATE OF PSYCHOLOGICAL CONTRACTS

The state of the psychological contract is determined by the contract partners' evaluation of the exchange relationship (see section 2.2.4.3, p. 66 et seq.). To explain how FB influences psychological contracts, some examples will be discussed in detail.

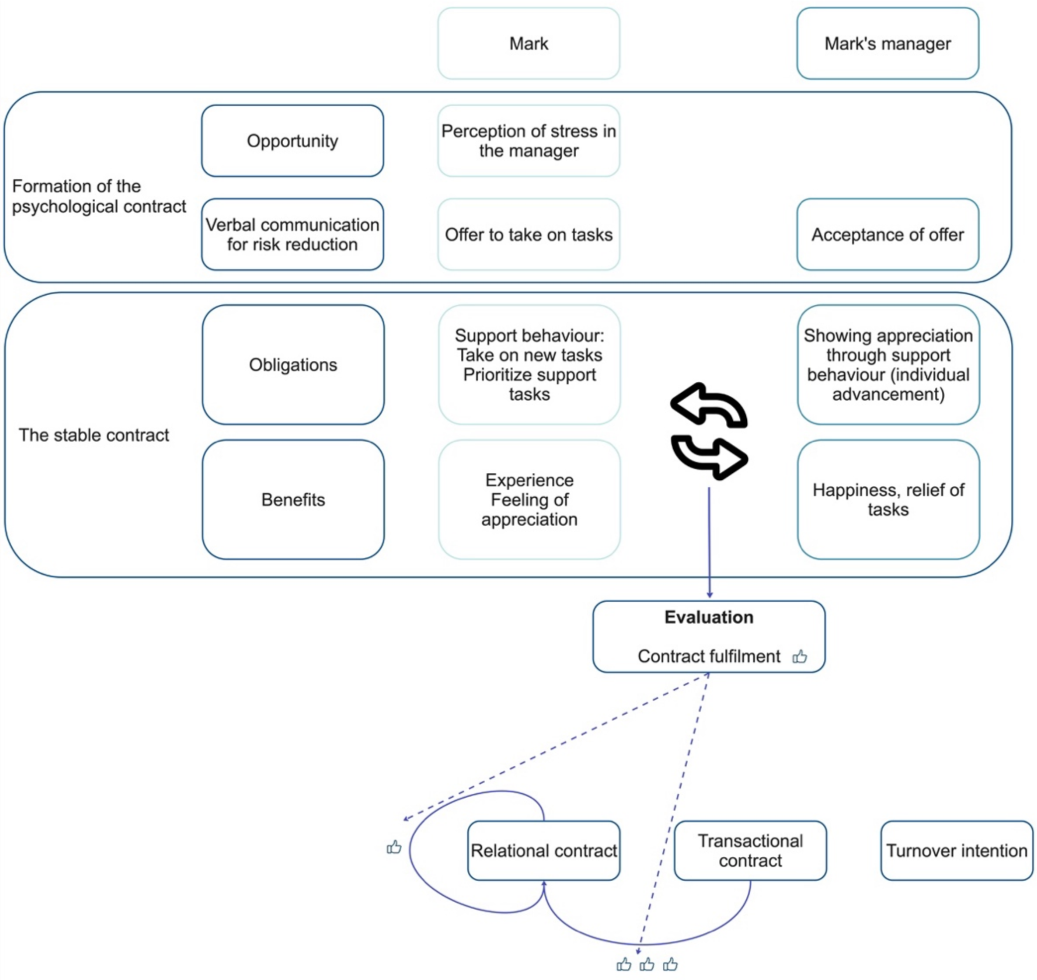
The first example refers to a stable, vertical psychological contract built between Mark (EFL) and his manager. Mark (EFL) perceives that his manager "has a fairly full schedule and ... is not able to handle all his e-mails." He supports by taking over some of the manager's tasks, such as representing him in meetings, writing minutes, and reporting these back to his manager. For him, these tasks mean he can "gain a bit of experience in this management track, I would say, because there are completely different tasks than the ones, I do every day." Regarding the reaction of his manager, Mark (EFL) says: "He was happy about it and then also appreciated that I approached him actively and asked if I could take something on." He stresses that "it's also really good for me, because I can get a taste of what a manager actually does." Mark (EFL) sees appreciation in "his reaction, he just thanked me." In addition to thanking him, his manager engages in "much more detailed discussions about what my professional future could look like, and he has been supporting me in a much more targeted way since then. I've noticed that. And that, in my view, is a form of appreciation." He sees that his manager "wants me to make progress. And shows me that in the form of the meetings, gives me tips, shows me tricks and structures a plan with me, because he doesn't have to do that." Asked about the voluntariness of his manager's behaviour, Mark (EFL) explains the reciprocity of the relationship: "If I hadn't approached him, would we be having the same conversations we're having right now? ... Ultimately there was a trigger for it and that was that I originally approached him." He acknowledges that his manager could have accepted his offer to show support behaviour without supporting his career development in return. Had he done so, Mark (EFL) states:

> Maybe my passion for it would have decreased a bit (laughs) while working on the tasks. Well, I always try to do them very conscientiously, but I'll put it this way, that's something I do on top, that I don't have to do and then I'd definitely have to go to one or the other meeting, where I might have one myself If I have an appointment that I consider important, I might have postponed the meeting, yes, and then not worked on it for him or just worked less than at the current time.

In this summary of an interview section, Mark (EFL) describes how his reciprocal relationship, which is displayed in Figure 35, with his manager emerged. He describes an opportunity through perception and verbal communication for risk reduction. He then specifies the contents of the contract. Based on Mark's (EFL) offer, his manager expects him to show support behaviour by taking on additional tasks. Mark (EFL) expects to gain knowledge about the work of a manager and support in personal and career development from his manager. His manager benefits from this stable psychological contract, as he shows positive emotions (happiness) towards Mark (EFL), and he experiences relief from task. Mark (EFL) benefits from the psychological contract as he has a positive feeling of appreciation and gains the experience he sought. The strengths of the expectations become clear as he states that a potential change in his manager's behaviour would lead to a reduction in his FB. While Mark (EFL) rates his initial behaviour as voluntary, the behaviours in the psychological contract are only partly voluntary. As discussed in section 5.2.1.4 (see p. 246 et seq.), expectations are volatile and can change over time. In this case, the trigger for the change of expectations, and therefore the evaluation of the voluntariness of behaviour, can be found in the formation of a stable psychological contract. Furthermore, a constant renewal of the positive evaluation is necessary to stabilize the psychological contract's reciprocity. Otherwise, a contract breach would be perceived, and the contract status could return to being transactional.

Figure 35

Vertical, Relational Psychological Contract Example (Participant Mark, EFL)



The second example refers to a transactional, vertical psychological contract. Edith (MBO) describes her organization, personified by a range of people, as the contract partner. She reports that she exhibited many voluntary behaviours in the past. Edith (MBO) says that “until two years or so ago, I just said yes when a special task came up.” She states that she reduced the effort and accepted fewer special tasks.

> What have I stopped doing? I stopped doing everything where I know about the protagonists: They ask me because I do things with lots of dedication and a high sense of responsibility. That leads to me having a lot of work, and other people can shine. I don’t want to do that anymore. Only if I must.

Edith (MBO) now evaluates the potential outcome for her: “Now I think ‘What is in it for ME in the end? Will I get something countable or just a clammy handshake?’ ... When you do these things for years and nothing changes - I now take a closer look.” She elaborates that something countable can be contacts, information, personal development, experience, and her feeling to matter. On the other hand, she talks about her contribution while exhibiting voluntary behaviour:

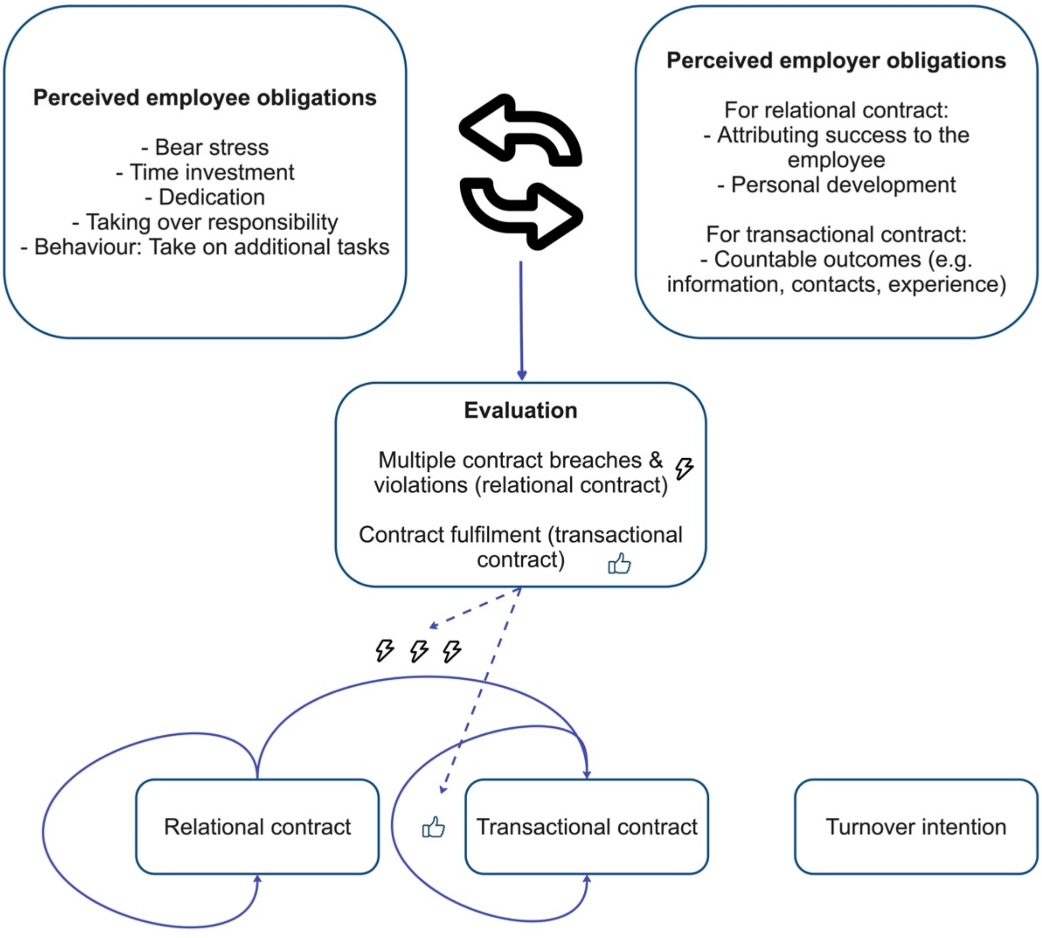
> Often, it’s extremely stressful. Long workdays and then this and that in addition... . That often burdens me because I have to go to the breaking point or even beyond it to get it done in a way that I find satisfactory.

She states that “at some point, that bears no proportion" if her behaviour is only "regarded with favour.”

Edith (MBO) describes how a relational contract became a transactional contract. The psychological contract is displayed in Figure 36. She describes that her obligations in the psychological contract are to take on additional roles with responsibility, show dedication, invest time, and bear stress. Edith (MBO) expects the organization, represented by unspecified individuals, to show appreciation by attributing the success to her. She would value to gain personal development, experiences, contacts, and information. Edith (MBO) perceived a contract breach, as the success related to her FB was attributed to other people several times. The contract violation was, at first, not perceived as strong enough to change the psychological contract based on one contract breach. However, Edith (MBO) describes a constant contract breach which led to the psychological contract becoming transactional. This example shows that contract breaches and violations can lead to a reduction in FBs. It also adds to the notion of expectation volatility (see section 5.2.1.4, p. 246 et seq.). For a relational contract to emerge, Edith (MBO) would expect to be attributed the success and gain personal development. The current transactional contract is based on her expectation for countable outcomes. These expectations are mostly met, leading to Edith (MBO) showing some FB, even though her individual potential to do so would be higher.

Figure 36

Vertical, Transactional Psychological Contract Example (Participant Edith, MBO)

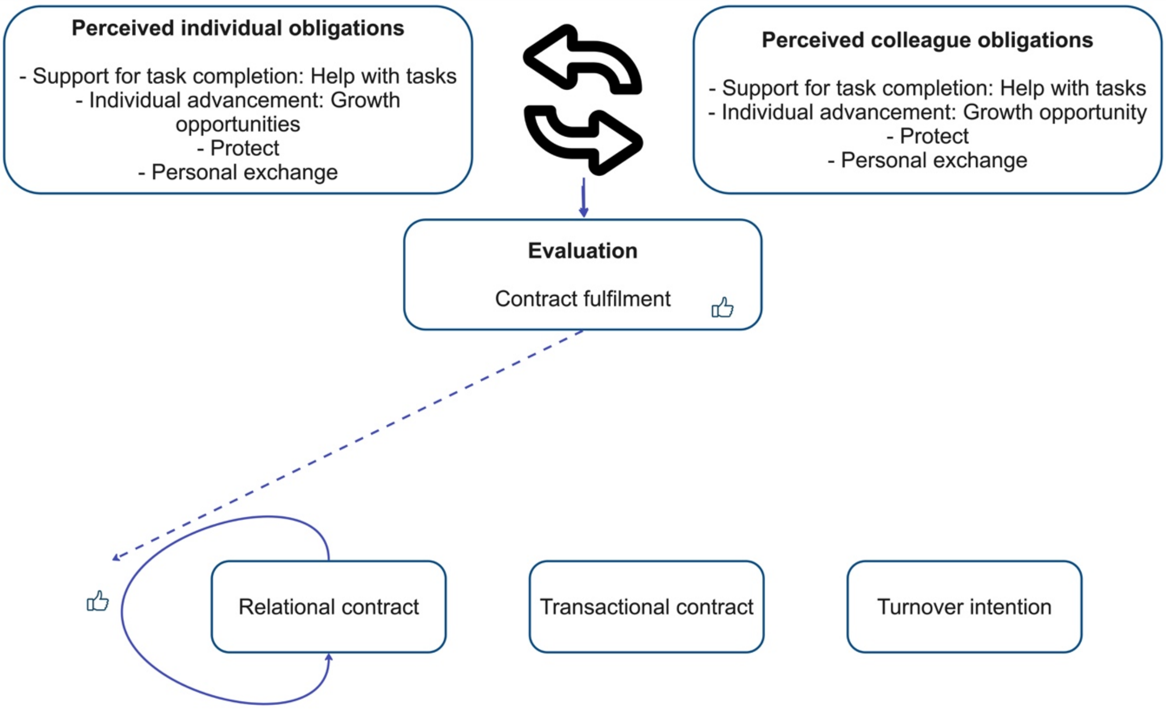


A third example presented by Jess (EFL) describes a stable relational, horizontal psychological contract. She states that her colleague has difficulties finding "the right approach to address customers on social media," and Jess (EFL) has "talked to him a few times about the possibilities he can use and how he could phrase it." She calls her behaviour "collegial coaching." On the other hand, Jess (EFL) sometimes needs help understanding the content of complex vacancies she needs to fill. In addition, Jess (EFL) sees reciprocal collegial affect and a mutual identification as "the newbies."

The psychological contract is presented in Figure 37. In the brief description Jess (EFL) presents, several voluntary behaviours can be identified. Jess (EFL) talks about mutual support for task completion by helping each other with tasks. By doing so, they also provide each other with growth opportunities. As the help is directly related to their formal task, the behaviour can also be interpreted as protecting a colleague from failure and potential negative consequences. Jess (EFL) also highlights her good relationship with her colleague, which indicates personal exchange.

Figure 37

Horizontal, Relational Psychological Contract Example (Participant Jess, EFL)



A fourth example can be found in Evan's (EBO) description of his team. He states that covering for colleagues on short notice is often necessary. For him personally, "these things are everyday work, and they just happen from time to time." He has difficulties understanding colleagues who do not want to cover for others on short notice, as he sees it as part of his obligation towards his colleagues. "I did that frequently in my working life, being challenged with not having done a workshop before. But I do it, even though I'm getting thrown into cold water." He thinks that "there isn't only the comfort zone, but I stand here and have to deliver the workshop even though I have never done it before, and I don't know the colleague I'm working with." He sees a change in expectations and says:

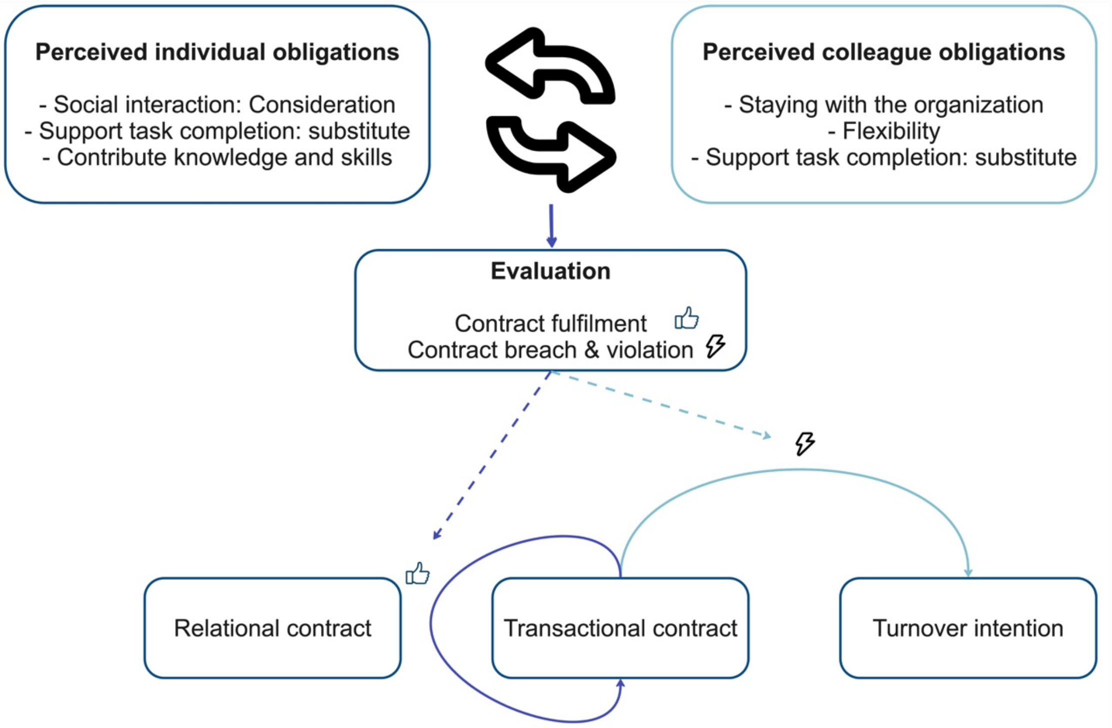
> In the past, you just had to take the task. Today, especially younger colleagues are much more often asked if they are willing to do it. Of course, they are less experiences and say no more often and I am not used to that from my past experience. I might be a bit conservative here.

Evan (EBO) sees that his colleagues expect their needs to be considered and that they leave organizations much quicker when those needs are not met.

Evan’s (EBO) view of the horizontal psychological contract is displayed in Figure 38. He perceives substituting for colleagues as a mutual obligation. He notices that his colleagues expect him to consider their needs while he expects them to stay on the team. Their contract is generally transactional, and there is a risk that his colleagues might leave if they are asked to show voluntary behaviour in the form of substituting for a colleague too often, as they do not feel that their expectation (social interaction: consideration) is met. From Evan’s (EBO) perspective, the contract is breached by his colleagues by not covering for others and not showing flexibility, but he does not evaluate it as a contract violation. Therefore, he still assesses the contract as transactional.

Figure 38

Horizontal, Transactional Psychological Contract Example (Participant Evan, EBO)



Note. Dark blue = Evan's (EBO) evaluation; light blue = colleague's evaluation

The four examples presented in this section show that FB is part of the mutual expectations of the psychological contract. They function to communicate the willingness to fulfil one's part of the psychological contract and can, therefore, lead to an improvement of the psychological contract status. On the other hand, contradicting expectations can lead to turnover intention, as described in Evan's (EBO) case. The state of the psychological contract also determines the degree to which voluntary behaviours are exhibited and form limiting or fostering frameworks for FB.

Horizontal contracts have been described in less detail than vertical contracts. While vertical contracts or regularly based on different obligations (see examples Mark, EFL and Edith, MBO), the obligations attributed to the contract partners in horizontal psychological contracts are rather similar (see examples Jess, EFL and Evan, EBO).

5.4 INTERIM CONCLUSION

FB has been identified to be informal and context sensitive. The informality of FB becomes evident as showing FBs is not only reported for employees but also for managers. Therefore, FB can be exhibited regardless of formal role. Hence, leader and manager roles, as well as employee and follower roles, can coincide but this is not necessarily the case. Therefore, managers can be followers and employees can be leaders. This finding supports the necessity to differentiate these formal and informal roles and sensitizes researchers to the careful use of the terms. In the findings, the terms FB receiver and provider were introduced, which offers a more inclusive approach.

The context-sensitivity of FB becomes evident as the organizational, interpersonal, and intrapersonal expectations and evaluations play a major role in the conceptualization of FB. These expectations are influenced by organizational characteristics such as sub-industry and organization size, and individual characteristics, such as career status or the job profile.

This research was the first to operationalize voluntariness as a means of demarcating follower from formal role behaviour. Interestingly, the conceptualizations of voluntariness differ and the evaluation of its meaning for practitioners' influences expectations. Therefore, the conceptualization of voluntariness discussed in this chapter extends the understanding of FB based on expectations and offers explanations for FB differences in conceptualization and the potential for conflict in practices based on its implicit nature.

Overall, the conceptualization of voluntariness and FB is complex, and thus the issues identified in earlier attempts at problematization are borne out, prior research is based on an insufficient understanding of practitioners' conceptualizations.

5.5 DEFINING AND DEMARCATING FOLLOWER BEHAVIOUR

5.5.1 *THE INFORMALITY OF FOLLOWER BEHAVIOUR*

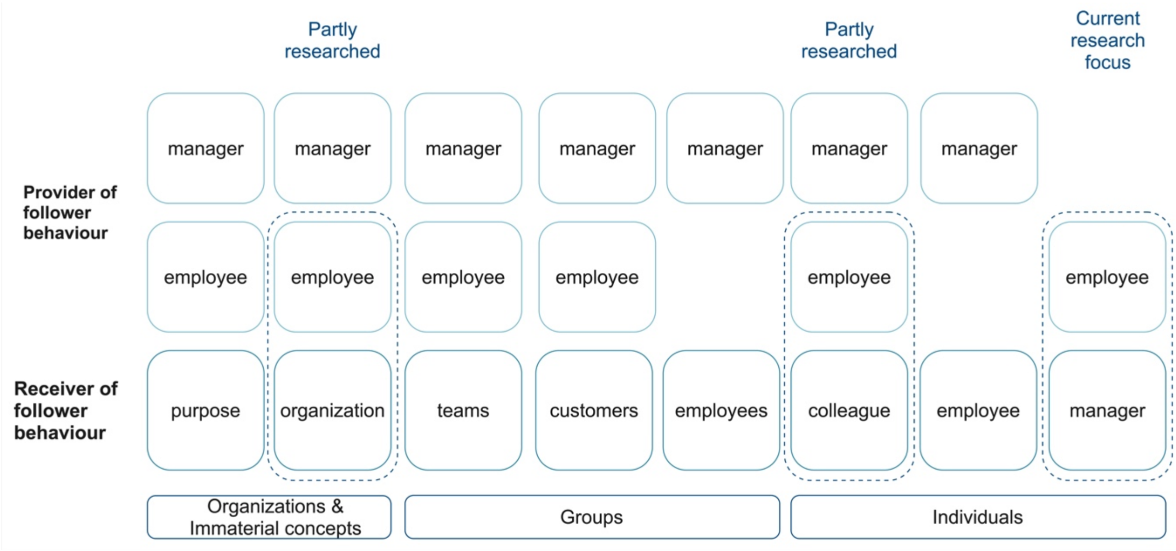
Fifteen definitions of FB (section 3.6.2, p. 93) were identified in the SLR. The remaining 115 publications used the term without explicit definition. The definitions provided regularly include two aspects: (a) the formal or informal character of FB, and (b) the focus of FB on the person of the leader or the organization. Most definitions postulate a leader-centred, formal definition of FB. Therefore, the problematization that FB research occurs in a limited scope based on a hierarchical role understanding, neglecting the informality of FB is supported.

The participants of this research perceive FB as informal and situational (see sections 5.2.2, p. 247 et seq. and 5.2.4, p. 265 et seq.). Participants suggest an informal role perspective on FB as they see both, employees and managers as potential FB providers. Furthermore, they report a range of possible FB receivers. These can be organizations, immaterial concepts (purpose, goal), groups (teams, customers, employees), or individuals (colleague, employee, manager). In contrast to the narrow definition implied by mainly hierarchy-based research (e.g. Anand et al., 2018; Chen et al., 2023), this research suggests that the perception of FB is broader in the sense that it includes further behaviour receivers and is detached from formal roles, meaning that formal managers can show FB. Most definitions (e.g. Bonner, 2018; Carsten et al., 2010) and methodological approaches (e.g. Gesang & Süß, 2021; Gochmann, 2018; van Dierendonck & Dijkstra, 2012) to FB in existing research imply that the formal role of employees is the foundation for the role of followers, and FB is a subset of employee behaviour. This research supports Alegbeleye and Kaufman's (2020) analysis that FB is informal, and the follower role can be adopted regardless of the formal role. In addition, various potential FB receivers were identified, extending their argument.

By taking an informal role understanding as a basis of FB research, new research opportunities arise, as additional combinations of FB between receiver and provider surface that are beyond the employee and manager dyad. Therefore, the suggestion is that future researchers investigating the leadership-followership construct from a follower-centred or balanced perspective, explicitly define their understanding of FB. Figure 39 shows combinations of FB providers and receivers reported in this research. Researchers need to adjust their sampling and participant selection strategies when adopting an informal role approach. Asking managers for the leader perspective and employees for the follower perspective is not feasible when the behaviour provider is the manager, or the FB receiver is not the manager. Therefore, sampling strategies must be justified based on the chosen behaviour provider-receiver combination.

Figure 39

Research Options Based on Follower Behaviour Providers and Receivers



Note. Dotted frames indicate focus areas of existing research.

5.5.2 *DEMARCATION FROM FORMAL ROLE BEHAVIOUR*

Gochmann (2018) states: “the boundaries [between employee behaviour and follower behaviour] might be blurred and are not intensely investigated yet” (p. 135). Even though this statement emphasizes the problem of a lack of concept demarcation, it does not provide an approach to demarcation. Furthermore, the statement includes that only employees can exhibit FB, indicating a formal role approach. Therefore, Gochmann (2018) reveals the need for a demarcation, but the line of thought seems unfinished. Accordingly, the statement would be more appropriately formulated as a question: What are the boundaries between follower and formal role behaviour? By stating this question, the informality of FB is incorporated, as formal role behaviour also includes the manager role.

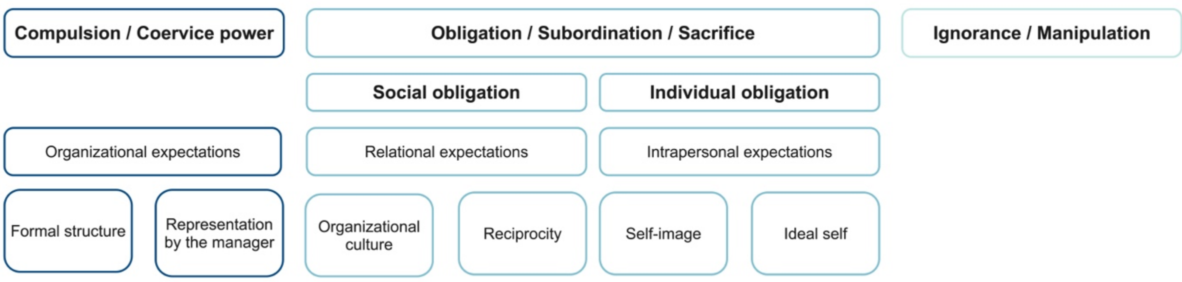
As no former research proposed an approach to demarcate formal role and follower behaviour, this study contributes to current knowledge by being the first to attempt such concept demarcation. This research includes the notion of voluntariness, suggesting a demarcation of formal role behaviour and follower behaviour based on the framework presented by Blom and Lundgren (2020), discussed in section 2.1.6 (see p. 42 et seq.). The framework is based on Nicomachean ethics and sees obligation/subordination, ignorance/manipulation, and compulsion/coercive power as the factors that distinguish fully voluntary, moderately voluntary, and minimally voluntary behaviour. These factors have not been defined in terms of their operationalization in organizational settings. This research includes a first attempt to explore the perception of voluntariness, enabling the development of an initial operationalization of voluntariness in organizational contexts.

5.5.2.1 EXPECTATIONS AS THE REFERENCING FRAMEWORK

Participants in this research conceptualize FB as based on organizational, relational, and interpersonal expectations (see section 5.2.1, p. 233 et seq.). These expectations can be interpreted as a referencing framework for evaluating behaviour as fully, moderately, or minimally voluntary in a specific situation. The expectations can be allocated to the categories defining voluntariness proposed by Blom and Lundgren (2020), as displayed in Figure 40.

Figure 40

Allocation of Expectations to Voluntariness Defining Aspects According to Blom and Lundgren (2020)



Organizational expectations, implemented through formal structures or verbal communication by the manager as the representative figure of the organization, lead to compulsion, as instruction limits the behavioural options available. These expectations are often, but not always, openly communicated and, therefore, require little interpretation.

In contrast, obligations are based on the interpretation by the behaviour provider. Evaluating the voluntariness involved in a specific behaviour relies on the obligations perceived by the behaviour provider and is, therefore, more subjective than organizational expectations. Blom and Lundgren (2020) state that “obligation is compared to compulsion more self-imposed” (p. 170), contributing to the notion of interpretation as a means of understanding expectations. In this research, two forms of obligation can be identified: social and individual obligation. Social obligations are based on relational expectations that can be conveyed through organizational culture and reciprocal relationships. The nature of relational expectations includes the need for interpretation, as they are conveyed implicitly. Therefore, the obligation is constructed in the behaviour provider, based on the relational interaction and their interpretation of the implicit messages. Hence, these behaviours include a higher level of risk as the expectations are not stated explicitly, leading to uncertainty about the evaluation of the behaviour by the FB receiver. In contrast, individual obligations are internal expectations that aim to maintain or enhance the self-image and strive for desired future selves. Therefore, this type of obligation is rooted in the individual, their wishes and motivation and hence does not need to be interpreted. Social standards often influence individuals, making them socially constructed. For example, becoming a manager is associated with higher social status and increased income. Therefore, individuals might strive to become managers based on a socially induced ideal self.

Interestingly, no expectations could be allocated to the aspect of ignorance. This might be the case as participants are unaware of its influence, they do not experience it, or they do not attribute relevance to it when evaluating the voluntariness in behaviour.

5.5.2.2 THE EVALUATION OF BEHAVIOUR AS (IN)VOLUNTARY

Participants in this research suggest four aspects that define the level of voluntariness perceived by the FB provider: (a) the absence of instructions, (b) the perceived risk taken, (c) the effort included, and (d) positive intention. Based on these criteria, and the expectations presented above, participants describe an evaluation of the behaviour as fully, moderately, or minimally voluntary.

First, participants perceive voluntariness when acting without instructions. The organizational expectations define the level of freedom. The absence of instructions relates to compulsion and coercive power in Blom and Lundgren's (2020) model, as hierarchically higher individuals can give instructions. In doing so, they exert power and convey expectations that do not leave room for other actions. When such hierarchical influence is not exhibited, participants perceive the opportunity to act proactively, which is considered an aspect of voluntariness. At the same time, participants acknowledge that voluntary behaviour always takes place in a setting that contains contracts, job descriptions, and other formal restrictions. Therefore, within these boundaries, participants primarily see voluntariness, as framed by the absence of instructions from the manager as a representative of the organization. Through this absence, participants describe the feeling of freedom to execute tasks in different ways. This choice is perceived as moderately voluntariness as it takes place in a context characterized by restrictions but allows proactive decision-making.

Second, the perceived risk includes potential negative evaluations by the FB receiver and potential social non-acceptance of the behaviour. A low level of perceived risk is based on the belief that declining the exhibition of behaviour will lead to neutral outcomes. The risk taken relates to uncertainties regarding the expectations of the behaviour receiver. Therefore, it mainly overlaps with social obligations, as these are interpretations of the FB provider. As these interpretations are relational, the risk included is based on interpreting relational expectations. In evaluating these risks, FB providers assess if they can cope with the risk involved by implementing coping mechanisms such as seeking information and approval or through trust processes.

Third, the effort included is evaluated against the individual expectations, which are influenced by interpreting relational expectations. While effort is often a characteristic of voluntary behaviour, participants evaluate behaviour that exceeds expectations as more voluntary than behaviour that reaches the expectations. The evaluation of the effort included is also related to the formal role. Given their formal manager role, participants in this group perceived higher expectations, leaving them with fewer opportunities to show FB. Nevertheless, participants reported behaviours they defined as voluntary. Concurrently, those holding a formal manager role perceive more restrictions imposed by their formal role that influence their interpretation of the associated expectations than those holding a formal employee role.

Fourth, a positive intention influences the perception of a behaviour as voluntary. The positive intention needs to be demarcated from altruistic behaviour. While altruistic behaviour would only benefit the behaviour receiver, positive intention contains mutually beneficial behaviours that positively affect the behaviour receiver and the provider. At the same time, evaluating the behaviour itself and the behavioural outcome by the behaviour receiver is not relevant for determining if a positive intention is perceived. Instead, the individuals involved can attribute a positive intention to the behaviour provider to evaluate a behaviour as voluntary. Therefore, the attributed intention can differ, leading to a potential perception discrepancy. Therefore, attributing an intention that aims to harm others or solely pursue selfish goals is evaluated as non-voluntary and instances in which ambiguous intentions are present are moderately voluntary at most.

Based on the meaning-making of the participants of this research, fully voluntary and moderately voluntary behaviours can be defined as FB. Fully voluntary behaviours are characterized as being shown *without instruction,* include *no perceived risk,* are based on *high efforts beyond expectations,* and a *positive intention*. Moderately voluntary behaviours are regularly based on instruction but contain voluntariness in the freedom to define how the instructions are executed. While there is a risk in denial, it is either evaluated as limited or can be compensated by coping strategies, such as seeking information and approval or through trust processes. Furthermore, the effort necessary reaches or exceeds expectations and a positive intention is attributed to the behaviour provider. In contrast, minimally voluntary behaviours follow clear instructions and do not allow the individual to make independent decisions. The intention does not play a role or is negative in minimally voluntary behaviour. Additionally, formal role behaviour can fall short of expectations. Formal role behaviours are demarcated from voluntary behaviours as coping strategies cannot compensate for perceived risk.

It needs to be clarified that the evaluation of voluntariness in behaviour is a process that is based on a dichotomous logic. The assessment result depends on the individual perception of the importance of the evaluation criteria, and the classification is conducted on a continuum rather than a clear assignment of the three voluntariness states. Therefore, not all four criteria must be met to evaluate behaviour as fully or moderately voluntary. In addition, the absence of one criterion could lead to labelling the behaviour as minimally voluntary. While this research suggests four criteria, their impact on the evaluation requires more investigation and opens up research opportunities.

Based on the empirical findings, a working demarcation can be established:

> *Follower behaviours are distinguished from formal role behaviours through the perception of voluntariness, which is determined by the level of freedom, a positive intention, the level of effort in relation to expectations, and the risk perceived, and potential coping strategies deployed.*

Figure 41

Evaluation of Behaviour Regarding its Voluntariness

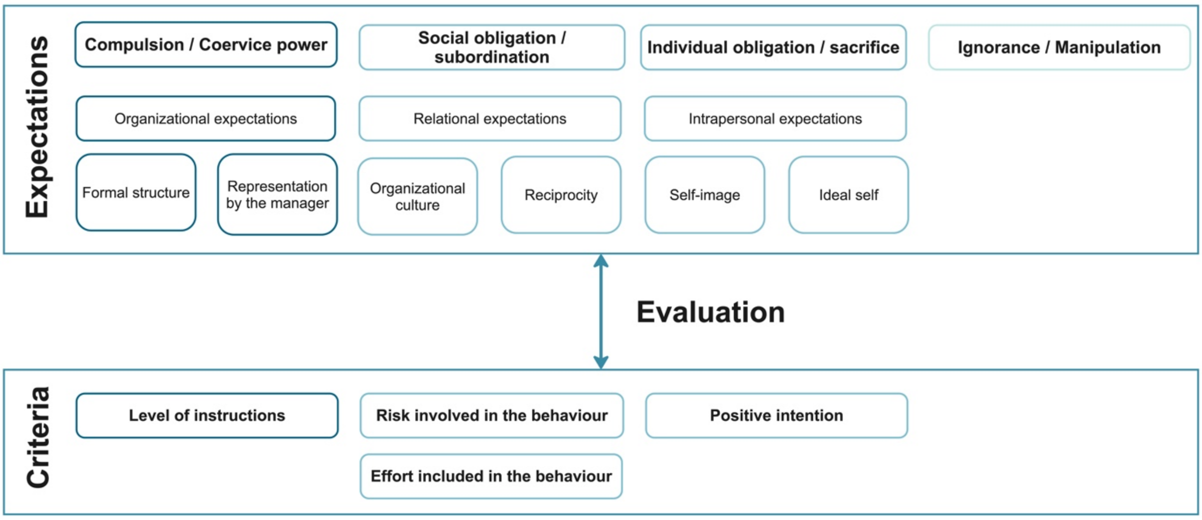


Figure 41 illustrates the evaluation process. In the next section, the application of this working demarcation is explored by assessing if behaviours labelled as FB in existing research meet these criteria.

5.5.2.3 ASSESSMENT OF BEHAVIOURS LABELLED AS FOLLOWER BEHAVIOUR

As FB has regularly been equated with employee behaviour (e.g. Anand et al., 2018; Bonner, 2018; Chen et al., 2023), the question arises if all behaviours researched under the term of 'follower behaviour' can be labelled as such according to the criteria provided above. In contrast to existing definitions and approaches, this demarcation clarifies the differences between follower and formal role behaviour. Therefore, it enables an assessment of whether the FBs identified in the SLR can be described as such in the light of the demarcation suggested within this research.

First, it needs to be analysed if the behaviours are performed without instruction. While behaviours that managers might negatively evaluate (e.g. resistance or deviance) can be described as behaviours without instruction, task-related behaviours could be predicated on instruction. Therefore, the chief issue is if there is freedom in the execution of the task. It seems sensible a low level of freedom in task execution characterizes behaviours closely related to the job description. For example, measures related to job performance might not include the necessary freedom.

Second, the presence of a positive intention needs to be evaluated. Destructive and deviant behaviours are aimed at inducing negative effects on the leader (Gauglitz et al., 2023; Schwarzmüller et al., 2017), the organization (Bush et al., 2021; Gatling et al., 2017; van Gils, 2012; van Gils et al., 2015), or co-workers (May et al., 2014). These behaviours are characterized by violating "significant organizational norms, and in so doing, threatens the well-being of the organization and/or its members" (Robinson & Bennett, 1995, p. 556). Therefore, both behaviours lack positive intention and need to be excluded from the list of FBs. Unethical behaviour might seem to lack positive intention initially, but concepts such as unethical pro-organizational behaviour suggest otherwise. Unethical pro-organizational behaviour "involves morally questionable actions that are carried out with the goal to increase organizational success, but that harms the wellbeing of customers or other external stakeholders, and possibly even society" (Kalshoven et al., 2016, p. 502). At the same time, unethical pro-organizational behaviour can contribute to the goals of a manager (e.g. a bonus) while being morally unacceptable (Hoogervorst et al., 2010). Hence, unethical pro-organizational behaviour constitutes an example of behaviours that positively affect the organization, and a positive intention towards organizational goals can, therefore, be attributed. At the same time, harm for others involved emerges and mitigating attribution of intent, the acceptance of those negative effects becomes evident. Other behaviours that include a similar dilemma, such as whistleblowing, are similar. In this case, disclosing secrets and compromising information would benefit societal goals but not align with the organizations. Therefore, situations that do not facilitate positive intentions in the sense of aspired beneficial outcomes for all parties involved but can only benefit some. Simultaneously, negative consequences for other parties involved are accepted. Even though participants did not report situations characterized by such a moral predicament, this might be a potential differentiation between fully and moderately voluntary behaviour. Furthermore, even though intentions might be positive, the behaviour receiver can negatively evaluate the outcome due to decreased public trust in the organization or a loss of reputation (Zhang et al., 2022). In this case, the positive intention is pre-dominant in the follower, but it must be acknowledged that the outcomes are not all positive. While unethical behaviour is generally not associated with a positive intention, the construct of unethical pro-organizational behaviour cannot be eliminated from the list of potential FBs.

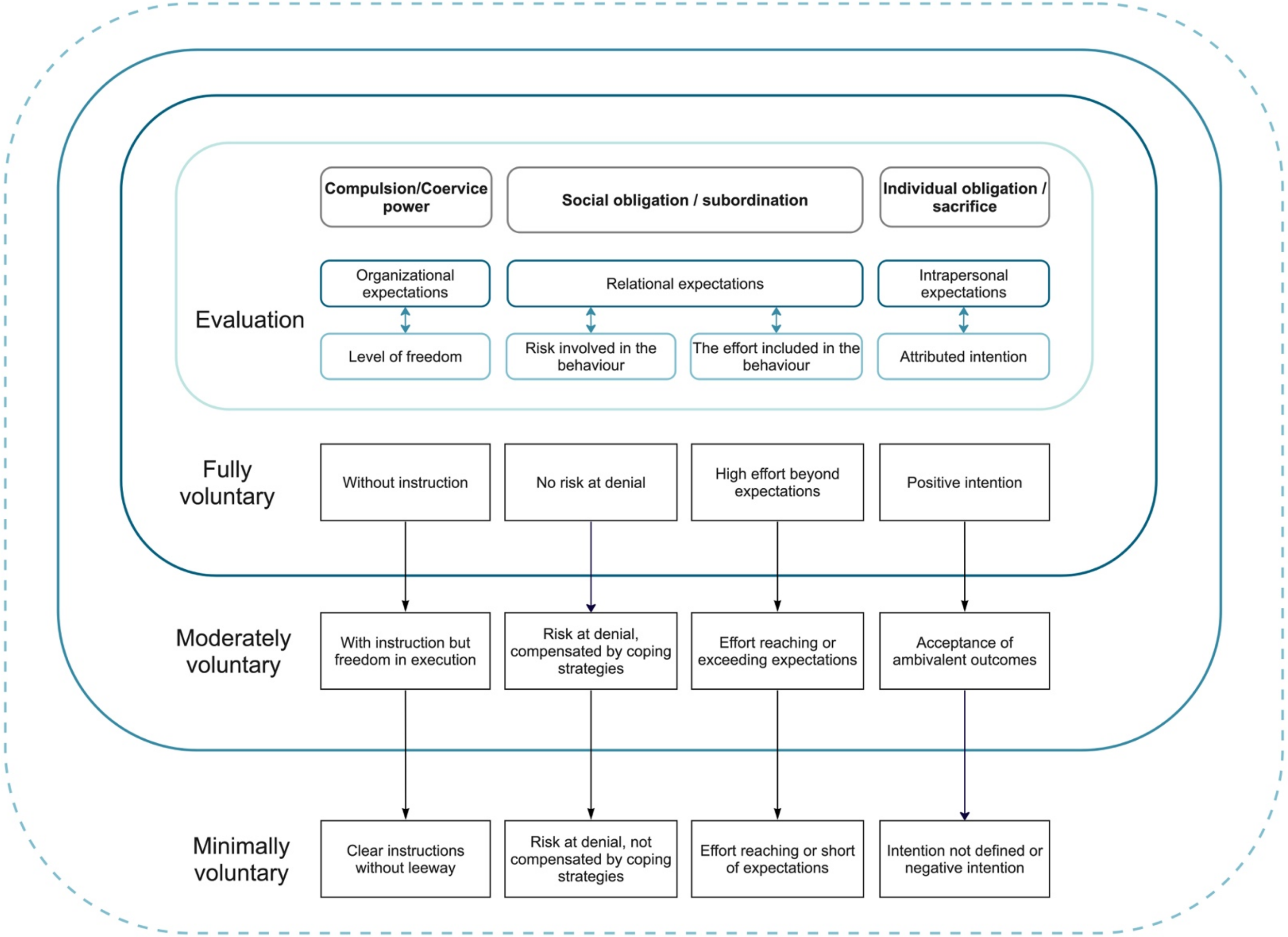
Based on the working demarcation provided above, some behaviours labelled as FB in existing research need to be carefully reviewed regarding their attribution as such. These behaviours can be found in the category of 'other behaviours' and are characterized by a potentially negative intention. For example, Uppal and Bansal (2023) explore follower unethical behaviour, to which they attribute a negative intention. Such behaviours cannot be labelled as FB, as intentions are not ambivalent but negative.

Based on this discussion, a distinction in the criterion of intention not mentioned by the participants surfaces. While a positive intention seems relevant for fully voluntary behaviour, moderately voluntary behaviour can include a positive intention toward the behaviour receiver while negative consequences for others not directly involved in the process are simultaneously accepted.

This research extends the theoretical framework proposed by Blom and Lundgren (2020) and suggests an adapted and operationalized version displayed in Figure 42. While *compulsion and coercive power* are relevant aspects in the perception of voluntariness in practice, *ignorance and manipulation* could not be found. Furthermore, the obligations Blom and Lundgren (2020) propose were divided into social and individual obligations. Intrapersonal obligations are represented by the newly introduced aspect of *acceptance of ambivalent outcomes*, representing the intrapersonal obligations. Social obligations are based on relational expectations and are operationalized by two aspects: the risk involved, and the effort involved in the behaviour. Through these adjustments, the framework provided in Figure 42 contributes to current knowledge as it specifies and operationalizes the theoretical framework proposed by Blom and Lundgren (2020).

Figure 42

Adjusted and Operationalized Framework of Voluntariness in Organizations



5.5.2.4 DEFINITION OF FOLLOWER BEHAVIOUR

In summary, FB can be demarcated from formal role behaviours based on its voluntariness. Taking the definitions provided on followership (see section 2.1.7, p. 46) and behaviour (see section 2.2.3, p. 56) and the findings of this research into account, the following definition has been developed within this doctoral work and is suggested as a basis for future research:

> *Follower behaviours are overt actions and communications aimed at organizations, immaterial concepts, groups, or individuals. They are informal and distinguished from formal role behaviours through the perception of voluntariness. Follower behaviours are based on organizational, relational, and individual expectations and lead to organizational, relational, and individual outcomes.*

In contrast to the 15 definitions identified in the SLR, this definition includes a demarcation from formal role behaviour and, therefore, does not only describe but also differentiate the term. It also extends the potential behaviour receivers, as the definitions provided in existing literature see FB in relation to the formal manager or the organization. Hence, this definition extends the scope of FB receivers by including immaterial concepts and individuals and groups other than the manager. Furthermore, this definition takes an informal perspective on FB, which has only been done by one theoretical (Uhl-Bien et al., 2014) and one empirical publication (Alegbeleye & Kaufman, 2020). Therefore, it extends the one-sided focus regarding employees as FB providers prevalent in existing research. Overall, this definition offers concept clarity, as it demarcates follower and formal role behaviour while extending the scope of individuals potentially involved in the process. By doing so, it offers new research opportunities and provides guidance for the use of the term ‘follower behaviour’.

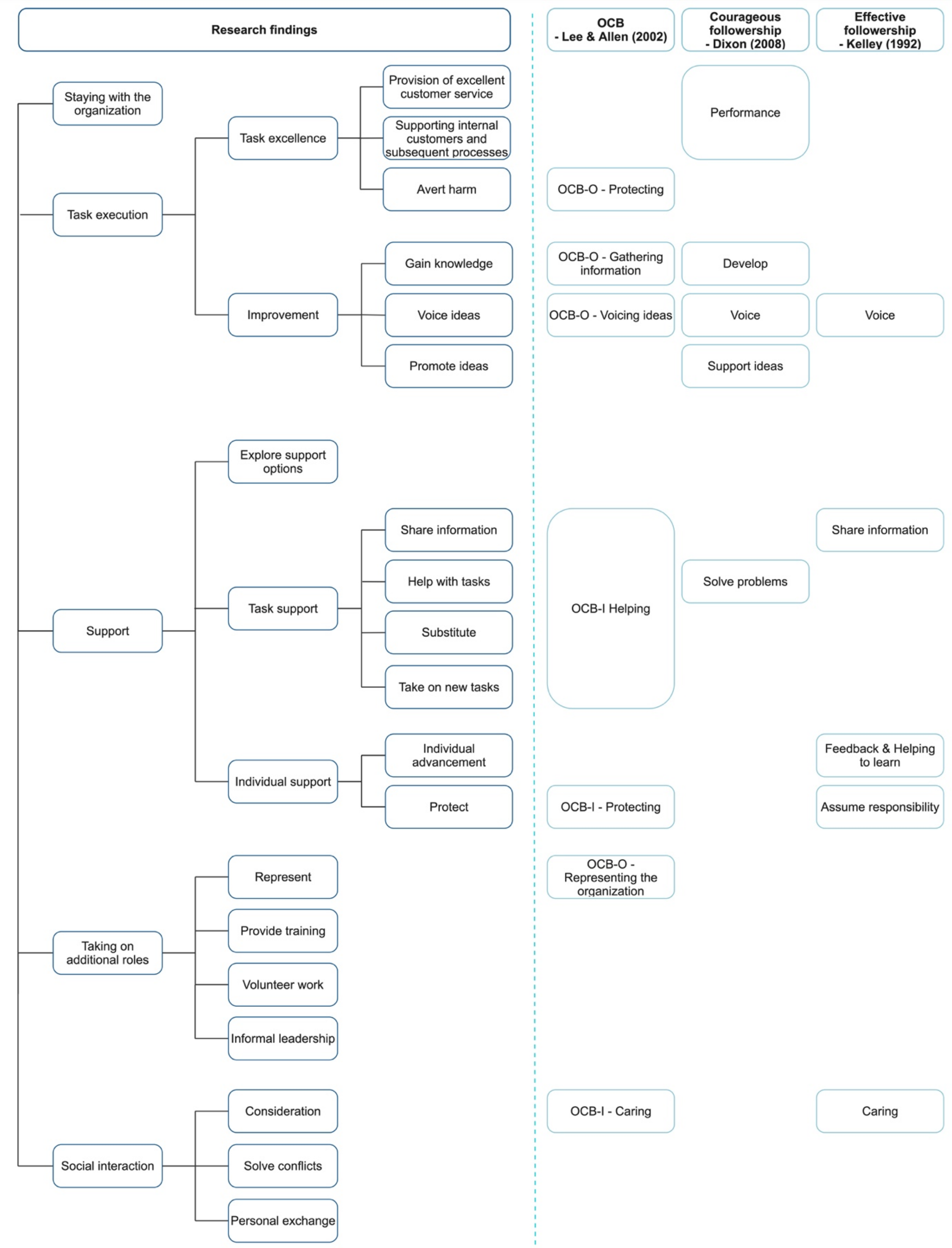
5.5.3 *DESCRIPTION OF FOLLOWER BEHAVIOURS*

As Figure 43 shows, OCB, courageous followership, and effective followership address aspects of the FB concept but participants perceive FB as more extensive than any of these concepts. For example, OCB, as measured in Lee and Allen (2002), covers one additional role (representing the organization), while more additional roles have been found in this empirical research. Furthermore, helping behaviour is a higher-order concept and, as this research has made evident, can be distinguished into four forms of support based on the time investment and the level of transfer or responsibilities. Courageous followership covers improvement-related behaviours to their full extent, but additional tasks or social interactions are not included. This might be the case as Chaleff (1995) conceptualized courageous followership with the manager as the behaviour receiver. Effective followership also does not include additional roles as well as task excellence. Thus, it becomes clear that current conceptualizations offer partial mapping of the concept, but the research field has missed the opportunity to develop an integrative theory.

In this partial mapping, existing measures for FB include aspects of the behaviours uncovered in the empirical research. Task execution and support are represented to a greater extent, potentially because they have been of interest in classic leadership research before the emergence of followership research. However, none provides an instrument covering the full breadth of practitioners' understanding of FB. This might be the case as researchers have not explored the foundations of followership since the early publications by Kelley (1988) and Chaleff (1995). The formal role approach rooted in a leader-centred view has been accepted in an uncritical manner by most authors. Therefore, most of the research field investigated only a part of this complex and nuanced construct, namely those aspects related to the manager-employee relationship, leaving other elements under-explored.

Figure 43

Juxtaposition of OCB, Courageous Followership Behaviours and Effective Followership Behaviours with Behaviours Found in the Empirical Research



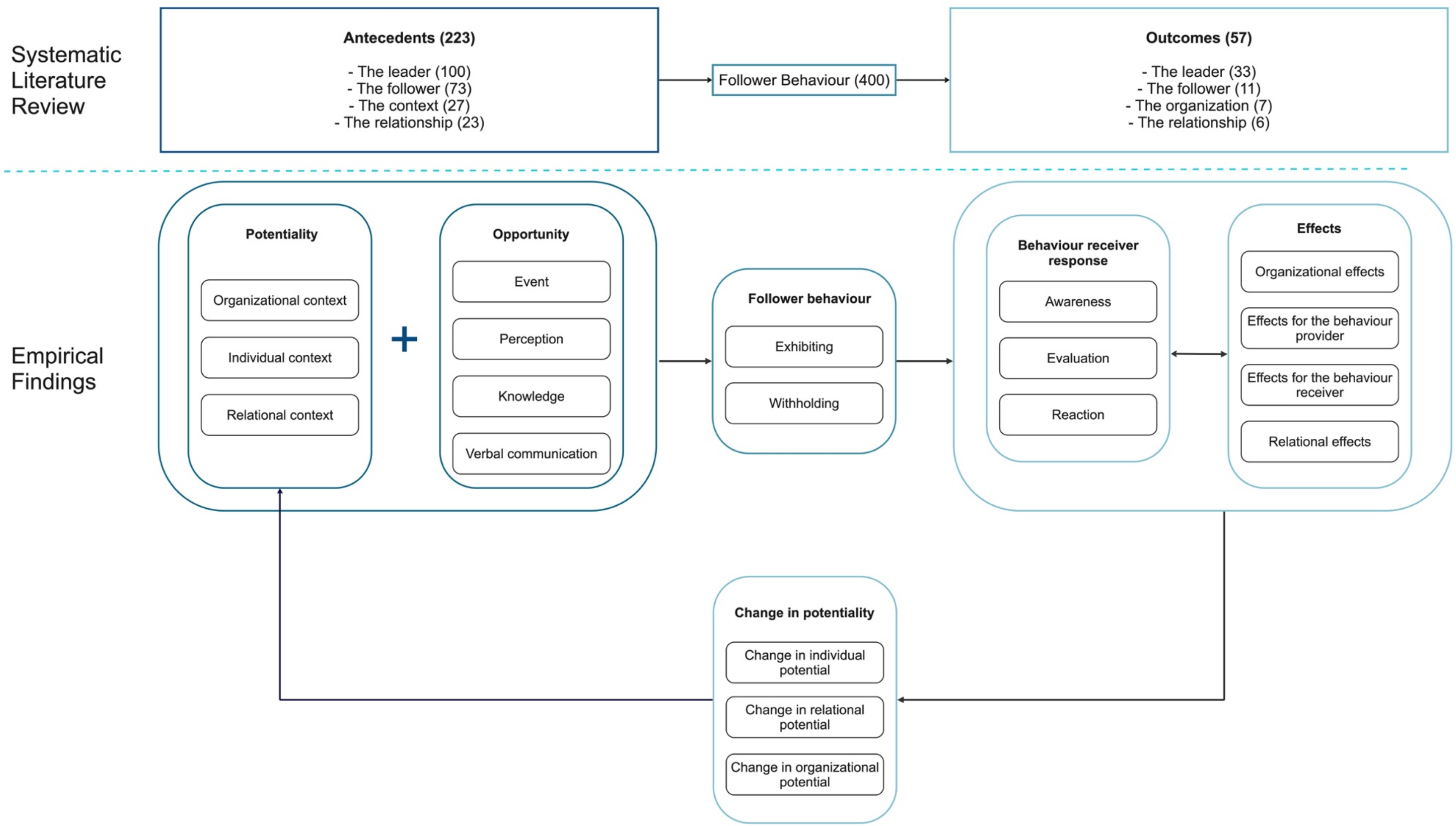
5.6 THE PROCESS OF FOLLOWER BEHAVIOUR

5.6.1 *OVERVIEW*

The FB process in existing research discusses antecedents, behaviours, and outcomes. The imbalance between antecedents and outcomes investigated becomes clear, as antecedents have been explored in 223 instances, while outcomes were only explored 56 times. Figure 44 shows a juxtaposition of the FB process investigated in existing research and the process derived from this study. Therein, practitioners' understanding is more complex than existing research suggests. So far, only a fraction of the FB process has been explored, and knowledge of the concept is limited with academic investigations. Figure 44 illustrates several aspects of the FB process that have not been explored. First, antecedents have been found to consist of potentiality and opportunity which must concur for FB to be exhibited. Second, the voluntariness in FB implies the possibility to withhold such behaviour. Third, FB results in a reaction and in several effects for the individuals involved, the organization, and the relationship. Fourth, FB processes are not isolated incidents but influence the individual, relational, and organizational potential for the future display of such behaviours. Therefore, this research provides an understanding of the complex nature of the FB process, which is discussed in more detail in the following sections.

Figure 44

Juxtaposition of the Follower Behaviour Process



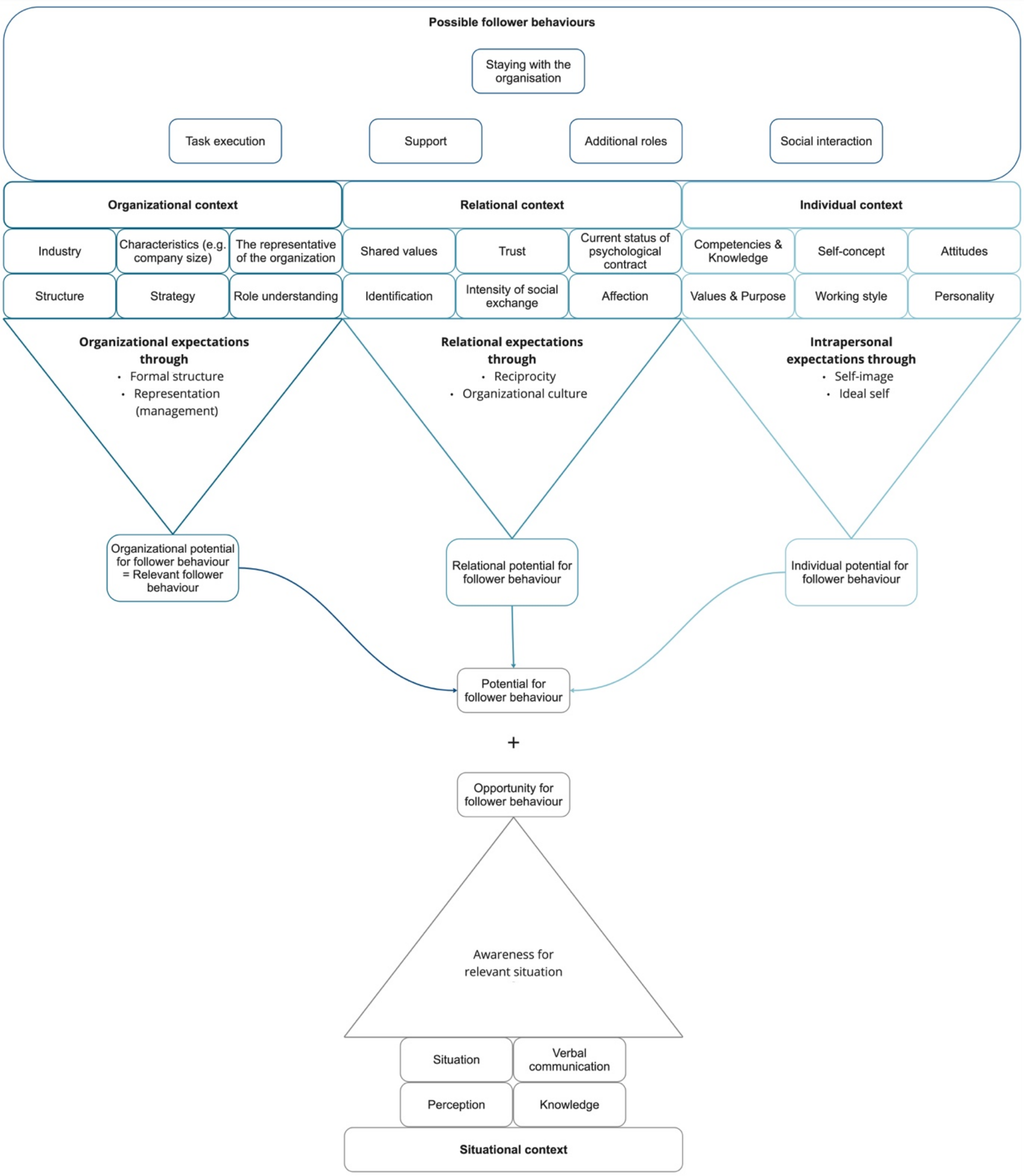
Note. Numbers in parentheses indicate the number of results identified in the SLR.

5.6.2 *ANTECEDENTS - POTENTIALITY AND OPPORTUNITY*

A variety of aspects have been considered to be antecedents of FB (see section 3.6.7, p. 120 et seq.). In the SLR, 223 meaning units could be allocated to antecedents of FB, the majority (100 meaning units) being linked to the leader. In this research, antecedents of FB have been found to be more complex. This is because antecedents consist of potentiality and opportunity. Generally, a variety of behaviours can be considered FB, as explored in section 5.1 (see p. 176 et seq.). In Figure 45, which provides an overview of the process leading to potentiality and opportunity, this entirety of behaviours is labelled as ‘possible follower behaviours’. The organizational, relational, and individual contexts with their characteristics and expectations then limit the relevance of these behaviours for the specific situation. The potentiality then represents the relevant set of behaviours derived through this reduction of the generally available actions. The potential for FB can only result in actual behaviour when it intersects with opportunity to show FB. Importantly, however, the opportunity must be recognized by the potential follower, leading to awareness of the opportunity. Otherwise, the potential for exhibiting FB remains latent. This study identified events, perceptions, knowledge, and verbal communication as contextual triggers that enable FB.

Figure 45

Potentiality and Opportunity as Antecedents of Follower Behaviour



As discussed in the SLR, follower behaviour has regularly been treated as the dependent variable and, therefore, an outcome, mainly of leader behaviour rather than being seen as the cause for change in the environment or others itself. While each study focused on a limited number of influences on FB, a broader picture has not been presented.

Furthermore, Shamir (2007) called for more follower-centred research. They stated that one characteristic of such research is the treatment of followers and their behaviour as independent variables. Hence, existing research is still mainly leader-centred, limiting the understanding of processes in leading and following.

This research found that the potential for FB is based on organizational, relational, and individual contexts. While possible FBs include all behaviours identified in chapter 5, they are not all relevant to every particular context at a given time. The three contexts reduce the relevant behaviours in a setting and determine the relational and individual potential to show a specific behaviour by different modes of conveying expectations. Regarding the organizational context, this research suggests that a set of relevant behaviours in a specific organization is derived through formal structure and the communication of the organization’s representatives (managers). As a result, the organizational potential includes the socially accepted behaviours in organizations and, therefore, defines whether a specific behaviour is voluntary in that context.

The complex interplay of FB antecedents this research revealed is facilitated by its social constructionist approach. In contrast, the focus of existing studies is regularly on the representative of the organization, as leaders have, in most studies, been identified as formal managers (e. g. Avey et al., 2011; Bush et al., 2021; Groves, 2020; Hannah et al., 2016; Uppal & Bansal, 2023; Zhu et al., 2013). Organizational culture (e. g. Hunter et al., 2013; Jia et al., 2018; Smith, 2009), organizational structure (e. g. Groves, 2020; Velez & Neves, 2022), organizational characteristics, such as vision clarity (Gracey, 2019), company size (Brumm & Drury, 2013), or work resources (Somers, 2022), and task characteristics, such as innovation requirement (Gerlach, 2019) or job autonomy (Kalshoven et al., 2016) have been investigated by individual researchers but less emphasis has been placed on these aspects in comparison to formal management influence and the person of the manager. Therefore, the organizational context in the form of the representative of the organization and the communication of organizational expectations by those representatives has been explored in depth. However, the broader organizational context needs more exploration, to enlarge the perspective on FB antecedents and explore which conditions, other than leadership styles, can be altered in organizations to foster FB. Furthermore, it is of interest how organizational factors, such as company size or organizational culture, influence the relevant set of FBs and if common understandings of these relevant sets exist in organizations. Participants in this research indicated that small companies offer greater potential for identification than large multicorporate enterprises. Additionally, they suggest trustful organizational cultures, lived not only top-down but also in teams, extend the potential, and foster the awareness for FB. The organizational context can also lead to the potentiality of FB becoming infinitesimal. When expectations are high and trust is low, only a small number of possible voluntary behaviours remain. Therefore, organizational characteristics influence the organizational potential.

Regarding the relational context, this study suggests that the potential for FB here is based on expectations conveyed through reciprocity and organizational culture. Reciprocal expectations are implicitly or explicitly communicated between individuals, while organizational culture conveys expectations in teams or departments. This study further links FB to the psychological contract and suggests that the current status of the psychological contract between FB provider and receiver and the underlying factors for risk-coping strategies (e.g. trust and intensity of social exchange) play a role in defining the relational potential. The research field could benefit from including findings from psychological contract research and given vertical psychological contracts have been investigated extensively, there is a considerable body of knowledge at followership researchers' disposal. In existing research, the relationship between leader and follower has mostly been explored through LMX (e.g. Anand et al., 2018; Fletcher & Brannick, 2022; MacMillan et al., 2020), rather than the psychological contract. Two publications identified FB as reciprocal (Somers, 2022; Tang & Li, 2022) and perceived trust (Bush et al., 2021; Newman et al., 2014; Zhu et al., 2013) has been identified as an influence on FB (Bush et al., 2021; Newman et al., 2014; Zhu et al., 2013). While reciprocity and trust both play a role in the psychological contract, this broader concept has not yet been included in the discussions around FB. Furthermore, horizontal psychological contracts seem to be relevant in practitioners' conceptualization of FB and, hence provide additional research opportunities, especially as psychological contract research has just begun to investigate this notion. In summary, this research proposes the integration of contemporary understandings of the psychological contract as an antecedent of FB. Such consideration would extend the current understanding of the complexity of FB antecedents at the relational level.

Focusing on the individual context, this research proposes that intrapersonal potential is based on the skills and competencies, working styles and personal attributes, such as personality and attitudes, that individuals bring to the situation. This research suggests that intrapersonal expectations are rooted in one's self-image and ideal self and lead to self-image congruent, positive standard approaching, or negative standard avoidant behaviours (Carver, 2006). While some researchers have used the self-concept as an explanatory factor for FB, mainly focusing on self-efficacy (Asghar et al., 2022; Bharanitharan et al., 2019) and self-esteem (Avey et al., 2011), this research suggests more investigation into the role this concept plays in the decision to exhibit, or withhold, FB. Some of the relevant follower characteristics, such as attitudes and personality (Groves, 2020; Hannah et al., 2011; Johnson et al., 2019) and follower role beliefs (Carsten, 2017; Carsten et al., 2010; Inderjeet & Scheepers, 2022) have been linked to FB, but more research regarding skills, experience, and working styles is needed, as this research suggests that they play a major role in determining the individual potential for FB. For example, participants indicated that prioritizing and flexibility are working styles that determine individual potentiality. Regardless of the organizational and relational potential, FBs require skills from the individual as a prerequisite to be exhibited. This becomes especially evident with support behaviour in back-office functions that relies on knowledge and skills or social interaction behaviour that requires empathy. Such behaviours cannot be shown without the relevant competencies. Therefore, the competencies, skills, and knowledge of followers limit the range of FBs individuals can exhibit.

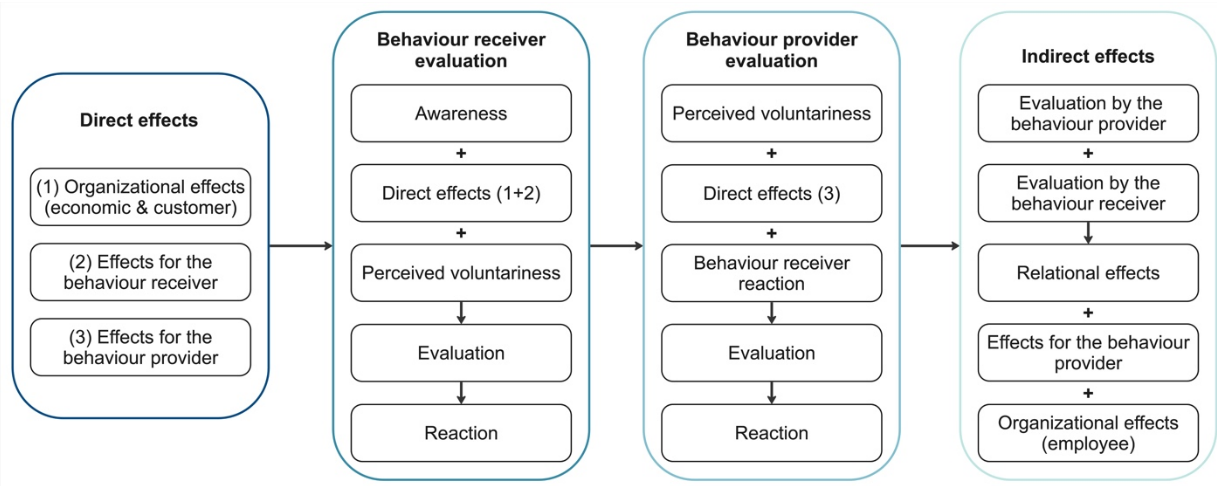
In future research, organizational contexts other than the person representing the organization, relational contexts, and individual contexts should be granted more attention. In addition, existing research has not acknowledged that the situational context in which FB is embedded circumscribes the opportunity for it to occur. This expansion of research focus is informed by the implicit premise of this research that the lack of concept clarity evident in prior research is still leader-centred and a more balanced view is necessary to comprehend FB processes in all their complexity.

5.6.3 *OUTCOMES – VISIBILITY AND ATTRIBUTION OF VALUE*

The SLR evidenced a significant imbalance in existing research, as the outcomes of FB (56 meaning units allocated) are significantly under-researched. Similar to the discussion on antecedents above, this study found that outcomes are more complex than acknowledged in existing research. In contrast to the discussion on antecedents, effects and responses do not have to coincide but influence each other based on a communication process. Figure 46 displays the process found to form the foundation of FB outcomes.

Figure 46

Direct and Indirect Effects in the Outcomes of Follower Behaviour



5.6.3.1 DIRECT EFFECTS

Direct effects that occur without a communicative process are organizational effects at an economic and customer level, effects for the behaviour receiver and effects for the behaviour provider.

In accordance with prior examination in existing research, this study indicates that FB affects the FB receiver, often the formal manager. As discussed in section 5.5.1 (see p. 296 et seq.), the recipients of FB can also be other individuals or groups, organizations, or immaterial concepts due to the informality of FB. Therefore, the outcomes for FB receivers in a formal understanding of followership are well-researched. The informal understanding opens up additional research opportunities, as this research suggests that other FB receivers, such as colleagues, also benefit.

Organizations can be recipients of FB. Effects for the organization have been researched to a limited extent, mainly focusing on performance (e.g. Gerlach, 2019; Jin et al., 2017), but also considering innovation (Klonek et al., 2020) and person-organization fit (Jin et al., 2017). While a small number of publications includes organizational outcomes, this research identified potential further study opportunities. In that respect, this research found that FB contributes to organizational success on an employee, customer, and economic level. Organizational success relies on employee engagement and customer experience. This link is most relevant in the service industry, as services are provided by employees and the two are conjoined (Chuang & Liao, 2010; Rodrigues da Costa & Maria Correia Loureiro, 2019; Yee et al., 2008). Extending this perspective from employees to followers, the findings indicate that FB plays a major role in organizational success. FB directly influences customer awareness, acquisition, experience, satisfaction, and retention. Furthermore, it affects general efficiency, generating revenue, economic decision-making, and quality assurance. This study's findings show that the influence of FB on organizational success is more extensive than currently evidenced in the literature, and, hence, new research opportunities arise. In particular it seems that there is an imbalance in the domain perspectives taken, as most research appears to originate from psychological backgrounds.

This might explain why organizational outcomes that influence the economic state of corporations have largely been neglected. Therefore, a more balanced approach is needed to explore FB outcomes on a variety of levels, which would also contribute to an increase of relevance, as FBs outcomes could be linked to economic success.

A direct effect can also be found for FB providers on a self-concept level. FB serves individual functions regarding the self-concept. It is a source of self-affirmation, a means of self-regulation, and a platform for self-presentation. Hence, FB seems to be a significant means for organization members to experience work as being meaningful and in concordance with their own values. This research suggests that outcomes and underlying self-concept-based processes offer research opportunities, adding to follower-centred views (Shamir, 2007). While positive feelings can be derived on a self-concept level without a communicative exchange, other effects for the behaviour provider depend on the behaviour receiver's response. Therefore, indirect effects for the behaviour provider are explored below.

5.6.3.2 BEHAVIOUR RECEIVER EVALUATION

When FB is exhibited, it can be perceived by the behaviour receiver. Through an evaluation process, a response can be given, communicating the assessment to the behaviour provider.

To be evaluated, behaviour receivers need to be aware of the behaviour and the related outcome. This visibility seems to be influenced by the proximity of FB provider and receiver. Only if the behaviour is perceived, it can be evaluated. This evaluation is then influenced by the perceived level of voluntariness and the assessment of the direct effects. Thereby, it becomes evident that the evaluation of FB as voluntary happens before the behaviour exhibition (or withholding) for the behaviour provider, while behaviour receivers evaluate after the behaviour was shown. Therefore, the behaviour receiver can include the quality of the behaviour implementation in their evaluation. This evaluation is influenced by the value attributed to the behaviour and its direct effects. If these effects are not seen as beneficial, limited value is attributed to the behaviour, leading to its neutral or negative evaluation.

Furthermore, a response to FB can also be absent. If the behaviour receiver is unaware of the behaviour exhibition, a response cannot be shown. Additionally, behaviour receivers must be able to assess the direct effects. Therefore, the reaction to FB can be positive, negative, or absent.

5.6.3.3 BEHAVIOUR PROVIDER EVALUATION AND INDIRECT EFFECTS

The behaviour receiver's positive, negative, or absent reaction is then incorporated in the behaviour provider's evaluation. Additionally, the perceived level of voluntariness and the direct effects for the behaviour provider are considered. This evaluation results in assessing the appropriateness of the behaviour receiver's response and the congruence of expectations.

Based on the behaviour provider's evaluation, indirect effects for the behaviour provider occur. Those indirect effects are based on the communicative process and regularly involve feelings. For example, a positive reaction in the form of praise could lead to the indirect effect of feeling appreciated. In contrast, the absence of such praise might lead to dissatisfaction and the feeling of not being valued. Therefore, it is important to notice that feedback plays a major role in the behaviour provider's evaluation. As not communicating is impossible (Watzlawick et al., 2007), the absence of a reaction is interpreted by the behaviour provider, potentially in a negative sense, such as the receiver's lack of interest.

In existing research, outcomes for the follower have mainly been researched on an attitudinal level (Blanchard et al., 2009; Dixon et al., 2013; Gatti et al., 2017) or as feedback in the form of performance ratings (Zhang et al., 2022), motivation (Fletcher & Brannick, 2022), and the perceived potential for trust (McAuley, 2019; Shahzadi et al., 2022; Shen & Abe, 2023). This research suggests that the effects for the FB provider are broader than those explored in prior investigations and need to be studied regarding the direct and indirect effects. Behaviour providers benefit from FB through positive feelings, such as joy or being appreciated. In addition, positively evaluated attitudes towards one's job, such as job versatility, safety, or development opportunities are gained in addition to job satisfaction. Also, the perception of a positive work environment, which in turn leads to positive feelings and attitudes, can be achieved. These feelings and perceptions can either be evoked through self-concept or communicative processes. Therefore, the complexity of the effects of the behaviour needs to be considered in future research.

Furthermore, relational effects emerge from the respective evaluations as indirect effects. The evaluation of FB plays a major role in the findings of this research, as positive relational outcomes only appear when a shared understanding of voluntariness leads to a positive evaluation of the behaviour from the behaviour provider and receiver perspective. This study found that the communicative process, especially the lack of responses to FB, leads to changes in the psychological contract. While a positive evaluation of FBs and the respective response can enhance the psychological contract, negative evaluations reveal incongruence in expectations, leading to tensions and potential conflict. Thereby, they have the potential to deteriorate the psychological contract due to unfulfilled expectations. The investigation of relational outcomes in existing research includes the evaluation of the behaviour by supervisors and colleagues (Bowler et al., 2019), teammate satisfaction (Fletcher & Brannick, 2022), and LMX (Ayoko et al., 2023; A. J. Xu et al., 2023; A. J. Xu et al., 2019). Interestingly, Bowler et al.'s (2019) work is the only publication focusing on the evaluation of FB. Even though they take a formal role perspective, it is a first step to include the evaluation process in investigating relational outcomes. While researchers have predominantly used overarching theories based on expectations, implementing SET and other theories, they have not investigated the role of psychological work contracts and the influence FB has on these contracts and vice versa. This research suggests that FB can be a content of psychological work contracts and influences its evaluation. The perceived voluntariness that forms the foundation for the psychological work contract also frames expectations towards the FB receiver, such as support for personal development, stability, work-life balance, or appreciation.

Another indirect effect concerns the organization on an employee level. While retention was identified as a major aspect of organizational effects, it is not directly achieved through FB but depends on the behaviour provider's response. This is also linked to the psychological contract, as the deterioration of a transactional contract can lead to increased turnover intentions. Therefore, employee retention can be achieved through the behaviour provider's positive responses.

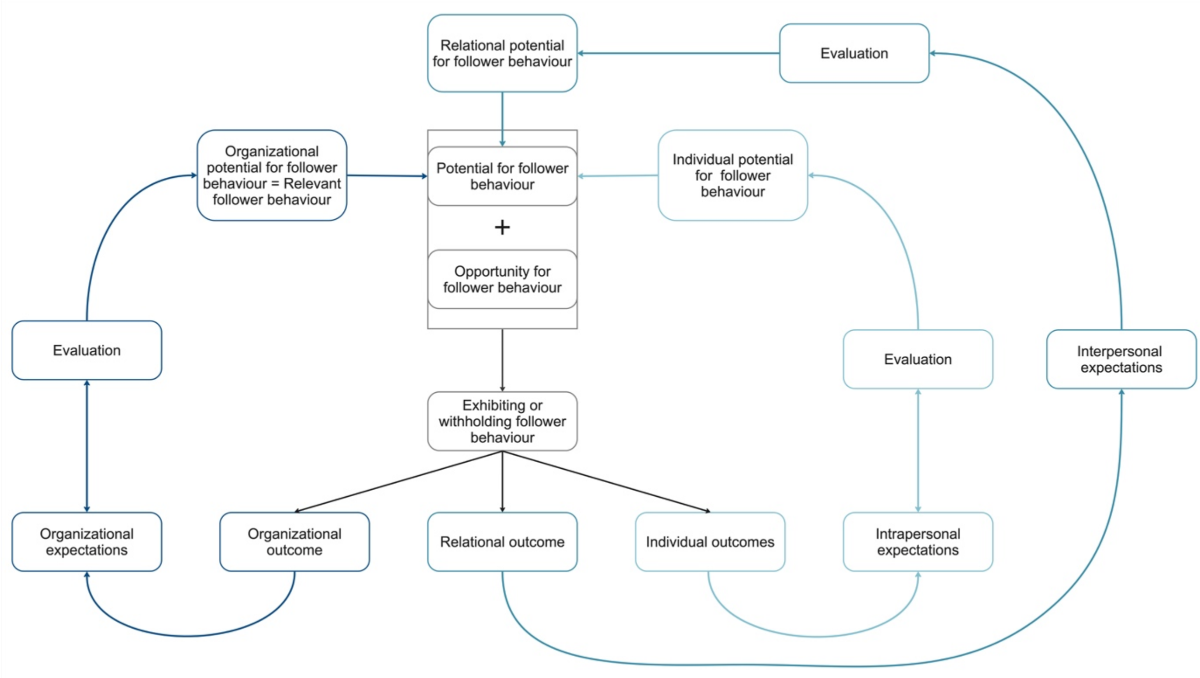
The outcomes of FB offer significant potential for additional research. Especially the positive outcomes for organizations on an employee, customer, and economic level need further exploration, as they highlight the relevance of FB research for practice. Furthermore, individual outcomes for the FB provider, including the underlying self-concept-based mechanisms, provide another potential focus for FB research. Furthermore, the complexity and the impact of the communication taking place after the behaviour is exhibited should be considered to a larger extent. By suggesting the communicative process, this research reveals the socially constructed nature of evaluating FB. It, therefore, shows the process complexity and discloses potential issues that lead to misunderstandings in practice. Thus, the relevance of communication processes following the exhibition of FB is highlighted, and scholars open to a different, socially constructed, and informal perspective on FB are provided with a framework to base their research on. While the effects for the manager as the FB receiver have received the most attention in existing research, relational effects in the form of the status of psychological work contracts are relevant for future research. Therefore, the impression arises that FB research is mono focused in terms of the object of research, lacking in richness and sensitivity to the contextual.

5.6.4 *TIME-SENSITIVITY*

This research suggests that FB is a time-sensitive construct. As described in section 5.6.3 (see p. 318 et. seq.), the outcomes of FB are evaluated by contrasting them with individual, relational, and organizational expectations. These evaluations influence the potential for future FB. An overview of the process is presented in Figure 47.

Figure 47

Changes in Individual, Relational, and Organizational Potentials over Time



Hemshorn de Sanchez et al. (2022) found that researchers regularly do not state their approach towards time. This seems to be the case as scholars regularly conduct cross-sectional studies that analyse specific behaviours in retrospect. Based on the definition of behaviour provided in section 2.2.3 (see p. 56), a behavioural process consists of antecedents, the behaviour itself, and outcomes. Therefore, it needs to be acknowledged that several such processes occur simultaneously and have different durations. Hence, FB processes can be described as sequences that occur in parallel (Uhl-Bien, 2006). This research suggests that these sequences turn into past experiences when completed and influence the organizational, relational, and individual potential for future FB. This link to the change in potential has not been made in existing research.

In this study, changes in the evaluation of voluntariness on an organizational level have become visible. While a manager evaluated a behaviour as voluntary when it was first exhibited, this evaluation changed over time. The behaviour is later seen as a task allocated to the FB provider, and the expectations towards the person change. Therefore, the organizational potential for FB changes. This happens as a behaviour exhibited once is no longer unexpected or part of the potentially voluntary behaviours. Whilst the behaviour was initially rated as fully or moderately voluntary, the individual is now instructed to show the behaviour, the risk of denial cannot be compensated by coping strategies anymore, and the intention is now irrelevant. Therefore, the behaviour has shifted from being regarded as fully or moderately voluntary to minimally voluntary and, therefore, is now subsumed in formal role behaviour.

Examples of changes in the relational potential have been reported by participants of this study in the function of the psychological work contract. The outcomes were evaluated based on prior experiences. As reciprocal expectations were not met in the past, the state of the psychological contract changed, which led to a change in the relational potential for FB. A second change in the potential for FB concerning the psychological contract can be found in the evaluation of voluntariness. When a behaviour is exhibited in return for another behaviour, it is evaluated as moderately voluntary at most. The risk inherent to declining the behaviour is then linked to the possibility of a degradation in the status of the psychological contract, leading to less future potential for FB.

On an individual, self-concept-based level, the affirmation of the self-concept has been found to contribute to the individual potential for FB, as self-affirmation strengthens one’s self-image. FB can also be shown to avoid negative standards or approach positive standards. If the self-image cannot be maintained, positive standards cannot be reached, or negative standards cannot be avoided, the potential for FB decreases and can lead to increasing turnover intentions in the longer term. The risk of turnover becomes clear as two participants state they have switched jobs due to negative standards becoming prevalent in their self-image. Another aspect of individual potential can be found in the function of self-presentation. Self-presentation is always linked to a personal goal an individual aims to achieve, which means that a change in potential happens when the goal changes or is reached.

These findings offer interesting research opportunities as they suggest volatility in the potential of FB. Therefore, the impact of former experiences on the decision to exhibit or withhold FB can be explored. Furthermore, the psychological contract can be implemented to explore the extent of negatively evaluated experiences that define the breaking point to withhold, rather than exhibit, FB. Additionally, it would be interesting to gain an understanding of the interplay between self-concept and psychological contract processes, as this research indicates that self-concept processes can lead to exhibiting FB even if expectations rooted in the psychological contract are not met.

5.7 FOUNDATIONAL EXPLANATIONS FOR FOLLOWER BEHAVIOUR

Prior research applies various overarching theories to explain the emergence and the process of FB (see section 3.6.3, p. 96 et. seq.). Given the findings of this research, the psychological work contract, self-concept-based processes, and aspects of TPB are used by practitioners to explain FB. Table 21 provides an overview of the relevant prior explanations and those identified in this research based on the organizational, relational, and individual antecedents, evaluations, and the mode of expectation conveyance.

Table 21

Explanatory Theories Juxtaposed

Aspect of the follower behaviour	Systematic literature review	Empirical study
Organizational antecedents	Role theory (9)	Role understanding
Organizational expectations	Social learning theory (11), Signalling theory (3), Social information processing	Formal structure and verbal & non-verbal management communication
Organizational evaluation	Performance theory (1)	Theories related to organizational outcomes e.g. Stimulus-organism-response theory or commitment theory
Relational antecedents	Attachment theory (1)	Psychological work contract
Relational expectations	Social exchange theory (16)	Psychological work contract
Relational evaluation	Attribution theory (5), Threatened egotism theory (1)	Psychological work contract
Individual antecedents	Self-concept theory (4) Identity theory (4) & Trait theory (1)	Self-concept: Self-image, Ideal self
Individual expectations	Regulatory-focus theory (4), Cognitive dissonance theory (1)	Regulatory Focus Theory
Individual evaluation	Impression management theory (2)	Impression management theory and self-image maintenance

In terms of the organizational antecedents, role theory has been implemented to explain the shared understanding of beliefs regarding a role in a context (Baker et al., 2014; Gesang & Süß, 2021; Kim et al., 2018). This research supports the need to explore role understanding but notes that these have been explored in a formal role setting, as discussed previously (see section 5.5.1, p. 296 et seq.). Therefore, informal role understandings need to be considered through role theoretical approaches to organizational antecedents. While a presumably simpler understanding of FB seems to be sufficient to derive functional conclusions in a hierarchical setting, the notion of informality addresses aspects of FB that cannot be directly influenced by the organization and its representatives. These aspects are also primarily implicit, and while highly relevant for organizational success, are often not addressed by organizations and their representatives. A potential explanation includes that organizations have not analysed their role understandings, leading to a lack of knowledge. In the current, fast-moving business world, another possible explanation could be an outdated internal understanding due to missing reconceptualization. This is often the case when strategies are changed but structures remain as they were. The communication of organizational expectations has been explored through social learning theory (e.g. Hannah et al., 2011; Hattke & Hattke, 2019; Uppal & Bansal, 2023) and signalling theory (Stock et al., 2022). While social learning theory refers to leaders as role models (e.g. Hannah et al., 2011; Hattke & Hattke, 2019; Uppal & Bansal, 2023), signalling theory includes that not all behaviour is emulated, but the evaluation of these behaviours also depends on the credibility of the person role-modelling (Stock et al., 2022). Social information processing theory relates to the finding that FB changes over time (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978; Zheng et al., 2021). This research finds that all three overarching theories are relevant, but more focus could be attributed to time sensitivity and changes in potential. This call to see FBs not as single events but an ongoing process is supported by a review by Hemshorn de Sanchez et al. (2022) who suggest measures, including implementing naturalistic research methods, to explore real behaviour in longitudinal studies, and unconventional data generation methods such as eye-tracking. Adding to their recommendations, diary studies or action research could be implemented to gain a deeper understanding of the related changes in FB.

The organizational outcomes have been explored through performance theory, which aims to explain positive or negative manager evaluations (Fuller et al., 2015). This research found that organizational outcomes are much broader than researched previously, and overarching theories including the economic outcomes should be implemented. For example, the stimulus-response model could be employed to explore the role of FB in consumers' decision-making (Jacoby, 2002). On an employee level, the role of FB on commitment as an antecedent of turnover intention could be explored (Allen & Meyer, 1990).

On a relational level, affect theories, such as attachment theory (Bharanitharan et al., 2019) and emotion theories (Schwarzmüller et al., 2017; Wang & Seibert, 2015) have been used to consider FB antecedents. Researchers have chiefly applied expectation theories, such as SET as overarching propositions to explain the conveyance of relational expectations (e. g. Bush et al., 2021; A. J. Xu et al., 2023). Evaluations of relational outcomes have been explored through attribution theory, which includes the appraisal of the appropriateness of behaviours in a specific context (e.g. Baker et al., 2014; Seele & Eberl, 2020; Zhang et al., 2022). While researchers acknowledge that relational expectations play an important role in FB, they have not yet incorporated psychological work contracts. This research suggests that the relational work contract should be integrated into investigations of FB. The notions contained in existing work on the psychological work contract constitute the basis for potential FB, namely that reciprocal expectations limit the relational potential for FB, and the evaluation of mutual expectation fulfilment, including FB, leads to the maintenance or a change in the psychological contract. Based on SET, the psychological contract provides a framework that addresses the pertinent aspects of the FB process at a relational level. Hence, the application of the psychological contract affords future research opportunities in the under-researched field of relational antecedents and outcomes.

At the individual level, self-concept and identity theories have been implemented to investigate individual antecedents (Bonner, 2018; Ete et al., 2021). Based on self-concept theory, regulatory focus theory includes avoidance and approach theories and has been identified as helpful in explaining why followers exhibit or withhold behaviours (Groves & LaRocca, 2011; Johnson & Wallace, 2011; Naidoo, 2016). This research also found self-concept processes to be relevant insofar as they imply individual expectations and influence the individual potential for FB and the evaluation of FB outcomes. Furthermore, several self-concept-related processes were identified. First, approach-avoidance theory based on regulatory focus theory is relevant for FB, as practitioners reported either acting by following their self-image, approaching positive standards, or avoiding negative standards. They, therefore, anticipate how their self-image will change and regulate their behaviour in a way that maintains, or enhances, their current self-image. Impression management also plays a role in practitioners meaning making of FB, as they see FB as a means to influence the impressions others have of them. Overall, self-concept-related processes play a considerable role in the individual level of FB. Therefore, this research suggests there is substantial potential and benefit to be gained by applying self-concept theories.

Hence, FB needs to be researched as a phenomenon that is expectation-based and context-sensitive. Expectations play a superordinate role in the understanding of FB as they appear throughout the process and limit the organizational, relational, and individual potential for FB. They create boundary conditions, regulate behaviour, and are the reference for evaluating FB. Therefore, expectations can be considered as the basis for shaping and defining the space for FB and the extent to which it is accepted. This influence of expectations on interpersonal and intrapersonal processes also makes FB context sensitive. The organizational context, its characteristics and culture, define the boundaries of voluntariness and, therefore, the characterization of FB in a given context. These definitions are phenomenologically constrained. The scope of the phenomenon can be an organization, in which several sub-cultures can influence the definition of expectations, voluntariness, and, therefore, FB. These context-sensitive, and often implicit definitions, specify FB in the circumstance, which can be an industry, an organization, or a department. Therefore, the description of FBs presented in section 5.1 (see p. 176 et seq.) needs to be interpreted as a set of possible FBs, which are narrowed down to the relevant set for the context. As this process of reducing the general set to the relevant set of behaviours relies on communication, interpretation, and evaluation, the potential for FB is socially constructed.

5.8 SUMMARY OF JUXTAPOSITIONS

Based on the discussion of definitional, descriptive, process, and explanatory aspects of FB in the preceding sections, Table 22 provides an overview on the juxtaposition. The overview additionally elucidates the research opportunities arising from the contributions of this research.

Table 22

Juxtaposition of Existing Research and Research Findings

	Systematic Literature Review	Lived Experiences
	Definition and Demarcation	

Role understanding	• Mainly formal role understanding with some exceptions
	• Use of 'employee' synonymously
	  ○ Leader = manager
	  ○ Follower = employee
		• Formal and informal role understanding
		• Demarcation between follower behaviour provider and receiver
		  ○ Behaviour provider: employee or manager
		  ○ Behaviour receiver: Institutions (organization, purpose), groups (teams, customers, employees), individuals (colleague, employee, manager)

Demarcation from formal role behaviour	• Not demarcated	• Demarcation through the notion of voluntariness based on
		  ○ the level of freedom
		  ○ a positive intention
		  ○ the level of effort in relation to the expectations
		  ○ the level of risk and potential coping strategies

	Description of follower behaviour	
Follower behaviours	• Followership styles (including attitudes) • OCB • Task-related behaviour • Communication • Other behaviours (including those based on negative intentions)	• Staying with the organization • Task execution • Support • Taking on additional roles • Social interaction
Determination of follower behaviours	• Labelling of existing constructs (e.g. OCB) as follower behaviour or use of followership measures	• Review of attribution to follower or formal role behaviour based on demarcation criteria
	Follower behaviour process	

Antecedents	• Current focus
	  ○ The leader (100)
	  ○ The follower (74)
	  ○ The context (27)
	  ○ The relationship (23)
		• Potentiality
		  ○ Overall potential of follower behaviours
		  ○ Limitation of this potential through organizational, relational, and individual expectations
		  ○ Potential is context-sensitive
		• Opportunity
		  ○ Necessity of event, perception, knowledge, or verbal communication
		• Potential + Opportunity = Antecedents

Outcomes	• Current focus
	  ○ The leader (33)
	  ○ The follower (11)
	  ○ The organization (7)
	  ○ The relationship (6)
		• Organizational outcomes on employee, customer, and economic level
		• Individual outcomes for follower behaviour provider and receiver
		• Relational outcomes depend on awareness and evaluation

Effect on future potential	• Not researched	• Experience with follower behaviour as influence on future potential
		  ○ Change in individual potential
		  ○ Change in relational potential
		  ○ Change in organizational potential

	Functions and explanatory theories	

Individual explanation	• Expectation theories (12)
	• Self-concept, identity & personality theories (8)
	• Motivation theories (8)
	• Affect theories (1)
	• Value theories (5)
		• Self-concept processes
		  ○ Self-affirmation (self-image)
		  ○ Self-regulation (ideal self)
		  ○ Self-presentation (impression management)

Relational explanation	• Expectation theories (46) • Social identity theories (4) • Motivation theories (2) • Affect theories (4)	• Psychological work contract based on SET

5.9 CONCLUSION

In summary, the term ‘follower behaviour’ is regularly used without definition by researchers. Furthermore, the term is frequently used synonymously with the terms ‘employee’ and ’subordinate’. While the researchers’ approach to the concept can be derived from their methodological decisions and reading between the lines, a “precise meaning of words that are at the heart of your profession” (Angier, 2009), or in this case at the heart of your publication, can often not be found. Hence, a definition enabling a clear demarcation from other concepts is currently missing. Therefore, this study contributes to the research field by providing a demarcation based on the concept of voluntariness which has been operationalized for implementation in future research.

Additionally, FB is embedded in a complex social process, making it socially constructed. Existing research explored the process as linear, consisting of antecedents, behaviour, and outcomes. This research provides several options for future research, which are explored in more detail in section 6.1 (see page 333 et seq.), based on the recognition that each of these process steps is more complex than currently acknowledged, and behavioural sequences cannot be treated as isolated incidents but lead to implications for future behaviour.

Overall, this research calls for a clearer distinction of research fields and terms used, broader epistemological, ontological, and methodological approaches to explore it, and further gain of understandings regarding the complexity of the FB process.

6 CONCLUSION

The overall aim of the research was to explore practitioners' understanding of FB in terms of its conceptualization, process, and sense-making in the German service industry, and to provide recommendations for future research. This aim was approached by conducting a narrative literature review, an SLR, qualitative research based on 40 narrative interviews, and a juxtaposition of practitioners' perceptions and understandings of FB with existing academic research.

6.1 IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

6.1.1 *DEFINITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS*

This research problematized the incoherence in the field and the lack of protocols guiding research in the domain. In that respect, the necessity to provide a definition has become apparent. Therefore, it is recommended that future researchers premise their work on an explicit statement of their understanding of FB, particularly regarding FB provider and receiver and the demarcation of FB from other concepts. Through the implementation of this approach as a minimal definitional requirement, the research field would benefit from clarity and coherence or enhanced ability to identify divergence.

This research proposes the demarcation of FB from formal role behaviours through the notion of voluntariness. Therefore, the propositions laid out here can be understood as an initial investigation of perceptions of voluntariness in organizational contexts insofar as it provides initial insights into the meaning of voluntariness in FB for practitioners in the specific context of the German service industry. The framework for voluntariness provided is subject to development with additional research. For example, it is of interest, which aspects of voluntariness influence the perception of fully or moderately voluntary behaviours. Furthermore, this research encourages the exploration of other forms of demarcation from formal role behaviour. Researchers should also explore if voluntariness is based on the same notions in other industrial and cultural contexts.

6.1.2 *RESEARCH RECOMMENDATIONS*

The proposed recommendations for future research are based on the understanding that such research needs to address the complexity of the FB process.

As FB is context-sensitive, future research could further examine potential FBs in differing cultural and industrial contexts. This study can be interpreted as a first step to building the foundations of the meaning of FB in various contexts based on an informal role understanding. Research in different industries in Germany, or other cultural contexts, is expected to add behaviours to the list of general FBs, before limitations through expectations occur in the specific circumstances being investigated.

This research also suggests further research into the organizational, relational, and individual potentials for FB. While the manager, representing the organization, and leadership styles have been explored in detail, further research on the follower, the relationship, and other organizational factors is advised. In terms of the organizational context, participants indicated that organizational characteristics, such as the industry, organizational structure, or strategy, should be explored in more depth. Regarding the relational context, identification is of interest, not only with the manager but the behaviour receiver. In an individual context, working styles, the competencies and the knowledge individuals bring with them should be probed further.

To date, the opportunity for FB has not been considered and this research suggests the necessity to explicitly realize that potential and opportunity are foundational premises in relation to FB. Researchers could, for example, explore the role of absent opportunities in contexts where FB is not exhibited. Such research would be extremely relevant, as practical recommendations could be derived for the German service industry and potentially other sectors, that offer advice on the conditions organizations could provide to foster FB.

Based on the recommendation to provide a statement on the definitional stance, researchers adopting an informal role perspective can explore the complexity of the FB process using ideas, such as DeRue and Ashford’s (2010) claiming and granting model, Bastardoz and Van Vugt’s (2019) evolutionary emergence model, or Sy and McCoy’s (2014) notion of leader-follower switching. While these models have been explored theoretically, empirical work is still lacking. This might be due to the missing understanding of informal FB roles and a lack of clarity in the approach to operationalizing these theories. While an initial idea for this thesis was to explore leader-follower switching, the lack of relevant literature and an approach to explore it became quickly evident. Therefore, this research adds to the foundational understanding of informal FB that can be implemented for future research, exploring the theories stated above. Such research could add significant knowledge to the understanding of FB as part of an informal role. This could add to practitioners gaining access to knowledge that would help provide positive work environments in which FB is exhibited, leading to organizational success.

Regarding explanatory theories for FB, researchers should explore the role of the psychological work contract in more detail. This study suggests that this concept plays a significant role in the relational component of FB. While this research states examples of psychological work contracts concerning FB, a deeper understanding of the contents could be derived from investigations in other cultural and industrial contexts. Horizontal psychological contracts in particular need further exploration, as the organizational behaviour research field has only begun to explore these.

Another explanatory theory that may yield additional insight if applied, is that of self-concept-based processes. As FB has principally been researched in relation to its external influences, this research suggests that FB is substantially influenced by the individual’s wish to maintain the self-image. Furthermore, potential future selves, in the form of positive and negative standards, are evaluated and lead to approach or avoidance behaviour. Regulatory-focus theory has previously been suggested as a potential explanatory theory for FB but should be explored in more detail.

An imbalance between research conducted on antecedents and outcomes of FB has been found. The outcomes of FB have, thus far, received limited attention. This study proposes that the outcomes of FB on organizational, relational, and individual level are essential for the relevance of the research field, as they influence aspects that are discussed copiously by practitioners, such as employee retention.

First, organizational outcomes should be investigated by future research. This study indicates that FB contributes to the success of organizations on an employee, customer, and economic level. Scholars could investigate the connections between specific FBs and organizational success factors. By doing so, researchers would provide relevant insights that would be applicable to shaping framework conditions in practice in favour of FBs connecting with organizational success.

Second, individual outcomes could be another focus of attention for future investigations. These include outcomes for the FB provider and the FB receiver. While outcomes for the manager in a formal role understanding have been explored, future research should focus on informal behaviour receivers, such as colleagues. This study indicates that FB can lead to positive and negative outcomes. While the positive outcomes prevailed in the participants' reports, both directions should be investigated. Assuming positive outcomes for individuals are generally achievable, the presence, or lack, of FB between colleagues, or in an informal setting in which the manager is the potential FB provider could be explored. Furthermore, in the emergence of burnout, job satisfaction, perceptions of fulfilment, and other attitudinal and health-related outcomes provide interesting research opportunities.

Third, relational outcomes have mainly been neglected in existing research. Future studies could investigate FB's role in the perception of work environments, perceived justice, and horizontal psychological contracts.

Furthermore, there is a need to explore how experiences and evaluations of FB influence future organizational, relational, and individual potential for FB to provide suggestions for organizational designs that foster FB.

6.1.3 *METHODOLOGICAL RECOMMENDATIONS*

This research disclosed an imbalance in the use of quantitative and qualitative research methods in the FB domain. Generally, more qualitative research is needed to explore underlying mechanisms in more detail and provide quantitative studies with a basis upon which to determine potential connections. Uhl-Bien et al.'s (2014) call for diversity in paradigmatic viewpoints has not been answered to date, and a disproportionate amount of work remains predicated on a post-positivist perspective. Therefore, this research calls for more paradigmatic courage and invites researchers to leave the domain's comfort zone and critically review paradigmatic and method-related assumptions.

As interviews are subject to several biases, other data generation methods should be implemented to gain a broader understanding of FB. For example, researchers could implement diary studies (e.g. Bartlett & Milligan, 2015; Ohly & Gochmann, 2019) to explore the lived experiences of practitioners from a perspective closer to the actual event. Additionally, observations (e.g. Bateson & Martin, 2021; Harari et al., 2016) could be employed to address hindsight bias. Story completion (e.g. Braun et al., 2018; Clarke et al., 2017) could reduce desirability bias, explore the role of opportunity further, investigate differences in the understanding of voluntariness and FB processes in cultural contexts, and address agency bias. To do so, story stems can be formed based on the behaviour storylines presented in this research. As FB is context-sensitive, case studies (e.g. Mabry, 2008; Yin, 2018) are advised. Additional narrative interviews (e.g. Reissman, 1993) or focus groups (e.g. Boddy, 2005; Krueger & Casey, 2009) could be conducted to explore the notion of voluntariness further. Longitudinal studies (e.g. Elliott et al., 2008) can be conducted to explore the time-volatile nature of FB and understand the role past experiences play in the potential for FB. Researchers could investigate how the psychological contract, the self-image, and the perceived organizational expectations change over time.

Throughout data generation, the unfamiliarity of practitioners with the term 'follower' needs to be considered. Due to the largely negative connotation of the term, a different, everyday terminology based on the definition provided here (see recommendation above) may be used. It is suggested that researchers refrain from labelling existing behavioural constructs as FB without a previous countercheck with their definition to avoid concept confusion.

Additional methodological recommendations concern sampling strategies and participant selection. When researchers take a constructionist, informal role perspective on followership, the synonymous use of ‘employee’ and ‘follower’ as well as ‘manager’ and ‘leader’ may be avoided in the interest of concept clarity. In that case, other sampling strategies need to be implemented. For example, a triangulated view based on the inclusion of both formal roles, as conducted in this study, can be implemented.

6.2 CONTRIBUTIONS

6.2.1 *CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE*

This research has contributed to knowledge in followership research by problematizing absent concept-clarity and methodological domination, addressing some of the foundational understanding still absent in the field, and adding to methodological and worldview diversity.

6.2.1.1 MAPPING AND PROBLEMATIZING THE RESEARCH FIELD

This research contributes to current knowledge in the FB domain by providing a systematic overview of its definition, process, and contexts. To my knowledge, the SLR conducted in this research is the first to analyse how the term has been used and understood in existing studies. It addresses research objective two, which aimed to critically review the use of FB in existing research and highlights the restricted focus on formal roles in the definitional approach and the empirical investigation of FB. It is noted that the terms ‘follower’, ‘employee’, and ‘subordinate’ are often used synonymously, indicating a lack of concept demarcation. An additional problem is surfaced in the SLR’s findings, as an imbalance between research conducted on antecedents (e.g. leadership styles or individuals’ personalities) and outcomes (e.g. leader affect or performance) of FBs is revealed, and a static understanding of behaviour is uncovered. Additionally, results indicate that the field is dominated by a one-sided, primarily quantitative, methodological approach.

This SLR contributes to the problematization of the research field. Even though Shamir (2007) called for a balanced view on the leadership-followership construct more than 15 years ago, the research field seems resistive to integrating co-constructed and follower-centred perspectives. Therefore, the outcomes of this SLR encourage FB research based on problematization rather than gaps (Sandberg & Alvesson, 2010) to broaden the conceptualization of FB and create approaches for truly balanced leadership-followership research. Furthermore, it renews the call for more methodological and paradigmatic diversity, already provided by Uhl-Bien et al. (2014). Instead of simply requesting more such diversity, the study conducted following the SLR presents an example of research rooted in an informal role approach towards followership, based on a social constructionist worldview.

6.2.1.2 CONCEPT CLARITY

The narrative literature review addressed research objective one to provide an overview of followership and its associated behaviours. It became apparent that defining followership and behaviour is more complex than it might first appear. Consequently, it was found that FB is insufficiently defined and demarcated from other concepts, such as employeeship. This research contributes to the ongoing discourse as to whether management and leadership are distinct concepts or not (e.g. Learmonth & Morrell, 2016; Nienaber, 2010). The notion of concept distinction is supported through the informality of FB identified in this research. Additionally, this research adds to the discussion about the particularity of employeeship and followership based on practitioners' understanding. In doing so, research objectives three and four are addressed as an understanding of practitioner perspectives is created and this is then juxtaposed with those of academic researchers. This leads this study to suggest that management/employeeship and leadership/followership are distinct in terms of their origin, their role approach, and their perceived voluntariness. Furthermore, management and employee functions are assigned by organizations and lead to the adoption of formal roles. Therefore, voluntariness is not necessary for employees to adhere to the formal instructions provided by managers. In contrast, leadership and followership are socially constructed through processes involving organizational, relational, and intrapersonal expectations, resulting in the adoption of informal roles that are essentially independent from formal ones. While employee and follower roles, as well as manager and leader roles, often coincide, this is not a given.

Managers can be followers, and employees can be leaders. Hence, this study takes a clear stance in the ongoing discussion regarding concept unity or delineation and strongly advocates for concept demarcation. Scholars in the followership domain are encouraged to base their research on clear definitions and connected demarcation criteria, such as the one provided in this research. Employeeship and followership are distinguished by the level of perceived voluntariness. Through this proposed demarcation, this research not only contributes to the theoretical discussion about the distinction, or unity, of management/leadership and employeeship/followership but also offers researchers definitions and an approach to demarcation enabling them to allocate their studies to the appropriate research field. Therefore, it is hoped that a greater level of concept clarity can now be achieved in future research given the distinctions that this work has elucidated.

Interestingly, the contribution to the discussion around the demarcation of management/leadership and employeeship/followership also affects leadership research. By seeing management/employeeship and leadership/followership research as distinct areas of interest, this necessitates that existing research needs to be re-evaluated. Following the findings in the SLR, much of the reviewed studies are potentially more management/employeeship- than leadership/followership-focused, as formal roles are (over)emphasized and only low levels of voluntariness are considered. Therefore, it is expected that the understanding of leadership as an informal role, characterized by its emergence through the voluntary behaviour of followers, has only been investigated to a small extent. Comprehending leadership and followership as socially constructed also directs attention to lateral and emerging leadership, as these concepts acknowledge informal roles attributed through social processes. Therefore, by addressing research objective five, additional research in these areas is encouraged, whilst advocating that there is a need to always keep the interplay of leadership and followership in mind.

6.2.1.3 UNDERSTANDING AND OPERATIONALIZATION OF VOLUNTARINESS

This research extends Blom and Lundgren’s (2020) voluntariness model and this further adds to addressing research objective three. Their concept was based on philosophical reflections on voluntariness and its characteristics. Building on these theoretical considerations, Blom and Lundgren (2020) propose the differentiation of minimally, moderately, and fully voluntary behaviour based on the following three dichotomous dimensions: obligation/subordination, ignorance/manipulation, and compulsion/coercive power. This research found three aspects defining voluntariness in the context of FB:

(a) Compulsion/coercive power, represented by organizational expectations

(b) Social obligation/subordination, represented by relational expectations

(c) Individual obligation/sacrifice, represented by interpersonal expectations

In contrast to Blom and Lundgren's (2020) voluntariness model, ignorance/manipulation was not included in practitioners' conceptualizations of voluntariness. Instead, obligations have been found to be more complex and distinguishable as social and individual obligations, based on their origin. Additionally, the evaluation process has been explored, in which (a) organizational expectations are evaluated against the perceived level of freedom, (b) relational expectations are assessed against the effort and risk involved in the behaviour, and (c) intrapersonal expectations are reviewed against the attributed intention. By extending Blom and Lundgren's (2020) voluntariness model, this research contributes to knowledge regarding practitioners' perceptions of voluntariness, adding to the resolution of research objective three. Thereby, the demarcating criteria of FB and formal role behaviour are defined and operationalized. Future researchers can implement these criteria for concept clarity – this outcome hence adds to those associated with research objective five. Furthermore, exploring practitioners' understanding of voluntariness opens up additional research fields. For example, researchers could investigate the influence of the identified components on the overall evaluation of behaviour as fully, moderately, or minimally voluntary.

6.2.1.4 FOUNDATIONAL CONCEPT UNDERSTANDING

This research contributes to the foundations of the field by proposing the following conceptualization of FB based on practitioners' informal and expectation-based understanding, addressing research objective three:

> *Follower behaviours are overt actions and communications aimed at organizations, immaterial concepts, groups, or individuals. They are informal and distinguished from formal role behaviours through the perception of voluntariness. Follower behaviours are based on organizational, relational, and individual expectations and lead to organizational, relational, and individual outcomes.*

As exemplified in this research, the proposed conceptualization provides the means to distinguish FB from other formal role behaviours and to unambiguously allocate behaviours to the research domains. Furthermore, it adds clarity by categorizing overt actions and communication as behaviours, enabling researchers to address the necessary conceptual demarcation called for by Banks et al. (2021) and overcome shortcomings identified in previous work.

6.2.1.5 FOUNDATIONAL PROCESS UNDERSTANDING

This research reveals that the leadership-followership process is more complex than acknowledged in existing research, and further responds to research objectives three and four. While FB has been understood to have antecedents and outcomes, this study provides deeper insights into the meaning attributed to these processual steps and their detailed understandings.

Regarding the complexity of the behaviour antecedents, this research identified that potentiality and opportunity need to coincide. The potentiality for FB is context-sensitive and explains the distinction between possible FBs and relevant FBs through implicit or explicit expectations. Organizational, relational, and individual contexts and expectations must be considered to understand the social processes leading to the situational potential for FB. Hence, this research provides comprehensive insights into the processes leading to the exhibition, or withholding, of FB and contributes to understanding the antecedents in the FB process by identifying opportunity in the form of events, perceptions, knowledge, or verbal communication as a neglected necessity for the display of FB. These contexts, expectations, social processes, and situational aspects offer rich research opportunities, offering a further response to research objective five. Future researchers are encouraged to explore the relational and individual antecedents in more detail, taking psychological work contracts and self-concept theory into account. Furthermore, future research needs to incorporate the catalyst function of opportunities and the context-sensitivity of the FB process.

Regarding the behavioural outcomes, this research found organizational, relational, and individual effects. It highlights the economic benefits of FB, emphasizing its relevance for businesses. Furthermore, direct, and indirect effects can be distinguished, with indirect effects based on interpersonal processes. The complexity of behaviour outcomes lies in this interpersonal process, as it includes the behaviour receiver's evaluation, their exhibited or absent reaction, a proceeding behaviour provider's evaluation and, consequently, relational, and individual outcomes. In the evaluations, values are attributed to behaviours, outcomes, and interpreted relational aspects, such as perceived appreciation. Hence, this research contributes to a detailed understanding of behavioural outcome emergence based on social processes.

Furthermore, this research reveals that FB cannot be conceptualized as a singular occurrence of behaviour. Rather, it must be acknowledged that FB is linked to former experiences, that are, based on previous interactions. The potential for FB is dynamic, meaning that it changes over time. Hence, former evaluations of FB influence the current decision-making process. Therefore, future researchers should engage in longitudinal explorations, e.g. through diary studies, to add a perspective of change and evolution to the current, rather static, understanding of FB.

Overall, this research contributes to an in-depth understanding of social interaction in the FB process, as well as the role of self-concept and relational processes in the form of the psychological contract. Furthermore, it highlights the connection between FB and economic outcomes, opening rich research opportunities.

6.2.1.6 OVERALL CONTRIBUTION

This research contributes to academic knowledge in several ways: (a) it maps the domain based on existing research and problematizes the shortcomings of FB research, (b) it suggests the demarcation of FB and formal role behaviour based on the notion of voluntariness, (c) it provides an understanding of voluntariness in practice and, therefore, offers a form of operationalization for the demarcation of FB and formal role behaviour, and (d) it provides a detailed understanding of the complex social processes underlying FB. Therefore, it addresses research objective five by providing research opportunities, methodological recommendations, a call for paradigmatic courage, and an example of research rooted in a social constructionist worldview.

6.2.2 *CONTRIBUTION TO PRACTICE*

Followership has often been described as something that has negative connotations, especially in practice (e.g. Aarons et al., 2017; Riggio, 2020). This research offers an approach to changing that perception. By demarcating FB from formal role behaviour through voluntariness, a positively connotated term is used, influencing both perception and evaluation. This becomes evident as participant Jess (EFL) says: “Seeing it that way, it is a super relevant concept. It is almost more important than leadership, as you can’t demand it from your colleagues or employees.” This positive perception of FB opens up the possibility to include the concept in work contexts, increasing the relevance of followership research. Such implementation can occur through workshops aimed at managers, who can learn about the mechanisms underlying voluntary behaviours. Current leadership training may teach leaders to appreciate their employees more – but the why and how remain unclear. This research offers a model explaining the importance of sincere and authentic appreciation in fostering FB and employee retention. Practitioners, especially managers, must acknowledge the informality of followership and understand that appreciation is not only expressed in verbal praise. It is rather perceived in reciprocal actions accruing from the perception of implicit expectations rooted in the psychological contract. Those actions are evaluated as most valuable and strengthen the psychological contract when they are evaluated as voluntary. For example, an unexpected pay rise is attributed more value – not in terms of the money per se, but rather the implicit act of appreciation that is signalled. Therefore, FB exhibited by managers must be thematized in leadership training.

Leadership training might also be renamed, and organizations should focus on imparting knowledge regarding the influence of one’s behaviour on others in general, not only on managers. This is important, as both parties co-construct the process, as characterized by high levels of communication. By developing the capacity of all organizational members to identify, name, and communicate expectations, different role understandings and expectations are formed, and potential sources for stress and frustration can be reduced. Furthermore, voluntariness contributes to the perception of work as a meaningful activity. Those outcomes contribute to a more humane work environment for both managers and employees, in which they feel appreciated, valuable, and self-effective. While it needs to be acknowledged that organizations in capitalist economies primarily seek to make a profit, this does not mean that they cannot provide positive and enriching environments for the people working within them towards that goal. This research, therefore, contributes to the notion that sustainability in the sense of organizations’ profit-making and social responsibilities can complement each other.

In addition, the link to organizational success is illustrated, identifying FB not only as a staff-centred, emotional, and time-consuming exercise, but rather revealing the value of the investment in building a followership culture. By linking FB and organizational outcomes, this research offers the potential to re-evaluate the worth of various positions in organizations. Currently, managerial positions are related to higher salaries (Linville & Rennaker, 2022), making specialist careers less desirable. Including the potential for FB to be attached to job profiles in terms of salary calculations could represent the worth of followership and its contribution to organizational success. Furthermore, it would adjust the personal financial outcomes for specialists and managers, leading to more career decisions based on personal strengths rather than potential financial implications. Therefore, strengthoriented, and resources-oriented staff allocation would be possible, benefiting both organization and individuals alike.

6.3 CRITICAL EVALUATION

6.3.1 *LIMITATIONS*

This study was conducted in German culture and the service industry context. Therefore, the transferability of the findings presented needs to be reviewed in the light of moderatum generalization (Payne & Williams, 2005). Future research might include similar studies, exploring the transferability of these findings to other contexts, such as additional industries or different cultural settings. For instance, it would be interesting to investigate FB understanding in the German automotive industry, another important pillar of the German economy. This would enable the analysis of similarities and differences between industry contexts. In relation to culture, the exploration of FB understanding in clusters neglected in existing research, such as Nordic Europe or Latin America, would contribute to a fuller picture of cultural impact on the meaning of FB.

Inherently connected to the qualitative research method chosen for this study, the findings are based on 40 interviews. While this research is considered a large qualitative study (Mason, 2010) that provides rich insights into the experiences of the interview partners, only a selective view of practitioners' perceptions can be provided. Based on further research, scales to measure perceived voluntariness and items representing the broad scope of possible follower behaviours could be developed to enable statistical means to expand the concept's exploration. These measures could be implemented for cross-cultural studies or analyses in business consulting. However, taking such a quantitative turn, may not be necessary, and other qualitative approaches might offer just as much to future researchers, particularly if the paradigmatic imbalance in extant research is to be addressed rather than exacerbated.

In addition, it is acknowledged that the sample is influenced by participation bias, as only those voices of participants willing to contribute to the study can be included. Most participants were able to identify with the overall topic of voluntary behaviours, while it is expected that more critical voices could be found in the overall workforce. It would be interesting to study the phenomenon of FB withholding in more detail, explicitly focusing on participants who exhibit few FB. While this research suggests that singular components of the organizational, relational, and individual contexts can significantly reduce the overall potentiality for FB, future research could further explore the importance of each component.

Regarding the analysis method, template analysis focuses on cross-case analysis rather than in-case analysis, generating the risk of missing links in individual reports. While this research aimed at understanding the socially constructed meaning of FB in an industry context, future research could explore research questions that seek in-case understanding. For example, typologies of FB providers, transcending the currently existing propositions of pro-active, active, and passive followers (Carsten et al., 2010) might be found, expanding scholars' comprehension of followership.

The SLR has limitations due to shortcomings in the supporting software and exclusion criteria. As no software for systematic reviews exists, much of the work on result exclusion had to be conducted manually using Excel, which is an error-prone process. It will be interesting to see how artificial intelligence influences the future realization of SLRs and researchers should explore such options to reduce the effort invested in the administrative aspects of the process. Furthermore, results that used 'follower' and 'employee' interchangeably were excluded. Throughout the analysis, it became clear that this approach is common in a formal role-based view on FB. Hence, some publications that might have contributed to the outcome could have been excluded. Overall, it can be assumed that the inclusion of more publications would not have changed the SLR's main findings.

In summary, this research contributes a particularized conceptualization of FB meanings and processes in the German service industry and provides rich research opportunities that can add to the understanding presented in this study.

6.3.2 *QUALITY CRITERIA*

Table 23 displays the assessment of the implementation of quality criteria in qualitative research introduced in section 4.1 (see p. 134). The third column contains aspects that were implemented in this empirical study. As SLRs “are a form of research” (Gough et al., 2012, p. 5) the criteria can also be applied to the SLR. The assessment can be found in the fourth column.

Overall, both the empirical research and the SLR are characterized by a high level of transparency regarding the process, contributing to credibility and dependability. Procedures were explicated in the methodology sections and participants and publications were cited to a great extent, adding to confirmability. As the influence of the context and the applicability to other contexts in light of moderatum generalization were discussed, the criterion of transferability was addressed. Reflexivity is demonstrated through sections dedicated to introspection and the researcher’s impact on the findings and interpretations. In the SLR, difficulties in the conduct of the review were disclosed, and the impact of the decisions to solve them was reflected.

In summary, both the empirical research and the SLR meet the requirements of the quality framework proposed by Stenfors et al. (2020).

Table 23

Reflection on the Implementation of Quality Criteria in This Research

Criteria	What it means and how to recognize it	Implementation in the empirical research	Implementation in the SLR
Credibility	The research findings are plausible and trustworthy: There is alignment between theory, research question, data collection, analysis and results. Sampling strategy, the depth and volume of data, and the analytical steps taken, are appropriate within that framework	• Continuous orientation on the research question regarding research methods • Justifications based on research objectives	• Development and display of review plan based on accepted model (3.2 and 3.4) • Adaption of the review
Dependability	The extent to which the research could be replicated in similar conditions: There is sufficient information provided such that another researcher could follow the same procedural steps, albeit possibly reaching different conclusions	Extensive and detailed presentation of the methodological aspects: • Philosophical stance (4.1) • Research design (4.2) • Translation procedures (4.3) • Participant selection, recruitment, and description (4.4.2 and 4.4.3) • Data generation method (4.5.1) • Pre-test interviews (4.5.2) • Transcription (4.5.3) • Data analysis method (4.5.1) • Examples for data analysis (Appendix D) • Ethical implications (4.7)	Extensive and detailed presentation of steps taken: • Philosophical stance (3.1) • General methodology (3.2) • Explication of the review questions (3.3) • Development and display of review plan with explicit instructions (3.4 and Appendix A)
Confirmability	There is a clear link or relationship between the data and the findings: The researchers show how they made their findings through detailed descriptions and the use of quotes	• Extensive use of direct and indirect quotes (5)	• Presentation of overview tables (3.6) • Extensive use of quotes in the finding interpretation (3.6)
Transferability	Findings may be transferred to another setting, context, or group: Detailed description of the context in which the research was performed and how this shaped the findings	• Provision of information on the industry and culture (1.6) • Integration of potential influences in the interpretation of the findings, the discussion, and future research recommendations	• Detailed description of inclusion and exclusion criteria (3.4) • Transparency regarding the publications included (list of references)
Reflexivity	A continual process of engaging with and articulating the place of the researcher and the context of the research: Explanations of how reflexivity was embedded and supported in the research process	• Introduction of me as a researcher (1.2) • Reflection on participant sampling and selection (4.4.4) • Reflection on data generation (4.5.4) • Reflection on data analysis (4.6.3)	• Introduction of me as a researcher (1.2) • Explication of restrictions based on access to databases and difficulties in the implementation and methods of solution (3.4)

Note. Numbers in parentheses indicate to the sections referred to. Adapted from "How to ... assess the quality of qualitative research," by T. Stenfors, A. Kajamaa, and D. Bennett, 2020, *The Clinical Teacher, 17*(6), p. 598 (https://doi.org/10.1111/tct.13242). CC BY 4.

6.4 CLOSING REFLECTION

This research aimed to explore practitioners' understanding of FB in the German service industry and to provide suggestions for future research. Additionally, my personal aim was to conduct work that has the capacity to impact future research and collaboration in organizations. I believe I have achieved both goals. My research journey was not always straightforward, I sometimes doubted its value and contribution, and it took several detours to arrive at its current form, where I can fully appreciate the worth of this study.

First, research fields need to develop to be relevant for practice. To do so, disruption and contradicting viewpoints are needed, even if they might feel inconvenient. At the same time, I would like to emphasize that I do not mean to diminish the contributions of other scholars adopting research methods I problematize in this research. With this study, I provide contradicting viewpoints and encourage researchers to question their assumptions and allow themselves to think beyond the extant confines from time-to-time. Having met like-minded scholars at the 2nd Global Followership Conference who were willing to engage in and share critical practices helped me find my place in the research community, recognize my contribution to the field, and helped me to work toward my research goal knowing that I was not alone.

Second, I have met many managers that refer to themselves as leaders but are not followed by their employees. I vividly remember a former manager saying: "Everybody says appreciation is missing. I don't get it, why can't they just tell me what they want?". I now feel better equipped to provide this manager with an answer – if he takes the time to listen, as the answer is not trivial. As my educational background is based on part-time studies at Universities of Applied Sciences, and I have been working in different HR management functions for the last thirteen years, I believe that the working world can be made a better place, and this work is valuable for practitioners.

Third, this doctoral journey was also a personal one. It made me a better lecturer, a better personnel developer, a better follower, and a better leader. In this personal development, the research is valuable regardless of its contribution to others.

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APPENDIX A: SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW METHODOLOGY

A1: REVIEW PROTOCOL

This appendix contains a checklist of the review protocol.

Step 3: Search criteria

Protocol 1: Google Scholar search

1.1	Conduct searches on Google Scholar, using Publish or Perish with the following search strings *organization OR organization OR firm OR company OR enterprise OR corporation "follower behavior" -bee -animal -fish -robot -vehicle -car -influencer -dog -twitter -instagram -facebook -evacuation -transport -game -church -sport (conduct for each year separately)* and *organization OR organization OR firm OR company OR enterprise OR corporation "follower behaviour" -bee -animal -fish -robot -vehicle -car -influencer -dog -twitter -instagram -facebook -evacuation -transport -game -church -sport (conduct for each year separately).* This leads to a total of 32 searches.
1.2	Download each result list as a .csv file, naming it with the year of the search (e.g. "2021.csv")
1.3	Copy each file, rename it as Year_Copy.csv and convert each .csv file into a .txt file (e.g. 2021_Copy.txt)
1.4	Open Excel, click "File", "open", choose .txt file, open "with separator" and choose comma
1.5	Repeat for each year (32 times)
1.6	Copy all lines into one document
1.7	Delete columns A (Cites) and G (Article URL) to W (Age)
1.8	Rename the spreadsheet "Basic List- PoP" and colour it in blue
1.9	Save the document as "Systematic_Lit_Review_Follower_Behaviour.xlsx"

Protocol 2: WorldCat search 1

2.1	Conduct search on WorldCat with the following search string: *ab:("follower behavio*") OR ab:("followership behavio*") OR ti:("follower behavio*") OR ti:("followership behavio*") AND (yr:2007..currentyear) NOT kw:(dog) NOT (bee*) NOT kw:(church) NOT kw:(sport) NOT kw:(game) NOT kw:(transport) NOT kw:(evacuation) NOT kw:(facebook) NOT kw:(twitter) NOT kw:(instagram) NOT kw:(robot*)*
2.2	Tag all results and add them to saved items
2.3	Open the list of saved items
2.4	Click the button "Cite" and export the files to EndNote (.ris file)
2.5	Upload the .ris file into Endnote
2.6	Select relevant entries in Endnote, click "file", "export", choose Output Style "Tab Delimited" (might need to be downloaded from Endnote website first) and save as Text only
2.7	Open .txt file as in 1.4
2.8	Open a new spreadsheet in the document Systematic_Lit_Review_Follower_Behaviour.xlsx, rename it "Basic List WC" and colour it in green
2.9	Add headings "Authors" in Line 1, column A, "Title" in Line 1, column B, "Year" in Line 1, column C, and "Source" in Line 1, column D
2.10	Copy all lines into the spreadsheet "Basic List WC" starting in Line 2
2.11	Save

Protocol 3: WorldCat search 2:

3.1	Conduct search on WorldCat with the following search string: *Ti: ("follower behav*") AND (yr:2007..currentyear)*
3.2	Screen results for titles that relate to an organizational context and add them to saved items
3.3	Conduct steps 2.3 to 2.7
3.4	Copy all lines into the spreadsheet "Basic List WC"
3.5	Save

<u>Step 4: Criteria for first screening for inclusion</u>

Protocol 4: Google Scholar search

4.1	Open six new spreadsheets, rename them as follows and colour them blue: "Relevant results - PoP", "Duplicates", "Before 2007", "Language", "Non-research", "Other Research areas"
4.2	Open the spreadsheet "Basic List – PoP" and copy its content into the spreadsheet "relevant results". Then protect the sheet "Basic List – PoP" from alterations.
4.3	Sort results by title and screen the list for duplicates Duplicate found – Cut line and insert in spreadsheet "Duplicates"
4.4	Sort by year and screen for publications before 2007 If the year of publication is missing, search online and add information If publication date before 2007 is found – Cut line and insert in spreadsheet "Before 2007"
4.5	Read the titles of the remaining results and exclude if: Language is other than English or German – Cut line and insert in spreadsheet "Language" Publication is non-scientific (e.g. Call for papers or lecture notes) – Cut line and insert in spreadsheet "Non-research" Research-field is obviously not in a business context or not related to the leader-follower-relationship (e.g. marketing, banking); school situations are only kept if the topic is about the follower-leader relationship of teachers and principals; political settings are excluded - Cut line and insert in spreadsheet "Other Research Area"

Protocol 5: WorldCat Search

5.1	Open four new spreadsheets, rename them as follows and colour them green: "Relevant results - WC", "Duplicates – WC", "Language - WC", "Other Research areas - WC"
5.2	Open the spreadsheet "Basic List – WC" and copy its content into the spreadsheet "Relevant results - WC". Then protect the sheet "Basic List – WC" from alterations.
5.3	Sort results by title and screen the list for duplicates Duplicate found – Cut line and insert in spreadsheet "Duplicates - WC"
5.4	Read the titles of the results and exclude if: Language is other than English or German – Cut line and insert in spreadsheet "Language – WC" Research-field is obviously not in a business context or not related to the leader-follower-relationship (e.g. marketing, banking); school situations are only kept if the topic is about the follower-leader relationship of teachers and principals; political settings are excluded - Cut line and insert in spreadsheet "Other Research Area – WC"

Protocol 6: Consolidation

6.1	Open three new spreadsheets, rename them as follows and colour them yellow: "Combined Basic List", "Relevant results - combined", "Duplicates - combined"
6.2	Open the spreadsheet "Relevant Results – WC" and copy its content into the spreadsheet "Combined Basic List". Do the same with the spreadsheet "Relevant Results – PoP"
6.3	Copy content of the spreadsheet "Combined Basic List" into the spreadsheet "Relevant Results – combined" and protect the sheet "Combined basic list" from alterations.

6.4	Sort the content of the spreadsheet “Relevant Results – combined” by title and screen the list for duplicates Duplicate found – Cut line and insert in spreadsheet “Duplicates - combined”
6.5	Save

Step 5: Search for full text

Protocol 7: Full text search

7.1	Open two new spreadsheets, rename them as follows and colour them yellow: “Found”, “Not found”
7.2	Copy title from spreadsheet “Relevant Results – combined” list and search for it on WorldCat, using University of Gloucestershire account – if publication is available – download, copy line from spreadsheet “Relevant Results – combined” to spreadsheet “Found”; if publication is not available go on with step 7.3
7.3	If publication was published by publisher other than Springer, go on with step 7.4 If publication was published by Springer, search publication on EBSCO, if publication is available – download, copy line from spreadsheet “Relevant Results – combined” to spreadsheet “Found”; if publication is not available go on with step 7.4
7.4	Search for publication title on Google Scholar – if publication is available – download, copy line from spreadsheet “Relevant Results – combined” to spreadsheet “Found”; if publication is not available go on with step 7.5
7.5	Search for publication title on researchgate.net – if publication is available – download, copy line from spreadsheet “Relevant Results – combined” to spreadsheet “Found”; if publication is not available go on with step 7.6
7.6	Search for publication title on proquest.com, using University account – if publication is available – download, copy line from spreadsheet “Relevant Results – combined” to spreadsheet “Found”; if publication is not available go on with step 7.7
7.7	If publication title contains the term ‘follower’ or ‘followership’, request interlibrary loan on WorldCat – if interlibrary loan is successful, download, copy line from spreadsheet “Relevant Results – combined” to spreadsheet “Found”; if interlibrary loan is not available or title does not contain the term ‘follower’ or ‘followership’ go on with step 7.8
7.8	Copy line of not available publications to spreadsheet “Not found”
7.9	Save

Step 6: Criteria for second screening for inclusion

Protocol 8: Screening for inclusion - content

8.1	Open three new spreadsheet, rename them as follows and colour them yellow: “FB only in sources”, “Contains content”
8.2	Open document in Adobe
8.3	Use search function and search the document for ‘follower beh’
8.4	Screen results of search - if no results can be found, try ‘followership beh’ - if term does only appear in bibliography, copy line from spreadsheet “Found” to spreadsheet “FB only on sources” - if term appears in text, copy line from spreadsheet “Found” to “spreadsheet “Contains content”
8.5	Save

Step 7: Quality screening

Protocol 9: Quality screening process

9.1	Open two new spreadsheets, rename them as follows and colour them yellow: “Quality checked”, “Quality issues”
9.2	Open spreadsheet ‘Quality issues’ and add column ‘Reason’
9.3	Open document and check if the document contains a bachelor or master thesis if yes, copy line from spreadsheet “Contains content” to spreadsheet “Quality issues” and add “Thesis” in column “Reason” If no, go on with 9.4
9.4	Check if document is a contribution to a conference organized by a University on a Bachelor or Master level if yes, copy line from spreadsheet “Contains content” to spreadsheet “Quality issues” and add “Thesis Conference” in column “Reason” If no, go on with 9.5
9.5	Check if document is a doctoral thesis. If yes, check if at least three reviewers are provided. if yes, copy line from spreadsheet “Contains content” to spreadsheet “Quality issues” and add “Doctoral thesis with no visible reviewers” in column “Reason” If no, go on with 9.4
9.6	Check if document is a journal paper or a conference contribution. If yes, check if quality is rated positive according to protocol 10
9.7	- If the evaluation process in protocol 10 led to a positive evaluation (green line), copy line from spreadsheet “Contains content” to spreadsheet “Quality checked” - If the evaluation process in protocol 10 led to a negative evaluation (red line), copy line from spreadsheet “Contains content” to spreadsheet “Quality issues” and add “Journal quality” or “Conference not peer reviewed” or “Conference information not found” in column “Reason”
9.8	Check if other reasons than the ones listed in 9.3 to 9.7 indicate low quality If yes, copy line to spreadsheet “Quality issues” and add a descriptive argument in column “Reason” If no, copy line to spreadsheet “Quality checked”
9.9	Save

Protocol 10: Development of journal and conference quality evaluation list

For this protocol, please use a new spreadsheet called “JourQual” with the columns “Source”, “AJG 2018”, “UGC”, and “Peer review process”.

10.1	Check if the journal or conference is already in the evaluation list If yes, go on with 9.7 If no go on with 10.2
10.2	Check if it is included in the Ranking index AJG (2018 version). If yes, add line with name of journal or conference (source) and “yes” in column “AJG 2018”, colour line green and go on with 9.7 If no, add line with name of journal of conference (source) and “no” in column “AJG 2018” and go on with 10.3
10.3	Check if it is included in the UGC ranking If yes, add “yes” in column “UGC”, colour line green, and go on with 9.7 If no, add “no” in column “UGC” and go on with 10.4
10.4	Look up the publisher of the journal or conference If the journal or the conference proceedings are published by one of the following publishers, add the Publisher’s name in the column “Peer Review Process”, colour line green, and go on with 9,7 List of publishers: Springer, Wiley, Sage, Emerald, Elsevier, Taylor & Francis, APA, IEEE, IGI If no, go on with 10.5
10.5	Look up the journals or conferences homepage and search for peer review process

	If peer review process is described in detail (e.g. form of peer review, list of reviewers) add "detailed" in column "Peer review process" colour line green, and go on with 9.7 If conferences are associated with journals ranked in AJG 2018 or UGC, add "associated with peer reviewed journal" in column "Peer review process", colour line green, and go on with 9.7 If peer review process cannot be found add "not found" in column "Peer review process", colour line red, and go on with 9.7 If peer review process can be found but offers little information on the review-process or the review process does not seem to be of sufficient quality (e.g. only stating that there is a review process or that the editor will read the draft), add "insufficient" in column "Peer review process", colour line red, and go on with 9,7
10.6	Save

Step 8: Depth screening

Protocol 11: Depth screening process

11.1	Open five new spreadsheet, rename them as follows and colour them yellow: "Focus not on FB", "Content", "Check needed – use of term", "No explanation for followership", "In final analysis" Add an additional column labelled "reason for inclusion" in the spreadsheet "final analysis"
11.2	Open document in MAX QDA
11.3	Use search function and search the document for 'follower beh'
11.4	Screen results of search, if no results can be found, try 'followership beh'. Also be aware that the search function sometimes cannot connect lines. Search for 'follower' and 'beh' separately, before dismissing a result
11.5	Check if 'follower beh' or 'followership beh' has less than six hits. (indicator 1) Read sentences around the hits and determine if the result focuses on follower behaviour. (indicator 2) If both indicators suggest a focus on follower behaviour, copy line from spreadsheet "Quality checked" to spreadsheet "Content" If both indicators suggest no focus on follower behaviour, copy line from spreadsheet "Quality checked" to spreadsheet "Focus not on FB"
11.6	Go on with the spreadsheet "Content". Open the tab "Visual Tools" in MAXQDA and open the "Word Trends" function. Delete all pre-set search terms and enter 'follower', 'followers', 'employee', 'employees', 'subordinate', and 'subordinates'. Interpret the result in terms of consistent use of the term 'follower'. A consistent use is considered if the term 'follower(s)' is used regularly and the word trend suggests that the other terms were used much less. If the term is used consistently, copy line from spreadsheet "Content" to spreadsheet "In final analysis" and add "consistent use of term follower" in column "reason for inclusion". If the term is used inconsistently, copy line from spreadsheet "Content" to spreadsheet "Check needed – use of term".
11.7	Go on with the spreadsheet "Check needed – use of term". Search the document for the term 'follower'. Check if a section on the use of the term follower or followership is provided. If yes, copy line from spreadsheet "Check needed – use of term" to spreadsheet "In final analysis" and add "explanation for followership" in column "reason for inclusion". If no, copy line from spreadsheet "Check needed – use of the term" to spreadsheet "No explanation for followership"
11.8	Save

Step 9: Data extraction

Protocol 12:

12.1	Use the remaining PDFs for further analysis in MAXQDA.
12.2	Add the following codes to the code set: 1 – Definition 2 – Behaviour (labels) 3 – Intentions/Motivation 4 – Antecedents 5 – Outcomes 6 – Evaluation 7 – Overarching theories 8 – Study context 9 – Measure/approach 10 – aim of behaviour 11 – report by
12.3	Read the results and code meaning units as follows: • **"1 - Definition"** – use if a definition for the term 'follower(ship) behavio(u)r' is provided, code the whole definition • **"2 – Behaviour (labels)"** – use if a behaviour is labelled as follower behaviour. Note that only follower behaviours that are part of the research framework are considered. Sentences like "follower behaviour (e.g. OCB)" are not coded. • **"3 – Antecedents"** – Use if antecedents of follower behaviour are discussed or described. Note that only antecedents that are part of the research framework are considered. • **"4 – Outcomes"** – Use if outcomes of follower behaviour are discussed or described. Note that only outcomes that are part of the research framework are considered. • **"5 – Overarching theories"** – Use if explanations for follower behaviours based on overarching theories are provided. Code whole paragraphs. • **"6 – Study context"** – Use for display of study contexts. Code whole paragraphs. • **"7 – Measure/approach"** – Search for the Methodology section and code the paragraph that describes either the specific quantitative measure or how the topic was qualitatively approached
12.4	Save

Do the following coding inductively:

- Code behaviours mentioned and defined in the articles, code words, sentences, or paragraphs
- Add inductive sub-codes when mentioned in the description above

A2: QUALITY CHECK: INCLUSION AND EXCLUSION LIST

Journals:

Journal Name	Link	AJG 2018	AJG 2021	Peer review process
Abasyn University Journal of Social Sciences	http://ajss.abasyn.edu.pk/reviewProcess	no	no	University Journal - Thesis level
Academy of Educational Leadership Journal	https://www.abacademies.org/policies-ethics.html	no	no	detailed
Academy of Management Journal		4*	4*	
Academy of Management Journal		4*	4*	
Academy of Management Review		4*	4*	
Academy of Strategic Management Journal	https://www.abacademies.org/journals/academy-of-strategic-management-journal-peer-review-process.html	no	no	insufficient
Accounting, Organization & Economics	https://fortunepublishing.org/index.php/aoe/peer_review_process/	no	no	medium
Administrative Science Quarterly		4*	4*	
American psychologist	https://www.apa.org/pubs/journals/amp?tab=4	no	no	APA
Amiferatu Economic	https://www.amfiteatrueconomic.ro/home_en.aspx	no	no	insufficient
Antitrust Law Journal	https://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/publishing/antitrust_law_journal/alj-supplementalmaterials/antitrust-law-journal-publication-procedures.pdf	no	no	insufficient
Apeejay Journal of Management Sciences and Technology	https://ajmt.apeejay.edu/peer-review-and-publication-policy	no	no	insufficient
Applied Psychology		3	3	
Asia Pacific Education Review		no	no	Springer
Asia Pacific Journal of Management		3	3	
Asian Business & Management		2	2	
Asian Journal of Advanced Research and Reports	https://www.journalajarr.com/index.php/AJARR/editorial-policy	no	no	medium
Asian Journal of Business Research	https://magscholar.com/asian-journal-of-business-research/publishing-ethics/	no	no	medium
Aslib Journal of Information Management		no	1	
Behavioral Sciences	https://www.mdpi.com/editorial_process	no	no	detailed
British Journal of Management		4	4	
Budapest International Research and Critics Institute-Journal	http://bircu-journal.com/index.php/birci/about/editorialPolicies#focusAndScope	no	no	medium
Business Ethics and Leadership	https://armgpublishing.com/journals/bel/peer-review-process/	no	no	detailed
Business Ethics Quarterly		4	4	
Business Ethics, the Environment & Responsibility	https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/page/journal/26946424/homepage/forauthors.html#Submission	no	no	Wiley

Career Development International		2	2	
Centre For Malaysian Chinese Studies Bulletin		no	no	insufficient
City University Research Journal	http://www.cityuniversity.edu.pk/curj/ethics.php	no	no	University Journal - Thesis level
Computational and Mathematical Organization Theory	https://www.springer.com/journal/10588/ethics-and-disclosures	no	no	Springer
Computers in Human Behavior		3	2	
Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research	https://www.apa.org/pubs/journals/cpb?tab=4	no	no	APA
Contemporary Issues in Education Research	https://clutejournals.com/index.php/CIER/about	no	no	insufficient
Corporate Ownership & Control	https://virtusinterpress.org/Submission-and-reviewing-of-the,57.html	no	no	detailed
Creighton Journal of Interdisciplinary Leadership	https://dspace2.creighton.edu/xmlui/handle/10504/70816	no	no	insufficient
Current Psychology		1	1	
Defence AT&L		no	no	Magazine
Dinasti International Journal of Education Management and Social Science	https://dinastipub.org/DIJEMSS/about/submissions	no	no	insufficient
Dinasti International Journal of Management Science	https://dinastipub.org/DIJEMSS/about/submissions	no	no	insufficient
Educational Management Administration & Leadership		1	2	
Effective Executive	https://iupindia.in/Effective_Executive.asp	no	no	insufficient
Eğitim Fakültesi Dergisi		no	no	Information not found in English
Emerging Leadership Journeys	https://www.regent.edu/acad/global/publications/elj/about.htm	no	no	not found
Engineering Management Journal	https://authorservices.taylorandfrancis.com/editorial-policies/	no	no	Taylor & Francis
Ethics & Behavior	https://authorservices.taylorandfrancis.com/editorial-policies/	no	no	Taylor & Francis
Eurasian Business Review		1	2	
EURASIP Journal on Wireless Communications and Networking	https://jwcn-eurasipjournals.springeropen.com/submission-guidelines/peer-review-policy	no	no	medium
European Business Review		2	2	
European Journal of Business and Management	https://www.iiste.org/Journals/index.php/EJBM	no	no	insufficient
European Journal of Business and Management Research	https://www.ejbmr.org/index.php/ejbmr/about	no	no	insufficient
European Journal of Business and Social Sciences	https://ejbss.org/index.php/ejbss/about	no	no	not found
European Journal of Innovation Management		1	1	

European Journal of Social Psychology		3	3	
European Management Journal		2	2	
Frontiers in psychology	https://www.frontiersin.org/about/how-to-peer-review	no	no	detailed
Gavesana Journal of Management	https://vjim.edu.in/gavesana/	no	no	insufficient
Gazi University Journal of Science	https://dergipark.org.tr/en/pub/gujs/policy	no	no	University Journal - Thesis level
German Journal of Research in Human Resource Management		2	2	
German Journal of Research in Human Resource Management		no	no	APA
Global Business Review		1	1	
Global Economics Review	https://www.gerjournal.com/guidelines/article-processing-chart	no	no	detailed
Global Journal of Management and Business Research	https://globaljournals.org/support/guide-to-publish-with-us	no	no	detailed
Global Management Journal for Academic & Corporate Studies	https://gmjacs.bahria.edu.pk/index.php/ojs/review-and-publication-policy	no	no	insufficient
Group & Organization Management		3	3	
Gruppe. Interaktion. Organisation		no	no	Springer
Health Care Management Review		2	2	
Human Relations		4	4	
Human Resource Development Review		2	2	
Human Resource Management Review		3	3	
Humanities & Social Sciences Review	https://mgesjournals.com/hssr/journal_quality_evaluation	no	no	medium
Independent Journal of Management & Production	http://www.ijmp.jor.br/index.php/ijmp/about	no	no	insufficient
Industrial and Commercial Training		no	1	
Information & Management		3	3	
International Business Management		no	no	insufficient
International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences	https://hrmars.com/pages/detail/Instructions-for-Authors	no	no	medium
International Journal of Business and Management Invention	https://www.ijbmi.org/submission.html	no	no	insufficient
International Journal of Business and Public Administration		no	no	detailed

International Journal of Business and Social Science	https://ijbssnet.com/index.php/index	no	no	detailed
International Journal of Computer Science & Information Technology	https://airccse.org/journal/papersub.html	no	no	insufficient
International Journal of Construction Project Management	https://novapublishers.com/peer-review-process/	no	no	insufficient
International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management		3	3	
International Journal of Current Science Research and Review	https://ijcsrr.org/publication-process/	no	no	medium
International Journal of Economics and Business Research	http://www.inderscience.com/papers/policies.php#peer	no	no	medium
International Journal of Education and Information Technologies	https://naun.org/cms.action?id=23144	no	no	detailed
International Journal of Educational Research & Social Sciences	https://www.ijersc.org/index.php/go/about	no	no	insufficient
International Journal of Entrepreneurship and small Business		2	2	
International Journal of Evidence Based Coaching and Mentoring		no	1	
International Journal of Hospitality Management		3	3	
International Journal of Human Resource Management and Research	https://authorservices.taylorandfrancis.com/editorial-policies/	no	no	detailed
International Journal of Humanities and Social Science Review	http://ijhssrnet.com/18/page.html	no	no	insufficient
International Journal of Indian Culture and Business Management	http://www.inderscience.com/papers/policies.php#peer	no	no	medium
International Journal of Latest Research in Humanities and Social Science	http://www.ijlrhss.com/about%20us.html	no	no	insufficient
International Journal of Law and Psychiatry		no	no	Elsevier
International Journal of Marketing and Technology	https://www.ijmra.us/review.php	no	no	insufficient

International Journal of Materials and Manufacturing	https://www.sae.org/binaries/content/assets/cm/content/publications/journals/resources/reviewerrubricresourcepage.pdf	no	no	detailed
International Journal of Mechanical Engineering and Technology	https://iaeme.com/Home/journal_editorial_policy/IJMET	no	no	medium
International Journal of Modern Trends in Social Sciences	http://www.ijmtss.com/ethic.asm	no	no	insufficient
International Journal of Multicultural and Multireligious Understanding	https://ijmmu.com/index.php/ijmmu/about/editorialPolicies#peerReviewProcess	no	no	medium
International Journal of Organizational Analysis		1	1	
International Journal of Organizational Leadership	https://ijol.cikd.ca/journal/process	no	no	detailed
International Journal of Organizational Leadership	https://ijol.cikd.ca/journal/process	no	no	detailed
International Journal of Public Leadership		no	no	Emerald
International Journal of Recent Technology and Engineering	https://www.ijrte.org/peer-review-policy/	no	no	detailed
International Journal of research in commerce & management	https://ijrcm.org.in/commerce/review-process.php	no	no	medium
International Journal of Science and Healthcare Research	http://www.ijshr.com/instructions.html	no	no	insufficient
International Journal of Science and Society	http://ijsoc.goacademica.com/index.php/ijsoc/PE	no	no	insufficient
International Journal of Science, Environment and Technology	https://www.ijset.net/index.php?pid=38	no	no	not found
International Journal of Scientific and Academic Research	https://ijsar.net/index.php/ijsar/peer-review-policy	no	no	medium
International Journal of Scientific Research and Management	https://ijsrm.in/index.php/ijsrm/jp#JournalPolicies	no	no	medium
International Journal of Social, Policy and Law	https://ijospl.org/index.php/ijospl/peer_review_process/	no	no	detailed
International Journal of Social Sciences and Entrepreneurship	http://www.ijsse.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=44&Itemid=63	no	no	medium
International Journal of Stress Management		2	2	
International Journal of Trade and Global Markets	http://www.inderscience.com/papers/policies.php#peer	no	no	medium
International Journal of Work Organization and Emotion	http://www.inderscience.com/papers/policies.php#peer	no	no	medium
International Journal of Workplace Health Management	https://www.emeraldgrouppublishing.com/journal/ijwhm?distinct_id=17e3e8f70b01e1b-09cba667262713-3e62684b-1fa400-	no	no	Emerald

	17e3e8f70b12086&_ga=2.249084174.883018672.1641727095-1450132594.1641727095#author-guidelines			
International Journal on Leadership	http://www.publishingindia.com/Uploads/SampleArticles/Ethicsandpeer.pdf	no	no	insufficient
International Leadership Journal	http://internationalleadershipjournal.com/index.php/ilj-submission-review-process-2/	no	no	insufficient
International Review of Administrative Sciences		3	3	
International Review of Public Administration		no	1	
International Small Business Journal		3	3	
IPN Journal of Research and Practice in Public Sector Accounting and Management	http://jurnal.ipn.gov.my/manuscript-review/	no	no	insufficient
Iranian Journal of Management Studies		1	1	
Journal of Applied Psychology		4*	4*	
Journal of Applied Social Psychology		2	2	
Journal of Asian Finance, Economics and Business	https://www.jafeb.org/journal/intro.do?journalSeq=J000171	no	no	detailed
Journal of Building Performance Simulation		no	no	Taylor & Francis
Journal of Business & Economic Policy	http://jbepnet.com/index.php/submission	no	no	detailed
Journal of Business & Economics Research	https://www.cluteinstitute.com/about/faqs/	no	no	insufficient
Journal of Business & Leadership: Research, Practices and Teaching	https://scholars.fhsu.edu/about.html	no	no	insufficient
Journal of Business and Behavioral Sciences	http://asbbs.org/jsbbs.html	no	no	not found
Journal of Business and Management		no	no	University Journal - Thesis level
Journal of Business and Psychology		2	3	
Journal of Business Cases and Applications	https://www.aabri.com/COPE.html	no	no	detailed
Journal of Business Ethics		3	3	
Journal of Business Logistics		3	2	
Journal of Business Research		3	3	
Journal of Business Studies Quarterly	https://jbsq.org/submission-guidelines/	no	no	insufficient
Journal of Clinical Nursing		no	no	Wiley

Journal of Contemporary Economic and Business Issues	https://journals.ukim.mk/index.php/jeccf/information/authors	no	no	detailed
Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization		3	3	
Journal of Economics and Behavioral Studies	https://ojs.amhinternational.com/index.php/jebs/about#focusAndScope	no	no	insufficient
Journal of Entrepreneurship & Project Management	http://bircu-journal.com/index.php/birci/about/editorialPolicies#focusAndScope	no	no	medium
Journal of Entrepreneurship and Innovation Management	http://www.betadergi.com/jeim/faqs.html	no	no	insufficient
Journal of Fundamental and Applied Sciences	https://jfas.info/index.php/JFAS/navigationMenu/view/Peer-Review-Policy	no	no	medium
Journal of General Management		2	1	
Journal of Global Responsibility		no	1	
Journal of Human Resource in Hospitality & Tourism		1	1	
Journal of Human Resource & Leadership	https://stratfordjournals.org/journal/	no	no	detailed
Journal of International Business Disciplines	http://www.jibd.org/	no	no	not found
Journal of International Doctoral research	not existent	no	no	not found
Journal of International Management Studies	https://jims-journal.org/JIMS-JOURNAL/Default.aspx	no	no	detailed
Journal of Development and Social Sciences	https://jdss.org.pk/publication-policy	no	no	insufficient
Journal of Family Business Strategy		2	2	
Journal of Knowledge Management		2	2	
Journal of Language, Technology & Entrepreneurship in Africa	https://www.ajol.info/index.php/ajol/JPPS	no	no	detailed
Journal of Leadership & Organizational Studies	https://journals.sagepub.com/author-instructions/JLO	no	no	Sage
Journal of Leadership Education	https://journalofleadershiped.org/reviewers/	no	no	detailed
Journal of Leadership Studies		no	1	
Journal of Leadership, Accountability, and Ethics	https://nabpress.com/journal-submission	no	no	medium
Journal of Management		4*	4*	
Journal of Management & Organization		2	2	
Journal of Management Development		1	1	

Journal of Management Education		2	2	
Journal of Management Policies and Practice	http://jmppnet.com/in/jmpp/submission	no	no	detailed
Journal of Management Practices, Humanities and Social Sciences	https://global-jws.com/ojs/index.php/global-jws/peerreview	no	no	medium
Journal of Managerial Issues	https://www.pittstate.edu/business/journals/journal-of-managerial-issues.html#undefined7	no	no	detailed
Journal of Managerial Psychology		3	3	
Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology		4	4	
Journal of occupational health psychology		4	4	
Journal of Organizational Behavior		4	4	
Journal of Organizational Psychology	https://www.nabpress.com/ethics-and-publication-malpractice	no	no	medium
Journal of Personnel Psychology		2	2	
Journal of Policy Research	https://jprpk.com/index.php/jpr/policy	no	no	medium
Journal of Professional Nursing		no	no	Elsevier
Journal of Psychology in Africa	https://authorservices.taylorandfrancis.com/editorial-policies/	no	no	detailed
Journal of Reviews on Global Economics	https://www.lifescienceglobal.com/independent-journals/journal-of-reviews-on-global-economics	no	no	medium
Journal of Social Work and Science Education	http://ejournal.karinosseff.org/index.php/jswse/peerreviewprocess	no	no	insufficient
Journal of Southwest Jiaotong University				University Journal - Thesis level
Journal of Surgical Research		no	no	Elsevier
Journal of US-China Public Administration	http://www.davidpublisher.org/index.php/Home/Faq/detail/id/12/pid/3.html	no	no	insufficient
Journal of Yasar University		no	no	insufficient
Jurnal Administrare: Jurnal Pemikiran Ilmiah dan Pendidikan Administrasi Perkantoran	https://ojs.unm.ac.id/administrare/about/editorialPolicies#peerReviewProcess	no	no	insufficient
Jurnal EMBA : Jurnal Riset Ekonomi, Manajemen, Bisnis dan Akuntansi	https://ejournal.unsrat.ac.id/index.php/emba/about/editorialPolicies#custom-0	no	no	Information not found in English
Jyväskylä studies in business and economics		no	no	University Journal - Thesis level
Leadership		2	2	
Leadership & Organization Development Journal		1	1	
Leadership in Health Services		no	1	

Life Science Journal	http://www.lifesciencesite.com	no	no	insufficient
Long Range Planning		3	3	
LUX: A Journal of Transdisciplinary Writing and Research from Claremont Graduate School	https://scholarship.claremont.edu/lux/about.html	no	no	University Journal - Thesis level
Management Decision		2	2	
Management Research and Behavior Journal	https://ojs.unimal.ac.id/index.php/mrbj/about/editorialPolicies#peerReviewProcess	no	no	insufficient
Management Research Review		1	1	
Management Teaching Review	https://journals.sagepub.com/author-instructions/MTR#3	no	no	Sage
Managerial Auditing Journal		2	2	
Modern Management Science & Engineering	http://www.scholink.org/ojs/index.php/mmse	no	no	detailed
Nordic journal of working life studies	https://tidsskrift.dk/njwls/about	no	no	detailed
NUML International Journal of Business & Management	https://nijbm.numl.edu.pk/index.php/BM	no	no	University Journal - Thesis level
Open Economics and Management Journal	https://benthamopen.com/process-flowchart-main.php	no	no	detailed
Organizational and Social Dynamics	http://www.osd.org.uk/notes-for-contributors/	no	no	insufficient
Organization Development Journal	https://isodc.org/page-1740221	no	no	insufficient
Organization Management Journal		1	1	
Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes		4	4	
Organizational Psychology Review		2	2	
Pakistan Journal of Commerce and Social Sciences	http://www.jespk.net/page.php?pageid=7	no	no	detailed
PalArch's Journal of Archaelogy of Egypt / Egyptology	https://www.archives.palarch.nl/index.php/jae/about/submissions	no	no	insufficient
Performance Improvement	https://authorservices.wiley.com/Reviewers/journal-reviewers/what-is-peer-review/the-peer-review-process.html	no	no	Wiley
Personality and Individual Differences		3	3	
Personnel Psychology		4	4*	
Personnel Review		2	2	
PLoS One	https://journals.plos.org/plosone/s/editorial-and-peer-review-process	no	no	detailed
Politics and the Life Sciences	https://www.cambridge.org/core/services/peer-review	no	no	detailed
Pramana Research Journal	https://www.pramanaresearch.org/	no	no	insufficient
Priviet Social Sciences Journal	https://journal.privietlab.org/index.php/PSSJ/PEER-REVIEW-PROCESS	no	no	insufficient

Psychological Test Adaption and Development		no	no	Hogrefe
Public Administration Quartlery		1	1	
Research Journal of Social Science & Management	https://www.theinternationaljournal.org/ojs/index2.htm#three-column	no	no	medium
Review of European Studies		no	1	
SA Journal of Human Resource Management		no	1	
SA Journal of Industrial Psychology		1	1	
Safety science	https://www.elsevier.com/journals/safety-science/0925-7535/guide-for-authors	no	no	Elsevier
Sage Open		no	no	Sage
Scandinavian Journal of Management		2	2	
Scandinavian Journal of Organizational Psychology	https://www.sjwop.com/about/editorialpolicies/	no	no	detailed
Schmalenbachs Zeitschrift für betriebswirtschaftliche Forschung		2	2	
Scholars Journal of Economics, Business and Management	https://saspublisher.com/review-process/	no	no	insufficient
Seoul Journal of Business	https://cba.snu.ac.kr/en/sjb-guideline-for-authors	no	no	University Journal - Thesis level
Social Behavior and personality	https://www.sbp-journal.com/index.php/sbp/pages/view/sbp_journal	no	no	insufficient
Studies in Higher Education		3	3	
Teaching Public Administration		no	1	
The International Journal of Business & Management	http://www.internationaljournalcorner.com/index.php/theijbm/pages/view/sp	no	no	insufficient
The International Journal of Ethical Leadership	https://case.edu/inamori/initiatives/ethical-leadership/IJEL	no	no	insufficient
The International Journal of Human Resource Management		3	3	
The Irish Journal of Management		1	1	
The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science		2	2	
The Journal of Applied Management and Entrepreneurship				not found
The Journal of Values-Based Leadership	https://scholar.valpo.edu/jvbl/policies.html#reviewprocess	no	no	detailed
The Leadership Quarterly		4	4	
The Psychologist-Manager Journal	https://www.apa.org/pubs/journals/mgr?tab=4	no	no	APA
Transforming Government: People, Process and Policy		no	2	

Turkish Journal of Business Ethics	https://isahlakidergisi.com/en/nc/aip	no	no	medium
Zeitschrift für Psychologie		2	3	

Conferences:

Conference Name	Link	Peer review process
11th International Seminar on Industrial Engineering and Management (ISIEM)	https://isiem.net/the-committee/	not found
12th National Conference Hassan Usman Katsina Polytechnic		not found
2nd International Conference on Education and Technology		not found
2nd International Conference on Research of Educational Administration and Management	https://www.atlantis-press.com/proceedings/series/assehr/publishing-info	detailed
30th International Conference on Design Theory and Methodology		Bachelor Thesis Conference
3rd Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Leadership Symposium	https://osofficer.wixsite.com/leadership-symposium	not found
41st Decision Sciences Institute Annual Meeting		not found
4th International Conference on Research of Educational Administration and Management	https://www.atlantis-press.com/proceedings/icream-20/publishing	not found
52nd Hawaii International...		not found
Academy of Management Proceedings		detailed
Allied Academies International Conference	https://www.alliedacademies.org/publication-policies-and-procedures.php	medium
Annual Meeting of the Southern Management Association	https://smgmt.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/SMA_2022_Call-word-format-FINAL.pdf?6bfec1&6bfec1	detailed
ASBBS Proceedings	http://asbbs.org/journals/	detailed
Association of Leadership Educators	https://www.leadershipeducators.org/Call-for-Proposals-2022	detailed
Conference of Administrative Sciences Association of Canada		insufficient
Conference: Humanities, Science and Engineering Research	https://conferences.ieeeauthorcenter.ieee.org/understand-peer-review/	IEEE
European Business Ethics Network (EBEN) Conference	https://eben-net.org/eben-calls-for-proposals/	insufficient
IEEE Symposium on Business, Engineering and Industrial Application	https://conferences.ieeeauthorcenter.ieee.org/understand-peer-review/	IEEE
International Conference on e-collaboration	https://www.igi-global.com/publish/peer-review-process/	IGI
International Conference on Economics Education, Economics, Business and Management, Accounting and Entrepreneurship	http://piceeba.fe.unp.ac.id/index.php/index/index/about	insufficient
International Conference on Human Resource Development 2015		not found

International Conference on Industrial Engineering and Operations Management	http://ieomsociety.org/ieom/conferences/	not found
International Conference on Research and Development		not found
Measuring Behavior	https://www.measuringbehavior.org/about/scientific-program-committee	medium
Annual Meeting of the Southern Management Association	https://smgmt.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/SMA_2022_Call-word-format-FINAL.pdf?6bfec1&6bfec1	detailed
ASBBS Proceedings	http://asbbs.org/journals/	detailed

APPENDIX B: CONTENT ANALYSIS IN THE SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW

B1: STRUCTURE OF FOLLOWER BEHAVIOUR BY MANNING AND ROBERTSON (2016)

Relation behaviours	Listening actively	Paying close attention to others
		Asking open questions
		Summarizing what others have said
		Presenting ideas after listening to others
	Providing support	Showing sympathy when colleagues are upset
		Providing support to those carrying out difficult tasks
		Being considerate when colleagues are under pressure
		Agreeing with and suggesting ways of developing others' ideas
	Providing praise and encouragement	Recognising team members when they perform effectively
		Praising colleagues who contribute to the team
		Being polite, courteous and friendly to colleagues
		Responding positively to what others say and do
	Working flexible with others	Adjusting tasks and methods to meet the needs of others
		Revising agreements and making temporary arrangements, when necessary
		Compromising with team members about how to carry out our work
		Encouraging, debating with and listening to colleagues, before making a decision
	Generating a sense of security	Approaching tasks and relating to colleagues in a consistent way
		Being cautious, investigating options and consulting widely, before making decisions
		Handling conflict in an open and trusting way
		Being seen as one amongst equals and treating others accordingly
Task behaviours	Planning work activities	Clarifying own role in the team and organization
		Analysing tasks to make best use of resources
		Preparing detailed plans specifying what to do and how to do it
		Preparing detailed schedules about when to do tasks
	Implementing tasks	Turning plans into practical procedures, establishing what is feasible and realistic
		Carrying out plans in a structured and systematic way
		Prioritising tasks in terms of importance
		Being self-reliant, well organized and hard working
	Completing tasks	Carrying out plans precisely and properly
		Maintaining a sense of urgency, completing plans on time
		Being persistent and preserving
		Monitoring own work progress and taking corrective action when it falls short of plan
	Supply information	Supplying information about decisions and actions to own manager
		Supplying information about results and achievements to own manager
		Communicating such information clearly and concisely
		Providing such information regularly and frequently

	Using technical, specialist or professional knowledge and skills	Using technical, specialist or professional knowledge
		Using technical, specialist or professional skills
		Conforming to professional standards
		Engaging in continuing professional development
Change behaviours	Convergent and critical thinking	Assimilating complex information
		Analysing information for errors, omissions and inconsistencies
		Searching for the underlying cause(s) of problems
		Objectively assessing alternative possible solutions
	Divergent or creative thinking	Taking an independent, even unorthodox view
		Having a strong inquisitive sense
		Adopting an intellectual approach, considering different perspectives
		Coming up with original ideas
	Scanning the wider environment	Keeping informed about other parts of own organization
		Taking an interest in trends in the wider environment
		Searching for new ideas that might help at work
		Having a varied network of contacts outside of work
	Persuasive influencing	Being clear about who to influence, what for and why
		Using a limited number of strong arguments
		Targeting arguments on the person being influenced and searching for common ground
		Using rational and emotional arguments
	Being committed and showing enthusiasm	Being committed to the organization, team and own role
		Being dynamic, energetic and enthusiastic
		Being cheerful and good-humoured
		Encouraging colleagues when they are positive and meet work goals

B2: ANALYSIS OF BEHAVIOURS IN KELLEY'S (1992) EFFECTIVE FOLLOWERSHIP QUESTIONNAIRE

	Does your work help you fulfill some societal goal or personal dream that is important to you?			Attitude
	Are your personal work goals aligned with your department's priority goals?			Attitude
	Are you highly committed to and energized by your work and your department, giving them your best ideas and performance?			Attitude
	Does your enthusiasm also spread to and energize your coworkers?			Attitude
ICT	Instead of waiting for or merely accepting what your departmental chairperson tells you, do you personally identify which activities are most critical for achieving your department's priority goals?	Identifying priorities for goal achievement	Proactivity	Behaviour
AE	Do you actively develop a distinctive competence in those critical activities so that you become more valuable to your departmental chairperson and the department?	Developing distinctive competencies	Personal development	Behaviour
AE	When starting a new assignment, do you promptly build a record of successes in tasks that are important to your departmental chairperson?	Striving for success	Performance	Behaviour
AE	Can your departmental chairperson give you a difficult assignment without the benefit of much supervision, knowing that you will meet your deadline with highest-quality work and that you will "fill in the cracks" if need be?	Aim for high quality work	Performance	Behaviour
AE	Can your departmental chairperson give you a difficult assignment without the benefit of much supervision, knowing that you will meet your deadline with highest-quality work and that you will "fill in the cracks" if need be?	Meet deadlines	Effort	Behaviour
AE	Do you take the initiative to seek out and successfully complete assignments that go above and beyond your job?	Taking initiative	Taking initiative	Behaviour
AE	When you are not the leader of a group project, do you still contribute at a high level, often doing more than your share?	Contributing beyond one's share	Effort	Behaviour
AE	Do you independently think up and champion new ideas that will contribute significantly to your departmental chairperson's or your department's goals?	Thinking up new ideas	Innovation	Behaviour
ICT	Do you try to solve the tough problems (technical or organizational), rather than look to your departmental chairperson to do it for you?	Solving tough problems	Solving problems	Behaviour
AE	Do you help out other coworkers, making them look good, even when you don't get any credit?	Helping coworkers	Helping	Behaviour
ICT	Do you help your departmental chairperson or department see both the upside potential and downside risks of ideas or plans, playing the devil's advocate if need be?	Voice concerns	Voice	Behaviour
ICT	Do you help your departmental chairperson or department see both the upside potential and downside risks of ideas or plans, playing the devil's advocate if need be?	Support leader's ideas	Support ideas	Behaviour
AE	Do you understand your departmental chairperson's needs, goals, and constraints and work hard to help meet them?	Working to meet leader's goals	Support goals	Behaviour
AE	Do you actively and honestly own up to your strengths and weaknesses rather than put off evaluation?	Reflect strengths/weaknesses	Personal development	Behaviour
ICT	Do you make a habit of internally questioning the wisdom of your departmental chairperson's decision rather than just doing what you are told?	Questioning leader's decisions	Voice	Behaviour
ICT	When your departmental chairperson asks you to do something that runs contrary to your professional or personal preferences, do you say "no" rather than "yes"?	Contradict decisions	Voice	Behaviour
ICT	Do you act on your own ethical standards rather than your departmental chairperson's or your department's standards?	Act on own ethical standards	Voice	Behaviour
ICT	Do you assert your views on important issues, even though it might mean conflict with your group or reprisals from your departmental chairperson?	Assert issues	In-team communication	Behaviour
ICT	Do you assert your views on important issues, even though it might mean conflict with your group or reprisals from your departmental chairperson?	Assert issues	Compliance & resistance	Behaviour
ICT		Risk conflicts	Voice	Behaviour

ICT = Independent critical thinking, AE = Active engagement; If effective followership based on Kelley (1992) is measured, add: (a) Extra-role behaviour (Taking charge/Proactivity: 1), (b) Task related behaviour (Performance: 1, Effort: 1, Support ideas and goals: 1, Innovation: 1), (c) Communication (Voice: 1, In-team communication: 1), (d) Other behaviours (Personal development: 1, Compliance & resistance: 1, OCB-I helping: 1)

B3: ANALYSIS OF BEHAVIOURS IN DIXON'S (2009) COURAGOUES FOLLOWERSHIP PROFILE

Courage to assume responsibility	I am dedicated to my work	Dedication	Category	Attitude
	I believe it is critical that I honor my commitments	Honour one's commitments	-	Belief
	I am self-managed in meeting deadlines and keeping commitments	Keeping commitments, being self-managed	Effort	Behaviour and skill
	I assume responsibility for bending a rule in a situation where the rule keeps me from serving others.	Assuming responsibility for one's own behaviour	-	Attitude
	I evaluate my performance	Evaluating one's performance	Personal development	Behaviour
	I take initiative even if a task is not in my job description.	Taking initiative	Taking charge/ Proactivity	Behaviour
Courage to serve	I behave in a way that reflects my manager's values without emphasizing my personal agenda	Acting on manager's values	Support ideas and goals	Behaviour
	I step forward to summarize my manager's communication if there is confusion for others in the team	Summarize the manager's communication for others	In-team communication	Behaviour
	I refrain from placing unnecessary pressures on my manager	Refraining from placing unnecessary pressures on the manager	OCB-I - Caring	Behaviour
	I defend my manager when he or she is being attacked.	Defend the manager	OCB-I - Protecting	Behaviour
	I encourage complainers to share fact and behaviours, not emotions.	Encourage others to share fact and behaviour, not emotions	In-team communication	Behaviour
Courage to challenge	I challenge inappropriate behaviour in others.	Challenge inappropriate behaviour	Voice	Behaviour
	I model appropriate behaviour.	Model appropriate behaviour	Role-modelling	Behaviour
Courage to participate in transformation	I create a supportive environment in which changes can occur.	Create a supportive environment	Role-modelling	Behaviour
	I notice and acknowledge improvements.	Notice and acknowledge improvements	Feedback	Behaviour
	I provide support for experimentation and learning.	Provide support for learning	OCB-I Helping	Behaviour
	I initiate ways to adjust my behaviour to support positive change.	Initiate and support positive change	Personal development	Behaviour
Courage to take moral action	I am committed to transfer knowledge and information should my departure from the company be necessary.	Transfer knowledge and information	OCB-O Protecting the organization	Behaviour
	I would assume full responsibility to protect my manager from negative consequences that resulted from my actions.	Assume responsibility for own behaviour	Cover behaviour	Behaviour
	I will not compromise my personal ethics to keep my job.	Act on personal ethics	Ethical behaviour	Behaviour and value

If courageous followership is measured, add:
Extra-role behaviour (OCB-I - Caring: 1, OCB-I - Protecting: 1, OCB-I Helping: 1, Taking charge/proactivity: 1, OCB-O: Protecting the organization: 1), Task-related behaviour (Effort: 1, Support ideas and goals: 1), Communication: (In-team communication: 1, voice: 1), Other behaviour (Personal development: 1, role-modelling: 1, Ethical behaviour: 1, Cover behaviour: 1)

B4: ANALYSIS OF BEHAVIOURS IN BRUMM AND DRURY'S (2013) GOOD FOLLOWERSHIP QUESTIONNAIRE

My supervisor makes it easy for me to stand up to managers/supervisors to express what I think is right.	Voice	Behaviour
My supervisor makes it easy for me to support him or her.	Support leader	Behaviour
My supervisor makes it easy for me to take initiative.	Take initiative	Behaviour
My supervisor makes it easy for me to be caring towards others.	Caring	Behaviour
My supervisor's behaviour influences me to want to be distant from him or her.	Being distant	Attitude
My supervisor's behaviour influences me to not perform up to my ability.	Performance	Behaviour
My supervisor's behaviour influences me to think that it's not worth getting involved.	Think it's not worth it	Attitude
My supervisor's behaviour influences me to not tell him or her about what I think is right.	Silence	Behaviour
My supervisor's behaviour influences me to reduce my support of him or her.	Support leader	Behaviour
My supervisor's behaviour influences me to do just the minimum required.	Performance	Behaviour
My supervisor's behaviour influences me to not care about cooperating.	Caring	Behaviour
My supervisor encourages me to develop a good working relationship with him or her.	Relationship behaviour	Behaviour
My supervisor encourages me to use my strengths.	Use strength	Behaviour
My supervisor encourages me to be actively involved in opportunities at work.	Active involvement	Attitude

Add:
Extra-role behaviour (Take initiative: 1, OCB-I - Caring: 1)
Task-related behaviour (Performance: 1, support ideas and goals: 1)
Communication: (Voice: 1, Personal development: 1)

B5: ANALYSIS OF BEHAVIOURS IN LEE AND ALLEN'S (2002) ORGANIZATIONAL CITIZENSHIP BEHAVIOUR QUESTIONNAIRE

Help others who have been absent.		OCB-I Helping	
Willingly give your time to help others who have work-related problems.		OCB-I Helping	
Adjust your work schedule to accommodate other employees' requests for off time.		OCB-I Caring	
Go out of the way to make newer employees feel welcome in the work group.		OCB-I Caring	
Show genuine concern and courtesy toward coworkers, even under the most trying business or personal situations.		OCB-I Caring	
Give up time to help others who have work or nonwork problems.		OCB-I Helping	
Assist others with their duties.		OCB-I Helping	
Share personal property with others to help their work.		OCB-I Helping	
Attend functions that are not required but that help the organizational image.		OCB-O Representing the organization	
Keep up with the developments in the organization.		OCB-O Gather information	
Defend the organization when other employees criticize it.		OCB-O Protect	
Show pride when representing the organization in public.		OCB-O Representing the organization	
Offer ideas to improve the functioning of the organization.		OCB-O Voice ideas	
Express loyalty towards the organization			Attitude
Take action to protect the organization from potential problems.		OCB-O Protect	
Demonstrate concern about the image of the organization.			Attitude

If OCB-I is measured add: 1 helping, 1 caring
If OCB-O is measured add: 1 representing the organization, 1 gathering information, 1 protect, 1 voice ideas

APPENDIX C: EMPIRICAL STUDY - DATA COLLECTION

C1: INTERVIEW STRUCTURE FOR FORMAL MANAGER ROLE

<u>Before the test interviews – German</u>

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2">Einleitung
Vielen Dank, dass du dir die Zeit nimmst, heute mit mir das Interview zu führen. Dieses Interviews ist Teil einer Forschung zum Thema „Verhalten von Followern im organisationalen Kontext“ und die Ergebnisse werden im Rahmen meiner Promotion veröffentlicht. Im Vorfeld habe ich dir die Einwilligungserklärung zukommen lassen. Wie dort erwähnt werden deine Daten anonymisiert, so dass keinerlei Rückschluss auf deine Person möglich ist. Es steht dir offen, die Einwilligung direkt nach dem Interview zu widerrufen. Hast du aktuell noch Fragen?</td></tr>
<tr><td>Vorstellung der Person</td><td>Bitte stelle dich kurz vor.</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td>Name
Alter
Unternehmensgröße
Branche</td></tr>
<tr><td>Erläuterung</td><td>Worum geht es heute?
Followership ist eine Rolle, die von Personen innerhalb einer Organisation angenommen wird und sich auf eine Person mit formaler oder informaler Führungsrolle bezieht. Followership beinhaltet freiwillige Verhaltensweisen, die die Ziele des Führenden oder der Organisation unterstützen.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Erzählanregende Frage</td><td>Bitte denke an eine Situation, in der du Followership gezeigt hast. Diese Situation muss nicht aus deiner aktuellen Arbeitssituation stammen, sondern darf auch in der Vergangenheit liegen. Die Situation muss sich auch nicht zwingend auf eine formale Führungskraft beziehen – Followership kann auch außerhalb der Hierarchie sattfinden. Beschreibe die Situation so konkret wie möglich.</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td>Wenn wir nochmal zur Definition von Followership zurückgehen, inwieweit beinhaltet die Situation, über die wir gerade gesprochen haben, Followership?

Followership ist eine Rolle, die von Personen innerhalb einer Organisation angenommen wird und sich auf eine Person mit formaler oder informaler Führungsrolle bezieht. Followership beinhaltet freiwillige Verhaltensweisen, die die Ziele des Führenden oder der Organisation unterstützen.</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Abschluss
Wichtige Punkte, die nicht angesprochen wurden, aber dem Teilnehmenden relevant erscheinen
Dank für Zeit und Teilnahme</td></tr>
</table>

Before the test interviews – English translation

Introduction Thank you very much for taking the time to conduct this interview with me today. This interview is part of the research "Follower behaviour in organizational contexts" and the results will be published in my doctoral thesis. Before this interview I sent you the declaration of consent. As stated in the form, your data will be anonymized so no conclusions about you as a person can be drawn. You are free to withdraw your consent even after the interview. Do you have any questions before we start?	
Introduction participant	Please introduce yourself quickly.
	Name Age Size of company (employees) Sector
Story generating question	What is our interview today about? Followership is a role that is adopted by a person in an organizational context. Followership relates to a person with a formal or informal leadership role. Followership contains voluntary behaviours. These behaviours support either the goals of the leader or of the organization.
Task	Please think about a situation in which you showed followership. This situation does not necessarily need come from your current work situation but can also be from the past. The situation also does not necessarily need to be situated with a formal leader – followership can take place outside of hierarchies. Please describe the situation as thoroughly as possible.
	When we go back to the definition of followership again. To what extend would you say does the definition fit the situation you just described? Followership is a role that is adopted by a person in an organizational context. Followership relates to a person with a formal or informal leadership role. Followership contains voluntary behaviours. These behaviours support either the goals of the leader or of the organization.
Conclusion Are there any relevant points we did not cover that you think are important for the topic? Thank you very much for your time and participation.	

C2: INTERVIEW STRCTURE FOR FORMAL EMPLOYEE ROLE

Before the test interviews – German

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2">Leitfaden Leader vor Pretest</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Einleitung
Vielen Dank, dass du dir die Zeit nimmst, heute mit mir das Interview zu führen. Dieses Interviews ist Teil einer Forschung zum Thema „Verhalten von Followern im organisationalen Kontext“ und die Ergebnisse werden im Rahmen meiner Promotion veröffentlicht. Im Vorfeld habe ich dir die Einwilligungserklärung zukommen lassen. Wie dort erwähnt werden deine Daten anonymisiert, so dass keinerlei Rückschluss auf deine Person möglich ist. Es steht dir offen, die Einwilligung direkt nach dem Interview zu widerrufen. Hast du aktuell noch Fragen?</td></tr>
<tr><td>Vorstellung der Person</td><td>Bitte stelle dich kurz vor.</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td>Name
Alter
Unternehmensgröße
Branche</td></tr>
<tr><td>Erzählgenerierende Frage</td><td>Worum geht es heute?
Followership ist eine Rolle, die von Personen innerhalb einer Organisation angenommen wird und sich auf eine Person mit formaler oder informaler Führungsrolle bezieht. Followership beinhaltet freiwillige Verhaltensweisen, die die Ziele des Führenden oder der Organisation unterstützen.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Aufgabe</td><td>Bitte denke an eine Situation, in der eine Person dir gegenüber Followership gezeigt hast. Diese Situation muss nicht aus deiner aktuellen Arbeitssituation stammen, sondern darf auch in der Vergangenheit liegen. Die Situation muss sich auch nicht zwingend auf eine formale Führungskraft beziehen – Followership kann auch außerhalb der Hierarchie sattfinden. Beschreibe die Situation so konkret wie möglich.</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td>Wenn wir nochmal zur Definition von Followership zurückgehen, inwieweit beinhaltet die Situation, über die wir gerade gesprochen haben, Followership?
Followership ist eine Rolle, die von Personen innerhalb einer Organisation angenommen wird und sich auf eine Person mit formaler oder informaler Führungsrolle bezieht. Followership beinhaltet freiwillige Verhaltensweisen, die die Ziele des Führenden oder der Organisation unterstützen.</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Abschluss
Wichtige Punkte, die nicht angesprochen wurden, aber dem Teilnehmenden relevant erscheinen
Dank für Zeit und Teilnahme</td></tr>
</table>

Before the test interviews – English

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2">Introduction
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<tr><td>Introduction participant</td><td>Please introduce yourself quickly.</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td>Name
Age
Size of company (employees)
Sector</td></tr>
<tr><td>Explanation</td><td>What is our interview today about?
Followership is a role that is adopted by a person in an organizational context. Followership relates to a person with a formal or informal leadership role. Followership contains voluntary behaviours. These behaviours support either the goals of the leader or of the organization.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Story generating question</td><td>Please think about a situation in which somebody showed followership towards you. This situation does not necessarily need come from your current work situation but can also be from the past. The situation also does not necessarily need to be situated within your formal leader role – followership can take place outside of hierarchies. Please describe the situation as thoroughly as possible.</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td>When we go back to the definition of followership again. To what extend would you say does the definition fit the situation you just described?
Followership is a role that is adopted by a person in an organizational context. Followership relates to a person with a formal or informal leadership role. Followership contains voluntary behaviours. These behaviours support either the goals of the leader or of the organization.</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Conclusion
Are there any relevant points we did not cover that you think are important for the topic?
Thank you very much for your time and participation.</td></tr>
</table>

C3: POWERPOINT SLIDES FOR NARRATIVE GENERATING QUESTIONS

Before the test interviews: definition of followership

Followership is a role that is adopted by a person in an organizational context.

Followership relates to a person with a formal or informal leadership role.

Followership contains voluntary behaviours.

These behaviours support either the goals of the leader or of the organization.

After the test interviews: narrative generating question, showing behaviours version

Please report about a work-related situation, in which you expressed

voluntary behaviours

that supported either the goals of another person or the goals of the organization.

After the test interviews: narrative generating question, observing behaviours version

Please report about a work-related situation, in which somebody showed

voluntary behaviours

that supported either your goals or the goals of the organization.

C4: INVITATION AND CONSENT FORM

Invitation German:

UNIVERSITY OF GLOUCESTERSHIRE
at Cheltenham and Gloucester

Ostfildern, Dezember 2022

Einladung zu einem Gespräch

Liebe/r Teilnehmer/in,

mein Name ist Maike Kugler und ich bin berufsbegleitende Promotionsstudentin an der University of Gloucestershire in England und forsche zum Thema „Follower Verhalten im Dienstleistungssektor in Deutschland“. Ich war zehn Jahre in verschiedenen Unternehmen als HR Business Partner tätig und arbeite aktuell als freiberufliche Dozentin an verschiedenen Fachhochschulen und als Business Coach.

Führung hat in meinen bisherigen Tätigkeiten immer eine große Rolle gespielt, ich habe sie als Mitarbeiterin und Teamleiterin aus beiden Perspektiven erlebt und unterrichte Studierende dazu. Insbesondere in Zeiten, in denen Begriffe wie „War for talent“ und „Fachkräftemangel“ diskutiert werden, ist es wichtig, auch die Rolle der Geführten oder „Follower“ genauer zu betrachten. Hier setzt meine Forschung an – ich möchte herausfinden, in welchen Situationen Followership von den Beteiligten erlebt wird und welche Verhaltensweisen als Followership gesehen werden.

Zu diesem Thema möchte ich gerne ein offenes Gespräch mit Ihnen führen und Ihre Erlebnisse aus der Praxis erfahren. Sie brauchen sich nicht vorzubereiten. Wichtig ist mir, dass es in unserem Gespräch keine richtigen oder falschen Antworten gibt. Ich möchte mehr über Ihr Erleben in Erfahrung bringen und freue mich, wenn Sie möglichst offen berichten und Ihre Erfahrungen und Meinungen mit mir teilen.

Unser Gespräch findet auf Microsoft Teams statt. Den Einladungslink erhalten Sie vorab per E-Mail. Die Dauer beträgt voraussichtlich 45 Minuten. Das Gespräch wird in Form einer Videodatei aufgezeichnet und gespeichert. Die Datei wird später für die Analyse verschriftlicht. Sie erhalten vor der Auswertung eine Mitschrift zur finalen Durchsicht und Freigabe. In dieser Mitschrift werden Ihre Daten bereits anonymisiert, so dass kein Rückschluss auf Sie als Person möglich ist. Bitte prüfen Sie die Mitschrift im Anschluss und bestätigen Sie mir, dass diese so verwendet werden darf und das geführte Gespräch sowie Ihre Meinungen und Erfahrungen widerspiegelt. Die Dateien werden bis zum Abschluss des Forschungsprojektes unter Berücksichtigung der geltenden Datenschutzbestimmungen gespeichert und im Anschluss gelöscht.

Die Forschung wird nach den Richtlinien des Handbuchs für Forschungsethik der University of Gloucestershire (*'Handbook of Research Ethics of the University of Gloucestershire'*) durchgeführt. Die Inhalte und Meinungen in dieser Forschung sind meine eigenen und repräsentieren in keiner Weise die der University of Gloucestershire.

UNIVERSITY OF GLOUCESTERSHIRE
at Cheltenham and Gloucester

Sollten Sie vorab Fragen haben, melden Sie sich gerne unter den folgenden Kontaktdaten bei mir:

Telefon
E-Mail

Bitte senden Sie mir vorab die unterschriebene Zustimmungserklärung im Anhang zu.

Vielen Dank für Ihre Unterstützung und Ihre Teilnahme an diesem Forschungsprojekt.

Mit freundlichen Grüßen

Maike Kugler

Invitation English:

UNIVERSITY OF GLOUCESTERSHIRE
at Cheltenham and Gloucester

Ostfildern, October 2022

Invitation to a dialogue

Dear participant,

My name is Maike Kugler, and I am a part-time doctoral student at the University of Gloucestershire in England, and I am doing research on the topic of "Follower behaviour in the service sector in Germany". I worked as an HR business partner in various companies for ten years and currently work as a freelance lecturer at various universities of applied sciences and as a business coach.

Leadership has always played a major role in my previous activities. I have experienced it from both perspectives: as an employee and team leader and I teach students in leadership. Especially in times when terms such as "war for talent" and "lack of skilled workers" are being discussed, it is important to take a closer look at the role of followers. This is where my research comes in – I want to find out in which situations followership is experienced by those involved and which behaviours are perceived as followership.

I would like to have an open discussion with you on this topic and learn about your experiences from practice. There is no need for preparations on your end. It is important to me that there are no right or wrong answers in our conversation. I would like to find out more about your experiences and would be happy if you report as openly as possible and share your experiences and opinions with me.

Our conversation takes place on Microsoft Teams. You will receive the invitation link in advance by email. The duration is expected to be about 45 minutes. The conversation is recorded and saved in the form of a video file. The file is later transcribed for analysis. Before the evaluation, you will receive a transcript for final review and approval. In this transcript, your data is already anonymized so that no conclusions can be drawn about you as a person. Please check the transcript afterwards and confirm that it may be used in the way presented and that it reflects the conversation and your opinions and experiences. The files are stored until the end of the research project, taking into account the applicable data protection regulations, and then deleted.

Research will be conducted in accordance with the guidelines of the University of Gloucestershire (*'Handbook of Research Ethics of the University of Gloucestershire'*). The content and opinions in this research are my own and in no way represent those of the University of Gloucestershire.

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If you have any questions in advance, please feel free to contact me using the following contact information:

Telephone
Email

Please send me the signed declaration of consent in the attachment in advance.

Thank you for your support and participation in this research project.

Kind regards

Maike Kugler

Consent form German/English:

UNIVERSITY OF GLOUCESTERSHIRE
at Cheltenham and Gloucester

Einverständniserklärung

Titel der Doktorarbeit

'Follower Verhalten im Dienstleistungssektor in Deutschland – eine multiperspektivische Betrachtung'

Doktorandin
Maike Kugler

Ich bestätige, dass
- ich die Einladung erhalten und gelesen habe.
- ich am Forschungsprojekt im Rahmen der Dissertation der Doktorandin unentgeltlich teilnehme.
- ich mit der Aufnahme sowie der Transkription des Gesprächs durch einen Dienstleister, der nach europäischem Datenschutz arbeitet, einverstanden bin.

Ich verstehe, dass
- die Teilnahme an der Forschung freiwillig erfolgt und ich nicht zur Beantwortung einzelner Fragen verpflichtet bin.
- ich das Gespräch jederzeit abbrechen kann.
- meine persönlichen Daten (Name, Alter und Tätigkeit) in anonymisierter Form (z.B. Altersspanne und Branche) verarbeitet und veröffentlicht werden.
- sämtliche personenbezogenen Daten datenschutzkonform aufbewahrt werden und nach Abschluss des Forschungsprojektes unwiderruflich gelöscht werden.
- diese Forschungsarbeit nicht die Meinung der University of Gloucestershire darstellt, sondern ausschließlich die der Doktorandin.

Persönliche Daten des Teilnehmers/der Teilnehmerin:

Name: ______________________________________

Alter: __________

Branche: ____

Beruf: ____

_________________________ Ort, Datum

_________________________ Unterschrift

UNIVERSITY OF GLOUCESTERSHIRE
at Cheltenham and Gloucester

Declaration of consent

Title of the doctoral thesis

'Follower behaviour in the German service sector – a multiperspective view'

PhD Candidate
Maike Kugler

I confirm that
- I have received and read the invitation.
- I am taking part in the research project as part of the doctoral candidate's dissertation gratuitously.
- I agree to the recording and transcription of the conversation by a service provider who works in accordance with European data protection.

I understand that
- Participation in this research is voluntary and I am not obliged to answer individual questions.
- I can end the conversation at any time.
- My personal data (name, age, and occupation) are processed and published in an anonymous form (e.g. age range, and industry).
- All personal data is stored in accordance with data protection regulations and is irrevocably deleted after the research project has been completed.
- This research does not represent the opinion of the University of Gloucestershire, but only that of the PhD student.

Personal data of the participant:

Name: ______________________________________

Age: __________

Industry: ____

Occupation: ____

_________________________ Place, Date

_________________________ Signature

C5: TRANSCRIPTION RULES

English, Dresing and Pehl (2015):

1. Transcribe literally; do not summarize or transcribe phonetically. Dialects are to be accurately translated into standard language. If there is no suitable translation for a word or expression, the dialect is retained.
2. Informal contractions are not to be transcribed, but approximated to written standard language. E.g. “gonna” becomes “going to” in the transcript. Sentence structure is retained despite possible syntactic errors.
3. Discontinuations of words or sentences as well as stutters are omitted; word doublings are only transcribed if they are used for emphasis (“This is very, very important to me.”) Half sentences are recorded and indicated by a slash /.
4. Punctuation is smoothed in favor of legibility. Thus, short drops of voice or ambiguous intonations are preferably indicated by periods rather than commas. Units of meaning have to remain intact.
5. Pauses are indicated by suspension marks in parentheses (...)
6. Affirmative utterances by the interviewer, like “uh-huh, yes, right” etc. are not transcribed. EXCEPTION: monosyllabic answers are always transcribed. Add an interpretation, e.g. “Mhm (affirmative)” or “Mhm (negative)”.
7. Words with a special emphasis are CAPITALIZED.
8. Every contribution by a speaker receives its own paragraph. In between speakers there is a blank line. Short interjections also get their own paragraph. At a minimum, time stamps are inserted at the end of a paragraph.
9. Emotional non-verbal utterances of all parties involved that support or elucidate statements (laughter, sighs) are transcribed in brackets.
10. Incomprehensible words are indicated as follows (inc.). For unintelligible passages indicate the reason: (inc., cell phone ringing) or (inc., microphone rustling). If you assume a certain word but are not sure, put the word in brackets with a question mark, e.g. (Xylomentazoline?). Generally, all inaudible or incomprehensible passages are marked with a time stamp if there isn’t one within a minute.
11. The interviewer is marked by “I:”, the interviewed person by “P:” (for participant). If there are several speakers, e.g. in group discussions, a number or a name is added to “P” (e.g. “P1:”, “Peter:”).
12. The transcript is saved in rich text format (.rtf file). Name the file according to the audio file name. E.g. interview_04022011.rtf or interview_smith.rtf.
13. Speech overlaps are marked by //. At the start of an interjection, // follows. The simultaneous speech is within // and the person’s interjection is in a separate line, also marked by //.
14. Transcribed texts need to be anonymized. Therefore, Names are substituted with [Person], company names are substituted with [Organization], and places are substituted with [Place].

German, Dresing and Pehl (2015):

1. Es wird wörtlich transkribiert, also nicht lautsprachlich oder zusammenfassend. Vorhandene Dialekte werden möglichst wortgenau ins Hochdeutsche übersetzt. Wenn keine eindeutige Übersetzung möglich ist, wird der Dialekt beibehalten, zum Beispiel: Ich gehe heuer auf das Oktoberfest.
2. Wortverschleifungen werden nicht transkribiert, sondern an das Schriftdeutsch angenähert: „Er hatte noch so'n Buch" wird zu „Er hatte noch so ein Buch" und „hamma" wird zu „haben wir". Die Satzform wird beibehalten, auch wenn sie syntaktische Fehler beinhaltet, beispielsweise: „Ich bin nach Kaufhaus gegangen".
3. Wort- und Satzabbrüche sowie Stottern werden geglättet bzw. ausgelassen, Wortdoppelungen nur erfasst, wenn sie als Stilmittel zur Betonung genutzt werden: „Das ist mir sehr, sehr wichtig.". „Ganze" Halbsätze, denen nur die Vollendung fehlt, werden jedoch erfasst und mit dem Abbruchzeichen / gekennzeichnet.
4. Interpunktion wird zu Gunsten der Lesbarkeit geglättet, das heißt bei kurzem Senken der Stimme oder uneindeutiger Betonung wird eher ein Punkt als ein Komma gesetzt. Dabei sollen Sinneinheiten beibehalten werden.
5. Pausen werden durch drei Punkte in Klammern (...) markiert.
6. Verständnissignale des gerade nicht Sprechenden wie „mhm, ja, aha, ähm, genau, ähm" etc. werden nicht transkribiert. AUSNAHME: Eine Antwort besteht NUR aus „mhm" ohne jegliche weitere Ausführung. Dies wird als „mhm (bejahend)", oder „mhm (verneinend)" erfasst, je nach Interpretation.
7. Besonders betonte Wörter oder Äußerungen werden durch GROSSSCHREIBUNG gekennzeichnet.
8. Jeder Sprecherbeitrag erhält eigene Absätze. Zwischen den Sprechern gibt es freie, leere Zeilen. Auch kurze Einwürfe werden in einem separaten Absatz transkribiert. Mindestens am Ende eines Absatzes werden Zeitmarken eingefügt.
9. Emotionale nonverbale Äußerungen der befragten Person und des Interviewers, die die Aussage unterstützen oder verdeutlichen, (etwa wie lachen oder seufzen), werden beim Einsatz in Klammern notiert.
10. Unverständliche Wörter werden mit (unv.) gekennzeichnet. Längere unverständliche Passagen sollen möglichst mit der Ursache versehen werden (unv. Handystörgeräusch) oder (unv. Mikrofon rauscht). Vermutet man einen Wortlaut, ist sich aber nicht sicher, wird das Wort bzw. der Satzteil mit einem Fragezeichen in Klammern gesetzt. Zum Beispiel: (Xylomethanolin?). Generell werden alle unverständlichen Stellen mit einer Zeitmarke versehen, wenn innerhalb von einer Minute keine Zeitmarke gesetzt ist.
11. Die interviewende Person wird durch ein „I:", die befragte Person durch ein „B:" gekennzeichnet. Bei mehreren Interviewpartnern (z.B. Gruppendiskussion) wird dem Kürzel „B" eine entsprechende Kennnummer oder ein Name zugeordnet (z.B. „B1:", „Peter").
12. Das Transkript wird in Rich Text Format (.rtf-Datei) gespeichert. Benennung der Datei entsprechend des Audiodateinamens (ohne Endung wav, mp3). Beispielsweise: Interview_04022011.rtf oder Interview.schmitt.rtf
13. Sprecherüberlappzungen werden mit // gekennzeichnet. Bei Beginn des Einwurfes folgt ein //. Der Text, der gleichzeitig gesprochen wird, liegt dann innerhalb dieser // und der Einwurf der anderen Person steht in einer separaten Zeile und ist ebenfalls mit // gekennzeichnet.
14. Transkribierte Texte müssen anonymisiert werden. Dazu werden Namen mit [Person] ersetzt, Firmennamen werden durch [Organisation] ersetzt und Orte werden mit [Ort] ersetzt.

C6: SAMPLE TRANSCRIPT TRANSLATED TO ENGLISH

I: Thank you again for ensuring this worked out today, that we can conduct this interview – or, rather, this conversation. It regards the topic of voluntary behaviour in the work context. I sent you the declaration of consent in advance, which you signed. Any questions? #00:00:17-0#

P: Everything was fine. #00:00:18-0#

I: Okay. It is important to note that there are no right or wrong answers. I want to know what you experience in your everyday work, and I don't necessarily want to know whether you think it's right or wrong. There is no judgement, and I won't judge either. That's important to me. Okay. #00:00:38-0#

P: Okay. #00:00:39-0#

I: Well, then let me in on your professional life. What do you do? #00:00:47-0#

P: I'm a financial advisor in a branch of [Organization] at [location], which is where I originally trained. I look after customers and advise them on financial issues ranging from checking accounts to online banking and complex stocks advice, where we take investment amounts from customers and work out a concept. Right. I also have other functions at [Organization]. For example, I can frequently be found on the social media channels, where I post videos on financial knowledge. #00:01:40-0#

I: Okay, interesting. And are these – that is, both your work and the videos – mainly aimed at your private customers? #00:01:49-0#

P: Right. Our segment, or the segment I advise currently, is in the private customer area. #00:01:57-0#

I: Okay. There are probably all types of people then, from those who have more money to, I would say, the average consumer. #00:02:06-0#

P: When I started working as a consultant after my apprenticeship in [year], when I was more or less an entry-level consultant – that's what I would call it now – I mainly looked after the younger customers – young professionals and students, for example – who had little to no income. By now, I look after almost all the social classes that exist. Really, from managing directors, who earn several hundred thousand euros, to students, who are exactly the opposite, as already mentioned, all sorts of people are still involved. So, it’s a very mixed, very broad field, and I’ve already had good experiences in all areas. #00:02:57-0#

I: Okay. Great. Thank you. I will now share a PowerPoint slide with you. I ask you to leave it open so that you can take a look if you need to recall what the task was. I would like you to share a work-related situation in which you demonstrated voluntary behaviours that supported either another person’s goals or the organization’s goals. #00:03:29-0#

P: Okay, wait a minute. Give me a moment. #00:03:33-0#

I: Feel free to think about it. No problem. #00:03:37-0#

P: ... Yes, well, I am a financial advisor. Being a financial advisor ultimately means working in sales, and sales also means selling financial products. And such an organizational goal/ I’ll just describe the organization as a bank that, for example, sometimes sets priorities for us in consulting. For example, they say: “it’s autumn now; what happens in autumn often?” Often, like today, there are things like small storms or such things, and then they focus on, for example, the insurance business at the bank. So, what was my voluntary behaviour? - I hope that’s what you’re aiming for, or I got that right - for example, when the bank says, “Hey, let’s see if you can somehow put an emphasis on insurance with your customers”, I start by selecting my customers using a software to see who is in my portfolio. I look after about a thousand customers whom I may not yet have consulted about this topic. I then invite them to discuss this topic and advise them on it. This is not something I’m required to do, and I don’t have any specific goals in this regard; thank God. It’s different from many other banks and insurance companies. I do it basically because I think, “Okay, it could actually fit with this or that customer, and I’ll invite them to discuss it”. #00:05:51-0#

I: Does that mean, that if you don’t have any goals for this, then would there be no consequences if you don’t do anything? #00:05:59-0#

P: Yes, that is correct. There aren’t any consequences in that we are/, yeah and it’s probably because we’re a public bank, as [organization]. Feel free to use the employer if it matters. I neither have a disadvantage as far as my salary is concerned, nor, let me put it this way, does my boss come at me angrily and ask me what’s going on if I don’t do things like this.

But it’s still in my interest to supply customers with the right area somewhere if it fits with a particular financial product. But I really don’t have a specific goal that requires me to say, “Okay, in two weeks I need, I don’t know, five of these contracts”. Of course, it would be great if I had one. But if nothing happened in this product area, there have never been any negative consequences for me or others. #00:07:08-0#

I: Okay. And that’s why you would regard this as voluntary? #00:07:12-0#

P: Yes. Exactly. #00:07:13-0#

I: Okay. Yes, interesting. Are there any other situations where you’d say that you’ve shown voluntary behaviour based on the definition here? #00:07:28-0#

P: Yes. For example, I am also active at the bank in the area of public relations. At the beginning of my career as a consultant, I mainly looked after young customers and students, as mentioned before, and what bothered me back in school was that the topic of financial education was pretty much forgotten there. Back then, I became aware of the job of a bank clerk because a Volksbank in my [town] area was more or less a partner bank of our school. That really appealed to me, and they came to us every now and then, taught some lessons and explained a bit of the basics to us like, well – and it sounds so simple – spending less than I earn. You’d be surprised how many people can’t do it and, therefore, simply can’t build up wealth over time, although they will really need it later on. That’s why I said to myself that within the framework of the [organization] – of course, the marketing and ultimately the training department support me – I would proactively approach schools around [place], the teachers and the headmasters, and offer to give one- or two-hour lectures to the students on financial education in different areas, depending on what interests them. I then teach that in the end. I actually do it completely voluntarily. I don’t have to do it, but I enjoy it because I think the students get absolute added value from it. #00:09:31-0#

I: I was just about to ask about the goals of another person or organization. What goal does this support? #00:09:41-0#

P: In fact, it also helps the bank on the organizational side, as more people would be aware of the bank, eventually giving the bank an advantage in winning new customers. For example, once the students have finished school, they may remember and think, “Ah, I once had such a cool lecture by [person] at our school. I don’t have a current account yet; maybe I’ll go to [organization] and see how things are going and open one with them”. That supports a goal of the organization, to simply increase the level of brand awareness. In addition, just as it helped me back then, it helps people ultimately become new employees in the bank. You get to draw attention to the job so they think, “This job exists, and that person showed me it can be fun.” #00:10:44-0#

I: So, from your own experience? #00:10:56-9#

P: Yes. #00:10:57-9#

I: Did that happen? #00:10:51-0#

P: Right. #00:10:52-0#

I: Yes, interesting. You also said earlier that you are also active on social media. Is that related to what you just described or is that something different? #00:11:02-0#

P: My activities, the whole range of it, are all somehow connected. I’ll put it this way: Based on my job description, my original one, you really couldn’t have known that everything would be going in this direction for me now, that I would be focusing on these young customers. But, well, this is so much fun for me, because I am [age range 20–29], and in my circle of acquaintances and relatives, many are leaving school, finishing their studies, but unfortunately, as far as the financial aspect is concerned, have no idea what they should actually do. Meaning, to build up assets and understand what kinds of problems they are going to face. But they don’t even know, well, what kind of insurance do I need? And which ones do I not need? And sometimes, they live beyond their means. This sometimes led to not only my customers, but also my friends and acquaintances biting off more than they could chew. That’s why I’ve made it a bit of a task for myself, and my superiors are totally supportive, thank God, and I’m allowed to do this alongside of normal consulting. With respect to social media, there was an internal call at the time for someone who could imagine being a so-called finance-fluencer– ultimately the person who is present in videos to the public and imparts financial knowledge. That fit in pretty well with what I was already doing, and I had always enjoyed it. I used to shoot YouTube videos from time to time, which made this a good idea. I applied then, and I didn’t have to do that. So, in the end, this was also voluntary, but it offered me extreme versatility in my job. In addition to advising, I have other tasks that I’m known for within the bank now. (laughs) #00:13:25-0#

I: Okay, very interesting. Can you think of another situation? If you can’t at some point, please say so, that’s fine. I’m just asking again. #00:13:38-0#

P: Yes. I’m still thinking about it. What did we have? We had school, we had social media and then the counselling itself. No, I can’t think of anything else right away. Do you know of a situation that might arise with me as a bank consultant, now that I can’t figure it out myself? (laughs) #00:14:02-0#

I: Well, it has to be about what you have experienced, and if you tell me something, then it’s important to you. Hence, I don’t want to influence it at all. However, I could give you some food for thought in another direction. #00:14:27-9#

P: Yes, // please do. #00:14:28-4#

I: Well, // think about other people in the company. What behaviours have you perceived that you would describe as voluntary and that support the goals of another person or the organization? Maybe even your own goals? #00:14:36-0#

P: Yes, well, if I do think about my manager, then yes, it’s clear he has a fairly full schedule. I have noticed that and many meetings, and so on. Unfortunately, due to high demand, also on the customer side, he is currently unable to handle all his e-mails, and so on, and meetings, so I support him by relieving him of his tasks. I kind of offered my help to him so that I basically gain a bit of experience in this management track, I would say, as the tasks are completely different from the ones I do every day. Ultimately, because I take care of his tasks, we, as an organization, as a branch, as a bank, gain absolute added value from it and can pursue our goals because nothing remains open, because everything will be done. #00:15:55-0#

I: What kind of tasks do you take on for him? #00:15:59-0#

P: Well, for example, in terms of meetings, I sometimes even take part in the managerial-level ones in our bank, and I basically pick up information during them. Sometimes, these meetings last one or two hours, so I make kind of a summary for him so that he stays up to date. There are always minutes afterwards, but, if we are honest, hardly anyone has the time to read them with the number of meetings that we have every day. Then, that might be a bit more efficient, I summarize in two or three minutes the information that is important for us as a unit, for him as a manager and for me as a consultant, instead of him looking for this log in the drive for twenty minutes, which can sometimes be a (laughing) hurdle, and then read the whole thing afterwards. And then, questions may still arise as not everything said in a meeting is formulated exactly in the minutes. And sometimes, and that needs to be said, you also have the ability during meetings to tell if someone formulates a sentence with emotions, and, of course, these can't be seen in the minutes either, right? So, maybe you recognize different priorities when actually present for meetings, as opposed to just reading the minutes. #00:17:54-0#

I: And how did he react when you offered to take on tasks? #00:18:04-0#

P: Well, first he did that/ yes, first he checked what kinds of tasks he could I assign to me. In the end, he was happy someone recognized that he had quite a lot on his plate and couldn't manage everything within his working hours. And yes, I basically noticed it because he would always come to work very early and leave very late. (laughs) I would say it's not that I didn't have anything to do – we had already discussed that I take on other functions in addition to advising – but I had some leeway from time to time. And he was happy about it and also appreciated that I had approached him, actively, and asked if I could take something on. On the other hand, it's a really good position for me because I get a taste of what a manager actually does. #00:19:15-0#

I: You just said he appreciated it. How did you determine this? #00:19:23-0#

P: Well, yes, from his reaction. He basically thanked me, and I also realize that, since I first approached him, we have had much more detailed discussions about what my professional future could look like. He has been supporting me in a much more targeted way since then. I've noticed that. That, in my view, is a form of appreciation. So, I've noticed that my manager wants me to make progress, and he shows me that in meetings, by giving me tips and tricks and structuring a plan with me – things he doesn't have to do. #00:20:26-0#

I: So, he supports you in your professional development and does it voluntarily? Would that also fit in with this voluntary behaviour? #00:20:42-0#

P: Yes (hesitant), it could fit in here. What I don't know is, had I not approached him, would we have the same conversations we do now? From this point of view, I'm not exactly sure whether I would call it voluntary, because ultimately there was a trigger for it; I originally approached him. Nevertheless, it could have been different: I could have approached him and taken over his tasks without him supporting me in return. From this point of view, his talks with me somehow are voluntary initiatives on his part. From that perspective, I would basically say yes to the whole thing. Yes, this is voluntary behaviour on his part. #00:21:37-0#

I: Now think about if he had said, “Here are some assignments. Thank you very much” and had not shown you this appreciation. Would that have changed your attitude towards this voluntary behaviour of supporting him? #00:21:56-0#

P: Maybe my passion for working on the tasks might have decreased a bit (laughs). Well, I always try to do them very conscientiously, but let me put it this way, there are things I do on top of everything else, and I don’t have to do them. I would definitely prioritize some meetings lower. If I had an appointment at the same time, that I considered more important, I might have postponed the meeting, not worked on it for him or just worked less on it than I currently do. #00:22:33-0#

I: Well, in conclusion, I’ll ask you again: Can you think of another situation? If you cannot, that’s okay too. #00:22:45-0#

P: I can’t think of any other situation right now. #00:22:48-0#

P: Okay. Well, then I would like to explain what this interview was actually about. I asked about voluntary behaviours. The concept behind this is followership in an organizational context. There’s leadership on one side and followership on the other side. A follower’s role within an organization that relates to another person, and followership includes those voluntary behaviours that support the goals of either the organization or an individual, usually the leader. Is there anything else going through your mind upon hearing this definition? #00:23:36-0#

P: Do you mean if I can think of anything else? #00:23:42-0#

I: Exactly. Do you say, “Ah yes, I have something else to say about that”? #00:23:45-0#

P: No, actually. I can’t think of anything more. #00:23:54-0#

I: Okay. Thank you very much. #00:23:59-0#

C7: TRANSCRIPT CHECK

E-Mail to the participants German:

Guten Tag [Name]

vielen Dank nochmal für Ihre Teilnahme an der Forschung im Rahmen meiner Promotion und für das aufschlussreiche Gespräch.
Wie bereits angekündigt finden Sie im Anhang das Transkript in voller Länge. Bitte lesen Sie sich dieses durch und lassen Sie mir zeitnah die im Anhang befindliche Datei ausgefüllt und unterschrieben zukommen. Sollten Sie Anpassungsbedarf sehen (z.B. bei der Anonymisierung), dürfen Sie sich natürlich gerne bei mir melden. Wichtig hierbei: die komplette Abschrift sehen lediglich meine Betreuer und Prüfer. Die Veröffentlichung der Arbeit erfolgt ohne die Transkripte. Hier werden lediglich Auszüge verwendet. Außerdem ist es ganz normal, dass unser gesprochenes Wort keine lupenreine Abschrift ermöglichen. Lassen Sie sich davon bitte nicht irritieren.
Eine Zusammenfassung der Ergebnisse erhalten Sie nach Beendigung meiner Forschung – vermutlich Mitte des Jahres.

Vielen Dank und viele Grüße
Maike Kugler

E-Mail to the participants English:

Dear [name],

Thank you again for taking part in the study which is part of my PhD programme and for the insightful talk.
As already announced, the transcript in full length is attached to this e-mail. Please read it and send back the attached file filled in and signed. Should you see the need for amendments (e.g. regarding anonymity), please let me know. Vital information: the complete transcript will only be made available to my supervisors and examiners. The publication of the thesis will not contain full transcripts but only excerpts. Furthermore, it is normal that our spoken language is not flawless. Please don't be unsettled by errors in the transcript.
You will receive the findings when I have finished my research. This will probably be the case in mid 2023.

Thanks again and kind regards,
Maike Kugler

Consent form German/English:

UNIVERSITY OF GLOUCESTERSHIRE
at Cheltenham and Gloucester

Bestätigung & Einverständniserklärung

Ich bestätige, dass das mir zugesendete Transkript meine Aussagen exakt und wahrheitsgetreu wiedergibt. Zudem stimme ich zu, dass meine Gesprächsbeiträge im Rahmen der Dissertation von Maike Kugler sowie darauf aufbauenden Veröffentlichungen anonymisiert ausgewertet und veröffentlicht werden dürfen.

Name:_______________________________________

__________________________ __________________________
Ort, Datum Unterschrift

UNIVERSITY OF GLOUCESTERSHIRE
at Cheltenham and Gloucester

Confirmation & Declaration of Consent

I confirm that the transcript sent to me accurately and truthfully reflects what I have said. I also agree that my contributions to the conversation may be analysed and published as part of Maike Kugler's dissertation and publications based on.

Name:_______________________________________

__________________________ __________________________
Place, Date Signature

APPENDIX D: EMPIRICAL STUDY - ANALYSIS

D1: DEVELOPING TEMPLATE AND EXAMPLE CODING DURING INITIAL CODING

This appendix contains the template during the development of the template and the coded transcript from participant Mark at that stage. This appendix aims to provide insights into the development stages of the analysis.

Developing template:

1. Behaviours
   1.1 Behaviours shown by formal leaders
      1.1.1 Behaviours shown by middle managers
      1.1.2 Behaviours shown by C-level leaders
   1.2 Behaviours shown by formal employees
2. Motivation
   2.1 Attribution for oneself
   2.2 Attribution for others
3. Antecedents
   3.1 Role understanding
      3.1.1 Formal employee role
      3.1.2 Formal leader role
   3.2 Pre-requisites for follower behaviour
   3.3 Trigger events
4. Events
5. Voluntariness
6. Evaluation
7. Other themes
   7.1 Time aspect of being a follower
   7.2 Influence of part-time and full-time
   7.3 Company size
   7.4 Understanding of followership
   7.5 Repetition of follower behaviour/Steadiness
   7.6 Description of own job
   7.7 Subjectivity

Example Coding during initial coding phase: Participant Mark

1 I: Thank you again that it worked out today and that we can conduct the interview or rather the conversation. It is about the topic of voluntary behaviour in the work context. I sent you the declaration of consent in advance, you signed it too. Any questions? #00:00:17-0#

2 P: Everything was fine. #00:00:18-0#

3 I: Okay. It is important to me that there are no right and wrong answers. Well, I really want to know what you experience in your everyday work, and I don't necessarily want to know whether you think it's right or wrong, but there is no judgment, and I won't judge either. That's just important to me again. Right. #00:00:38-0#

4 P: Okay. #00:00:39-0#

5 I: Well, then let me be a part of your professional life. What do you do? #00:00:47-0#

..Description of own job

6 P: I'm a financial advisor in a branch in [location] at [organization], which is where I originally trained. There I look after customers, advise them on financial issues from checking accounts to online banking to complex stocks advice, where we simply, yes, take investment amounts from customers and work out a concept. Right, and I also have other functions in the [Organization]. For example, I can frequently be found on the social media channels, where I record videos on financial knowledge. #00:01:40-0#

7 I: Okay, interesting. And that is mainly aimed at private customers, i.e. both your work and the videos? #00:01:49-0#

8 P: Right. So, our segment or there, where I also advise currently, is in the private customer area. #00:01:57-0#

9 I: Okay. There is probably everything there, from people who have more money to, I would say, the average consumer. #00:02:06-0#

..Description of own job

10 P: When I started being a consultant after my apprenticeship in 2019, when you are more or less an entry-level consultant, that's what I call it now, mainly looking after younger customers, young professionals, students, for example, who still have little to no income. In the meantime, however, it is the case that almost all social classes that exist are looked after. So really up to the managing director, who earns several hundred thousand euros, but also exactly the opposite, as already mentioned, students are still involved. So it's very mixed, a very broad field, from which I've already had good experiences in all areas. #00:02:57-0#

11 I: OK. great thank you Then I would now share a PowerPoint slide with you and ask you to leave it open so that you can always look again at what the task was. Namely, I would ask you to share a work-related situation in which you demonstrated voluntary behaviours that supported either another person's goals or the goals of the organization. #00:03:29-0#

12 P: Okay, wait a minute. give me a moment #00:03:33-0#

13 I: Feel free to think about it again, no problem. #00:03:37-0#

..Trigger events

14 P: (...) Yes, well, I am a financial advisor. Ultimately, financial advisor also means I work in sales. Ultimately, sales also

..Trigger events

..Behaviour shown by for

means that I sell financial products. And such a goal of the organization, I'll just describe the organization as the bank, that they might have, for example they sometimes set priorities for us in consulting. For example, they say, it's autumn now, what often happens in autumn? There are often some, yes, like today, some smaller storms and something like that and then you focus on, for example, the insurance business at the banks. So, what was my voluntary behaviour? I hope that's what you're aiming for, or I got that right, for example, when the bank says, "Hey, let's see if you can somehow put an emphasis on insurance with your customers," then I start, for example, and select my customers using a program and see who is in my portfolio of customers, I look after about a thousand customers who I may not have had consulted on this topic yet . Invite them to this topic and then simply advise them on it. And that's not something I'm required in the sense that I don't have any specific goals in this regard, thank God, it's different with many other banks and insurance companies. I do it more or less simply because I think: "Okay, it could actually fit with this and that customer and I'll invite him over to it". #00:05:51-0#

..Voluntariness

15 I: Does that mean if you don't have any goals for it that there would be no consequences if you didn't do it? #00:05:59-0#

16 P: Yes, that is correct. There aren't any consequences in that we are/ yeah, it's probably because we're a public bank, as [organization]. Feel free to use the employer if it matters. I don't have a disadvantage as far as my salary is concerned, nor, let me put it like that, my boss comes at me angrily and then asks me what's going on if I don't do it like this. But it's still in my interest to supply the customers with the right area

3/11

..Voluntariness

somewhere, if it fits, with this particular financial product. But I really don't have a specific goal that I'm going to say, "Okay, I need, in two weeks, I don't know, five of these contracts." Of course, it would be great if I had one, but if nothing happened in this product area, there have never been any negative consequences, neither for me nor for others. #00:07:08-0#

17 I: Okay. And that's why you would rate it as voluntary? #00:07:12-0#

18 P: Yes. Exactly. #00:07:13-0#

19 I: Okay. Yes, interesting. Are there other situations where you'd say that you've shown voluntary behaviour for the definition here? #00:07:28-0#

..Attribution for oneself

..Antecedents

..Antecedents

20 P: Yes. For example, I am also active at the bank in the area of public relations. At the beginning of my career as a consultant, I mainly looked after young customers and students, as mentioned before, and what bothered me, back in school, is that the topic of financial education is actually pretty much forgotten there. I became aware of the job as a bank clerk myself back then, because a Volksbank in my [town] area was more or less a partner bank of our school. And I really liked it and they just came to us every now and then, taught some lessons and just explained a bit of the basics to us like, yes, it sounds so simple, but that I just spend less than I earn. Because you'd be surprised how many people can't do it and therefore simply can't build up wealth over time, which they just need later on. And that's why I said to myself, within the framework of the [organization], of course, marketing and ultimately our

..Antecedents

..Behaviour shown by for

..Outcomes

training department, they support me, but I then proactively approach schools in our area around [place] and yes, offer the teachers, the headmasters, to give one or two hour lectures there in front of the students and then give them a bit of financial education in different areas, depending on what interests them, yes, and then teach that in the end. And I actually do it completely voluntarily, I don't have to do it, but I enjoy it because I think the students get absolute added value from it. #00:09:31-0#

21 I: I was just about to ask for the goals of another person or organization. What goal does this support? #00:09:41-0#

..Outcomes

22 P: In fact, it also helps on the bank side, on the organizational side, as the bank also gains a higher level of awareness, which ultimately has the advantage of winning new customers, for example when the students have finished and then remember: “Ah, I once had such a cool lecture by [person] at our school. I don’t’ have a current account yet, maybe I'll just go to the [organization] and see how things are going and then open one with them". So that's the goal of the organization, simply increasing the level of awareness, and on the other hand it also helps, just as it helped me back then, that you ultimately get new employees within the bank, so that you get to draw attention, aha, this job still exists and it can be fun, and that person just showed me that. #00:10:44-0#

23 I: So also from your own experience, #00:10:56-9#

24 P: Yes. #00:10:57-9#

25 I: did that happen? #00:10:51-0#

5/11

26 P: Right. #00:10:52-0#

27 I: Yes, exciting. You also said earlier that you are also active on social media. Is that related or is that something else? #00:11:02-0#

..Voluntariness
..Antecedents
..Voluntariness
..Trigger events
..Antecedents
..Voluntariness

28 P: My entire range of activities is somehow connected. I'll put it this way, based on my job description, my original one, you really couldn't have known that everything is going in this direction for me now, that I'm focusing on these young customers. But that, yes, is so much fun for me, because I see in my circle of acquaintances and relatives, yes, I am [age range 20-29] and I know many who are leaving school, finishing their studies and unfortunately, as far as the financial aspect is concerned, have no idea what they should actually do now. That means building up assets, what kind of problems they are going to face. They don't even know, well what kind of insurance do I need anyway? Which ones do I not need? And sometimes live beyond their means. And that sometimes led to the fact that not only with my customers, but perhaps also with friends and acquaintances, they simply bit off more than they could chew. And that's why I've made it a bit of a task for myself, and my superiors are totally supportive, thank God, that I'm allowed to do it besides of normal consulting. And with social media, there was an internal call at the time, saying who can imagine doing that, a so-called finance-fluencer, so that's ultimately the person who then presents himself in the videos, to show in public and impart financial knowledge. And that fitted in pretty well, I've always enjoyed it anyway. I used to shoot private YouTube videos like this from time to time and that made it a good idea. I applied then and I didn't have to do

..Voluntariness
..Outcomes

that. So in the end it was also on a voluntary basis, but it offers me extreme versatility as far as my job is concerned. And in addition to advising, I also have other tasks now. And that's what I'm known for within the bank. (laughs) #00:13:25-0#

29 I: Okay. Yes, very interesting. Can you think of another situation? If at some point you say no, that's okay too. I do just ask again. #00:13:38-0#

30 P: Yes, I'm just thinking about it. So what did we have? We had school, we had social media, then with the counseling itself. No, right away I can't think of anything else or do you have a situation that might arise with me as a bank consultant, I now can't figure it out myself ? (laughs) #00:14:02-0#

31 I: In fact, it's about what you experience and if you tell me that, then it's important for you, so I don't want to influence it at all. But I want to give food for thought in another direction, #00:14:27-9#

32 P: Yes, // gladly. #00:14:28-4#

33 I: namely, // think again about it, other people in the company. What behaviours do you perceive there that you would describe as voluntary and that support the goals of another person or organization? Maybe even your own goals? #00:14:36-0#

..Trigger events

34 P: Yes, well, for example, if I now think about my manager, then yes, he has a fairly full schedule and I really notice that and also many meetings et cetera . And unfortunately, due to

..Trigger events
..Behaviour shown by for
..Antecedents
..Outcomes

high demand, but also on the customer side, he is not able to handle all his e-mails , etc. , meetings, and accordingly I support him in relieving him of tasks. I offer that to him, so to speak, simply to gain a bit of experience in this management track, I would say, because there are completely different tasks than the ones I do every day, like that. And ultimately, because I take care of his tasks, yes, we as an organization, as a branch, as a bank, we have absolute added value from it, we can pursue our goals because nothing remains open, because everything will be done. #00:15:55-0#

35 I: What kind of tasks can you take on for him? #00:15:59-0#

..Behaviour shown by for
..Outcomes

36 P: Well, for example, it's about meetings where I sometimes even take part in the managerial level of our bank and there, yes, simply pick up information and sometimes these meetings last one or two hours and then I make a kind of summary for him so that he stays up to date. There are always minutes afterwards, but we have to be honest, hardly anyone has the time to read them given the number of meetings that you have every day. And then it might be a bit more efficient if I summarize for him in two or three minutes what is really important for us as a unit, for him as a manager and for me as a consultant. Instead of looking for this log in the drive for twenty minutes, it can sometimes be a (laughing) hurdle and then read the whole thing afterwards. And then questions may still arise because not everything was formulated in the minutes as it was said in the meeting. And sometimes you also have to say that during the meeting you can tell if someone formulates a sentence, with emotions and of course you don't see them in the minutes either, right? So maybe you recognize priorities differently and can read them out better if you were actually

8/11

..Behaviour shown by for
..Outcomes

there, live in the meeting instead of just reading the minutes. #00:17:54-0#

37 I: And how did he react when you offered to take on tasks? #00:18:04-0#

38 P: Yes, well, first he did that/ yes, he first checked, okay, what kind of tasks can I assign to [person] now? But in the end he was happy that someone recognized that he has quite a lot on his mind at the moment and can't manage it in his working hours. And yes, I just noticed it because he comes very early and leaves very late, (laughs) I'd say, and it's not like I don't have anything to do, we already discussed it earlier that I also take on other, yes, additional functions in addition to advising, but still, I have a small leeway / or free window in the end from time to time. And then he was happy about it and then also appreciated that I approached him actively and asked if I could take something on. But on the other hand, it's also really good for me, because I can get a taste of what a manager actually does. #00:19:15-0#

..Evaluation
..Trigger events
..Evaluation
..Outcomes

39 I: Now you just said he appreciated it. How did you determine that he appreciated that? #00:19:23-0#

40 P: Yes, well, from his reaction, he just thanked me, and I also notice that since I mentioned that, we have had much more detailed discussions about what my professional future could look like and he has been supporting me in a much more targeted way since then. I've noticed that. And that, in my view, is a form of appreciation. So I notice that my manager wants me to make progress. And shows me that in the form of the meetings, gives me tips, shows me tricks and structures a plan with me, because he doesn't have to do

..Outcomes
..Behaviour shown by mic

9/11

..Outcomes
..Behaviour shown by middle n

that. #00:20:26-0#

41 I: So he also supports you in your professional development and does it voluntarily? Would that also be a behaviour that fits in here? #00:20:42-0#

..Outcomes
..Voluntariness

42 P: Yes (hesitant), it can fit in here. What I just don't know is, if I hadn't approached him, would we be having the same conversations we're having right now? From that point of view, I'm not exactly sure whether I would call it voluntary, because ultimately there was a trigger for it and that was that I originally approached him. Nevertheless, it could have been like that: I approach him, I take over his tasks and he still doesn't support me in return. From that point of view, it is somehow a voluntary initiative on his part, that he is having these talks with me. So from that point of view, I would just say yes to the whole thing and say yes, it is a voluntary behaviour on his part. #00:21:37-0#

43 I: Now think about it if he had said, "Yes, here you have some assignments, thank you very much" and had not shown you this appreciation. Would that have changed your attitude towards this voluntary behaviour of supporting him? #00:21:56-0#

..Repetition of follower beh

44 P: Maybe my passion for it would have decreased a bit (laughs) while working on the tasks. Well, I always try to do them very conscientiously, but I'll put it this way, that's something I do on top, that I don't have to do and then I'd definitely have to go to one or the other meeting, where I might have one myself If I have an appointment that I consider important, I might have postponed the meeting, yes, and then not worked on it for him or just worked less

10/11

..Repetition of follower beh‹

than at the current time. #00:22:33-0#

45 I: Well, then I'll ask again in conclusion whether you can think of another situation? If not, that's okay too. #00:22:45-0#

46 P: I can't think of any other situation right now. #00:22:48-0#

47 P: Okay. Well, then I would also like to explain to you what it was actually about. I asked for voluntary behaviour. The concept behind it is so-called followership in an organizational context. So, it 's about leadership and on the other side followership. And a follower is a role that you have within an organization and that relates to another person. And followership includes those voluntary behaviours that support the goals of either the organization or an individual, usually the leader. When you hear the definition like this, is there anything else that goes through your mind? #00:23:36-0#

48 P: Do you mean if I can think of anything else? #00:23:42-0#

49 I: Exactly, do you say, ah yes, I want to say something about that? #00:23:45-0#

50 P: No, actually I can't think of anything more. #00:23:54-0#

51 I: Okay. Good. Then thank you very much. #00:23:59-0#

D2: TEMPLATE AND CODED TRANSCRIPT: INITIAL TEMPLATE

1. Behaviour (descriptive)
  1.1 Differentiation of follower behaviours
    1.1.1 Relation to formal job (task)
      1.1.1.1 Directly related to job
      1.1.1.2 Partly related to job
      1.1.1.3 Taking on additional tasks and roles
    1.1.2 Verbal communication vs. action
    1.1.3 Time aspects of follower behaviour (I)
      1.1.3.1 During or outside working hours
      1.1.3.2 Singular vs. repeated vs. enduring behaviour
  1.2 The informality of follower behaviour (I)
    1.2.1 The employee as follower
    1.2.2 The manager as follower
  1.3 Focus of follower behaviour
    1.3.1 Individuals
      1.3.1.1 The formal manager
      1.3.1.2 Colleagues
    1.3.2 Groups
      1.3.2.1 Team
      1.3.2.2 Customers
    1.3.3 Institution
      1.3.3.1 Organization
      1.3.3.2 Goal
      1.3.3.3 Purpose
  1.4 Voluntariness (I)
    1.4.1 Criteria for voluntariness
      1.4.1.1 Without instruction
      1.4.1.2 Intrinsic motivation
      1.4.1.3 Expectations
        1.4.1.3.1 Job description
        1.4.1.3.2 Role expectations
        1.4.1.3.3 Volatility of expectations
        1.4.1.3.4 Positive intention
        1.4.1.3.5 Risk involved
    1.4.2 Level of voluntariness
  1.5 Evaluation of follower behaviour
    1.5.1 Criteria for evaluation of follower behaviour
      1.5.1.1 Attributed motivation
        1.5.1.1.1 Self-attributed
        1.5.1.1.2 Other-attributed
          1.5.1.1.2.1 Social projection
      1.5.1.2 Benefits (evaluation of outcomes)
      1.5.1.3 Outcomes when not displaying follower behaviour
2. Potential for follower behaviour in a specific context
  2.1 Cultural context
  2.2 Organizational context
    2.2.1 Organizational characteristics
      2.2.1.1 Organizational structure
      2.2.1.2 Company size
      2.2.1.3 Team structure
      2.2.1.4 Form of service provided
    2.2.2 Organizational culture
      2.2.2.1 Understanding of leadership and management
      2.2.2.2 Definition of voluntariness
  2.3 The individuals involved in the process
    2.3.1 The person/organization in the focus of follower behaviour
    2.3.2 The follower
      2.3.2.1 Personality
      2.3.2.2 Attitudes
      2.3.2.3 Self-concept and own standards
      2.3.2.4 Competencies & knowledge
      2.3.2.5 Past experiences
  2.4 Relational context
    2.4.1 Relationship between individuals
      2.4.1.1 Affection
      2.4.1.2 Reciprocity
      2.4.1.3 Trust
    2.4.2 Relationship in the team
    2.4.3 Perceived support
    2.4.4 Identification
3. Opportunity
  3.1 Situation
  3.2 Verbal communication
  3.3 Perception
4. Decision
  4.1 Motivation
    4.1.1 Focus of motivation
      4.1.1.1 Achievement
      4.1.1.2 Power
    4.1.2 Extrinsic vs. intrinsic
    4.1.3 Self-oriented vs. Other-oriented motivation
  4.2 Risk
    4.2.1 Form of risks in showing the behaviour
    4.2.2 Risk reduction
      4.3.2.1 Interpersonal consultation
      4.3.2.2 Organizational culture
      4.3.2.3 Trust
5. Effect
  5.1 Effects for the receiver of follower behaviour
    5.1.1 Effects for a formal leader
      5.1.1.1 Feelings
      5.1.1.2 Convenience
      5.1.1.3 Reducing future efforts
      5.1.1.4 Relief of tasks
      5.1.1.5 Success
    5.1.2 Effects for the Organization
      5.1.2.1 Economic level
        5.1.2.1.1 Conclude agreements
        5.1.2.1.2 Generate revenue
      5.1.2.2 Customer level
        5.1.2.2.1 Customer awareness
        5.1.2.2.2 Customer satisfaction
        5.1.2.2.3 Customer retention
      5.1.2.3 Employee level
        5.1.2.3.1 Goal focus
        5.1.2.3.2 Candidate awareness
        5.1.2.3.3 Retention
  5.2 Effects for the follower
    5.2.1 Job variability
    5.2.2 Positive work environment
    5.2.3 Monetary rewards
    5.2.4 Career advancement
    5.2.5 Feelings
  5.3 Relational effects
    5.3.1 Communication (verbal and non-verbal)
  5.4 Change in potential (I)
    5.4.1 Change in expectations
    5.4.2 Change in relationship
6. Behaviour storyline

Example Coding with initial template: Participant Mark

1 I: Thank you again that it worked out today and that we can conduct the interview or rather the conversation. It is about the topic of voluntary behaviour in the work context. I sent you the declaration of consent in advance, you signed it too. Any questions? #00:00:17-0#

2 P: Everything was fine. #00:00:18-0#

3 I: Okay. It is important to me that there are no right and wrong answers. Well, I really want to know what you experience in your everyday work, and I don't necessarily want to know whether you think it's right or wrong, but there is no judgment, and I won't judge either. That's just important to me again. Right. #00:00:38-0#

4 P: Okay. #00:00:39-0#

5 I: Well, then let me be a part of your professional life. What do you do? #00:00:47-0#

6 P: I'm a financial advisor in a branch in [location] at [organization], which is where I originally trained. There I look after customers, advise them on financial issues from checking accounts to online banking to complex stocks advice, where we simply, yes, take investment amounts from customers and work out a concept. Right, and I also have other functions in the [Organization]. For example, I can frequently be found on the social media channels, where I record videos on financial knowledge. #00:01:40-0#

7 I: Okay, interesting. And that is mainly aimed at private customers, i.e. both your work and the videos? #00:01:49-0#

8 P: Right. So, our segment or there, where I also advise currently, is in the private customer area. #00:01:57-0#

9 I: Okay. There is probably everything there, from people who have more money to, I would say, the average consumer. #00:02:06-0#

10 P: When I started being a consultant after my apprenticeship in 2019, when you are more or less an entry-level consultant, that's what I call it now, mainly looking after younger customers, young professionals, students, for example, who still have little to no income. In the meantime, however, it is the case that almost all social classes that exist are looked after. So really up to the managing director, who earns several hundred thousand euros, but also exactly the opposite, as already mentioned, students are still involved. So it's very mixed, a very broad field, from which I've already had good experiences in all areas. #00:02:57-0#

11 I: OK. great thank you Then I would now share a PowerPoint slide with you and ask you to leave it open so that you can always look again at what the task was. Namely, I would ask you to share a work-related situation in which you demonstrated voluntary behaviours that supported either another person's goals or the goals of the organization. #00:03:29-0#

12 P: Okay, wait a minute. give me a moment #00:03:33-0#

13 I: Feel free to think about it again, no problem. #00:03:37-0#

..Behaviour-Storyline

14 P: (...) Yes, well, I am a financial advisor. Ultimately, financial advisor also means I work in sales. Ultimately, sales also

..Verbal communicatio
..Verbal communicatio
..Risk
..Behaviour-Storyline
..Customers
..Risk involved
..Relation to formal jot

means that I sell financial products. And such a goal of the organization, I'll just describe the organization as the bank, that they might have, for example they sometimes set priorities for us in consulting. For example, they say, it's autumn now, what often happens in autumn? There are often some, yes, like today, some smaller storms and something like that and then you focus on, for example, the insurance business at the banks. So, what was my voluntary behaviour? I hope that's what you're aiming for, or I got that right, for example, when the bank says, "Hey, let's see if you can somehow put an emphasis on insurance with your customers," then I start, for example, and select my customers using a program and see who is in my portfolio of customers, I look after about a thousand customers who I may not have had consulted on this topic yet . Invite them to this topic and then simply advise them on it. And that's not something I'm required in the sense that I don't have any specific goals in this regard, thank God, it's different with many other banks and insurance companies. I do it more or less simply because I think: "Okay, it could actually fit with this and that customer and I'll invite him over to it". #00:05:51-0#

15 I: Does that mean if you don't have any goals for it that there would be no consequences if you didn't do it? #00:05:59-0#

16 P: Yes, that is correct. There aren't any consequences in that we are/ yeah, it's probably because we're a public bank, as [organization]. Feel free to use the employer if it matters. I don't have a disadvantage as far as my salary is concerned, nor, let me put it like that, my boss comes at me angrily and then asks me what's going on if I don't do it like this. But it's still in my interest to supply the customers with the right area

3/11

..Relation to formal

..Risk involved

..Behaviour-Storylir

..Role expectations

somewhere, if it fits, with this particular financial product. But I really don't have a specific goal that I'm going to say, "Okay, I need, in two weeks, I don't know, five of these contracts." Of course, it would be great if I had one, but if nothing happened in this product area, there have never been any negative consequences, neither for me nor for others. #00:07:08-0#

17 I: Okay. And that's why you would rate it as voluntary? #00:07:12-0#

18 P: Yes. Exactly. #00:07:13-0#

19 I: Okay. Yes, interesting. Are there other situations where you'd say that you've shown voluntary behaviour for the definition here? #00:07:28-0#

..Behaviour-Storyline

..Past experiences

..Perceived support

20 P: Yes. For example, I am also active at the bank in the area of public relations. At the beginning of my career as a consultant, I mainly looked after young customers and students, as mentioned before, and what bothered me, back in school, is that the topic of financial education is actually pretty much forgotten there. I became aware of the job as a bank clerk myself back then, because a Volksbank in my [town] area was more or less a partner bank of our school. And I really liked it and they just came to us every now and then, taught some lessons and just explained a bit of the basics to us like, yes, it sounds so simple, but that I just spend less than I earn. Because you'd be surprised how many people can't do it and therefore simply can't build up wealth over time, which they just need later on. And that's why I said to myself, within the framework of the [organization], of course, marketing and ultimately our

4/11

..Perceived support

training department, they support me, but I then proactively approach schools in our area around [place] and yes, offer the teachers, the headmasters, to give one or two hour lectures there in front of the students and then give them a bit of financial education in different areas, depending on what interests them, yes, and then teach that in the end. And I actually do it completely voluntarily, I don't have to do it, but I enjoy it because I think the students get absolute added value from it. #00:09:31-0#

..Extrinsic vs. intrin:

..Purpose

..Joy

21 I: I was just about to ask for the goals of another person or organization. What goal does this support? #00:09:41-0#

22 P: In fact, it also helps on the bank side, on the organizational side, as the bank also gains a higher level of awareness, which ultimately has the advantage of winning new customers, for example when the students have finished and then remember: “Ah, I once had such a cool lecture by [person] at our school. I don’t’ have a current account yet, maybe I'll just go to the [organization] and see how things are going and then open one with them". So that's the goal of the organization, simply increasing the level of awareness, and on the other hand it also helps, just as it helped me back then, that you ultimately get new employees within the bank, so that you get to draw attention, aha, this job still exists and it can be fun, and that person just showed me that. #00:10:44-0#

..Behaviour-Storylir

..Customer awarene

..Candidate awarene

23 I: So also from your own experience, #00:10:56-9#

24 P: Yes. #00:10:57-9#

25 I: did that happen? #00:10:51-0#

5/11

..Behaviour-Storyline

26 P: Right. #00:10:52-0#

27 I: Yes, exciting. You also said earlier that you are also active on social media. Is that related or is that something else? #00:11:02-0#

..Job description
..Purpose
..Past experiences
..Behaviour-Storylir
..Perceived support
..Verbal communica
..Joy
..Competencies & K
..Job variability

28 P: My entire range of activities is somehow connected. I'll put it this way, based on my job description, my original one, you really couldn't have known that everything is going in this direction for me now, that I'm focusing on these young customers. But that, yes, is so much fun for me, because I see in my circle of acquaintances and relatives, yes, I am [age range 20-29] and I know many who are leaving school, finishing their studies and unfortunately, as far as the financial aspect is concerned, have no idea what they should actually do now. That means building up assets, what kind of problems they are going to face. They don't even know, well what kind of insurance do I need anyway? Which ones do I not need? And sometimes live beyond their means. And that sometimes led to the fact that not only with my customers, but perhaps also with friends and acquaintances, they simply bit off more than they could chew. And that's why I've made it a bit of a task for myself, and my superiors are totally supportive, thank God, that I'm allowed to do it besides of normal consulting. And with social media, there was an internal call at the time, saying who can imagine doing that, a so-called finance-fluencer, so that’s ultimately the person who then presents himself in the videos, to show in public and impart financial knowledge. And that fitted in pretty well, I've always enjoyed it anyway. I used to shoot private YouTube videos like this from time to time and that made it a good idea. I applied then and I didn't have to do

6/11

..Job variability
..Behaviour-Storyline

that. So in the end it was also on a voluntary basis, but it offers me extreme versatility as far as my job is concerned. And in addition to advising, I also have other tasks now. And that's what I'm known for within the bank. (laughs) #00:13:25-0#

29 I: Okay. Yes, very interesting. Can you think of another situation? If at some point you say no, that's okay too. I do just ask again. #00:13:38-0#

30 P: Yes, I'm just thinking about it. So what did we have? We had school, we had social media, then with the counseling itself. No, right away I can’t think of anything else or do you have a situation that might arise with me as a bank consultant, I now can't figure it out myself ? (laughs) #00:14:02-0#

31 I: In fact, it's about what you experience and if you tell me that, then it's important for you, so I don't want to influence it at all. But I want to give food for thought in another direction, #00:14:27-9#

32 P: Yes, // gladly. #00:14:28-4#

33 I: namely, // think again about it, other people in the company. What behaviours do you perceive there that you would describe as voluntary and that support the goals of another person or organization? Maybe even your own goals? #00:14:36-0#

..Perception
..The formal manager
..Behaviour-Storyline

34 P: Yes, well, for example, if I now think about my manager, then yes, he has a fairly full schedule and I really notice that and also many meetings et cetera . And unfortunately, due to

..Perception
..The formal manager
..Career advancement
..Goal focus
..Behaviour-Storyline
..Convenience
..Convenience

high demand, but also on the customer side, he is not able to handle all his e-mails , etc. , meetings, and accordingly I support him in relieving him of tasks. I offer that to him, so to speak, simply to gain a bit of experience in this management track, I would say, because there are completely different tasks than the ones I do every day, like that. And ultimately, because I take care of his tasks, yes, we as an organization, as a branch, as a bank, we have absolute added value from it, we can pursue our goals because nothing remains open, because everything will be done. #00:15:55-0#

35 I: What kind of tasks can you take on for him? #00:15:59-0#

36 P: Well, for example, it's about meetings where I sometimes even take part in the managerial level of our bank and there, yes, simply pick up information and sometimes these meetings last one or two hours and then I make a kind of summary for him so that he stays up to date. There are always minutes afterwards, but we have to be honest, hardly anyone has the time to read them given the number of meetings that you have every day. And then it might be a bit more efficient if I summarize for him in two or three minutes what is really important for us as a unit, for him as a manager and for me as a consultant. Instead of looking for this log in the drive for twenty minutes, it can sometimes be a (laughing) hurdle and then read the whole thing afterwards. And then questions may still arise because not everything was formulated in the minutes as it was said in the meeting. And sometimes you also have to say that during the meeting you can tell if someone formulates a sentence, with emotions and of course you don't see them in the minutes either, right? So maybe you recognize priorities differently and can read them out better if you were actually

8/11

..Convenience

there, live in the meeting instead of just reading the minutes. #00:17:54-0#

37 I: And how did he react when you offered to take on tasks? #00:18:04-0#

38 P: Yes, well, first he did that/ yes, he first checked, okay, what kind of tasks can I assign to [person] now? But in the end he was happy that someone recognized that he has quite a lot on his mind at the moment and can't manage it in his working hours. And yes, I just noticed it because he comes very early and leaves very late, (laughs) I'd say, and it's not like I don't have anything to do, we already discussed it earlier that I also take on other, yes, additional functions in addition to advising, but still, I have a small leeway / or free window in the end from time to time. And then he was happy about it and then also appreciated that I approached him actively and asked if I could take something on. But on the other hand, it's also really good for me, because I can get a taste of what a manager actually does. #00:19:15-0#

..Feelings

..Perception

..Attitudes

..Communication (Verb

..Behaviour-Storyline

..Career advancement

39 I: Now you just said he appreciated it. How did you determine that he appreciated that? #00:19:23-0#

..Communication (Verb

..Relational Effects

40 P: Yes, well, from his reaction, he just thanked me, and I also notice that since I mentioned that, we have had much more detailed discussions about what my professional future could look like and he has been supporting me in a much more targeted way since then. I've noticed that. And that, in my view, is a form of appreciation. So I notice that my manager wants me to make progress. And shows me that in the form of the meetings, gives me tips, shows me tricks and structures a plan with me, because he doesn't have to do

..Relational Effects

that. #00:20:26-0#

41 I: So he also supports you in your professional development and does it voluntarily? Would that also be a behaviour that fits in here? #00:20:42-0#

42 P: Yes (hesitant), it can fit in here. What I just don't know is, if I hadn't approached him, would we be having the same conversations we're having right now? From that point of view, I'm not exactly sure whether I would call it voluntary, because ultimately there was a trigger for it and that was that I originally approached him. Nevertheless, it could have been like that: I approach him, I take over his tasks and he still doesn't support me in return. From that point of view, it is somehow a voluntary initiative on his part, that he is having these talks with me. So from that point of view, I would just say yes to the whole thing and say yes, it is a voluntary behaviour on his part. #00:21:37-0#

..Relational Effects

..Behaviour-Storyline

43 I: Now think about it if he had said, "Yes, here you have some assignments, thank you very much" and had not shown you this appreciation. Would that have changed your attitude towards this voluntary behaviour of supporting him? #00:21:56-0#

44 P: Maybe my passion for it would have decreased a bit (laughs) while working on the tasks. Well, I always try to do them very conscientiously, but I'll put it this way, that's something I do on top, that I don't have to do and then I'd definitely have to go to one or the other meeting, where I might have one myself If I have an appointment that I consider important, I might have postponed the meeting, yes, and then not worked on it for him or just worked less

..Change in relationshi

..Change in expectatio

10/11

..Behaviour-Storyline
..Change in relationship
..Change in expectations

than at the current time. #00:22:33-0#

45 I: Well, then I'll ask again in conclusion whether you can think of another situation? If not, that's okay too. #00:22:45-0#

46 P: I can't think of any other situation right now. #00:22:48-0#

47 P: Okay. Well, then I would also like to explain to you what it was actually about. I asked for voluntary behaviour. The concept behind it is so-called followership in an organizational context. So, it 's about leadership and on the other side followership. And a follower is a role that you have within an organization and that relates to another person. And followership includes those voluntary behaviours that support the goals of either the organization or an individual, usually the leader. When you hear the definition like this, is there anything else that goes through your mind? #00:23:36-0#

48 P: Do you mean if I can think of anything else? #00:23:42-0#

49 I: Exactly, do you say, ah yes, I want to say something about that? #00:23:45-0#

50 P: No, actually I can't think of anything more. #00:23:54-0#

51 I: Okay. Good. Then thank you very much. #00:23:59-0#

D3: EXAMPLE CODING DURING FINAL CODING

This appendix contains the final template and the transcript coded with the final template for participant Mark.

1. Description of follower behaviour (M)

- 1.1 Staying with the organization
- 1.2 Task execution
  - 1.2.1 Task excellence
    - 1.2.1.1 Provision of excellent customer service
    - 1.2.1.2 Internal customers & subsequent process
  - 1.2.2 Improvement
    - 1.2.2.1 Gain knowledge
    - 1.2.2.2 Voice ideas
    - 1.2.2.3 Promote ideas
- 1.3 Support
  - 1.3.1 Explore support options
  - 1.3.2 Support task completion
    - 1.3.2.1 Share information
    - 1.3.2.2 Help with tasks
    - 1.3.2.3 Substitute
    - 1.3.2.4 Take on new tasks
  - 1.3.3 Protect
    - 1.3.3.1 Solve errors
    - 1.3.3.2 Speak up
  - 1.3.4 Individual advancement
- 1.4 Additional roles
  - 1.4.1 Informal leadership
  - 1.4.2 Provide training
    - 1.4.2.1 Apprentices
    - 1.4.2.2 Employees
  - 1.4.3 Represent
    - 1.4.3.1 Internal
    - 1.4.3.2 External
  - 1.4.4 Volunteer work
- 1.5 Social interaction
  - 1.5.1 Consideration
  - 1.5.2 Conflict solving
  - 1.5.3 Private exchange
- 1.6 Differentiation of follower behaviour (M)
  - 1.6.1 Relation to formal job (task)
  - 1.6.2 Verbal communication vs. action
  - 1.6.3 Time aspects of follower behaviour
    - 1.6.3.1 During or outside working hours
    - 1.6.3.2 Singular vs. repeated vs. enduring behaviour

2. Meaning (L)

- 2.1 The informality of follower behaviour
  - 2.1.1 The provider of follower behaviour
    - 2.1.1.1 The employee as follower
    - 2.1.1.2 The manager as follower
  - 2.1.2 The recipient of follower behaviour
    - 2.1.2.1 Individuals
      - 2.1.2.1.1 Formal manager
      - 2.1.2.1.2 Colleague
      - 2.1.2.1.3 Employee
    - 2.1.2.2 Groups
      - 2.1.2.2.1 Team
      - 2.1.2.2.2 Customers
      - 2.1.2.2.3 Employees
    - 2.1.2.3 Organization
    - 2.1.2.4 Immaterial concepts
      - 2.1.2.4.1 Goal
      - 2.1.2.4.2 Purpose
- 2.2 Interpretation of voluntariness (L)
  - 2.2.1 Criteria for voluntariness
    - 2.2.1.1 Without instruction
      - 2.2.1.1.1 Perceived freedom
      - 2.2.1.1.2 Intrinsic motivation
    - 2.2.1.2 Positive intention
    - 2.2.1.3 Individual effort
      - 2.2.1.3.1 High task involvement
      - 2.2.1.3.2 Time-bound efforts
      - 2.2.1.3.3 Beyond expectations
    - 2.2.1.4 Risk taking
      - 2.2.1.4.1 Level of risk
      - 2.2.1.4.2 Form of risk
      - 2.2.1.4.3 Risk handling
  - 2.2.2 Level of voluntariness
- 2.3. Expectations (L, I)
  - 2.3.1 Organizational expectations
    - 2.3.1.1 Formal structure
    - 2.3.1.2 Representation by manager
  - 2.3.2 Relational expectations
    - 2.3.2.1 Reciprocity
    - 2.3.2.2 Organizational culture
  - 2.3.3 Individual expectations
    - 2.3.3.1 Self-image
    - 2.3.3.2 Ideal self
  - 2.3.4 Volatility of expectations

2.4. Contexts (L)	**3. Function (L)**	**4. The follower behaviour process (M)**
2.4.1 Organizational context		
2.4.1.1 Org. characteristics	3.1 Pertinence of organizational success	4.1 Potentiality
2.4.1.2 Representative	3.1.1 Economic level	4.1.1 Organizational context
2.4.1.3 Industry	3.1.1.1 Generate revenue	4.1.2 Individual context
2.4.1.4 Structure	3.1.1.2 Economic decision making	4.1.3 Relational context
2.4.1.5 Strategy	3.1.1.3 Efficiency	
2.4.1.6 Role understanding	3.1.2 Customer level	4.2 Opportunity
2.4.2 Relational context	3.1.2.1 Customer awareness	4.2.1 Event
2.4.2.1 Affection	3.1.2.2 Customer acquisition	4.2.2 Perception
2.4.2.2 Trust	3.1.2.3 Customer experience	4.2.3 Knowledge
2.4.2.3 Shared values	3.1.2.4 Customer satisfaction	4.2.4 Verbal communication
2.4.2.4 Reciprocity	3.1.2.5 Customer retention	
2.4.2.5 Intensity of social exchange	3.1.3 Employee level	4.3 Follower behaviour
2.4.2.6 Identification	3.1.3.1 Candidate awareness	4.3.1 Exhibiting
2.4.3 Individual context	3.1.3.2 Retention	4.3.2 Withholding
2.4.3.1 Personality		
2.4.3.2 Attitudes	3.2 Source of effects for individuals involves	4.3 Evaluation and Response
2.4.3.3 Self-concept	3.2.1 Behaviour provider	4.3.1 Awareness
2.4.3.4 Competencies & knowledge	3.1.2.1 Feelings	4.3.2 Evaluation (I)
2.4.3.5 Working style	3.1.2.2 Job versatility	4.3.2.1 Attributed motivation
2.4.3.5.1 Independence	3.1.2.3 Positive work environment	4.3.2.2 Benefits
2.4.3.5.2 Use skills & knowledge	3.1.2.4 Career advancement	4.3.2.3 Effort
2.4.3.5.3 Prioritising	3.1.2.5 Self-affirmation	4.3.2.4 Alternative
2.4.3.5.4 Creativity	3.1.2.6 Self-presentation	4.3.3 Reaction
2.4.3.5.5 Prioritising	3.2.2 Behaviour receiver	
2.4.3.5.6 Flexibility	3.2.2.1 Feelings	4.4 Effects
2.4.3.6 Values and purpose	3.2.2.2 Reduction of efforts	4.4.1 Organizational effects
	3.2.2.3 Information gain	4.4.2 Individual effects
	3.2.2.4 Growing opportunity	4.4.3 Relational effects
	3.3. Retaining or enhancing reciprocity	4.5. Change in potential
		4.5.1 Change in organizational potential
		4.5.2 Change in individual potential
		4.5.3 Change in relational potential

Example Coding with final template: Participant Mark

1 I: Thank you again that it worked out today and that we can conduct the interview or rather the conversation. It is about the topic of voluntary behaviour in the work context. I sent you the declaration of consent in advance, you signed it too. Any questions? #00:00:17-0#

2 P: Everything was fine. #00:00:18-0#

3 I: Okay. It is important to me that there are no right and wrong answers. Well, I really want to know what you experience in your everyday work, and I don't necessarily want to know whether you think it's right or wrong, but there is no judgment, and I won't judge either. That's just important to me again. Right. #00:00:38-0#

4 P: Okay. #00:00:39-0#

5 I: Well, then let me be a part of your professional life. What do you do? #00:00:47-0#

6 P: I'm a financial advisor in a branch in [location] at [organization], which is where I originally trained. There I look after customers, advise them on financial issues from checking accounts to online banking to complex stocks advice, where we simply, yes, take investment amounts from customers and work out a concept. Right, and I also have other functions in the [Organization]. For example, I can frequently be found on the social media channels, where I record videos on financial knowledge. #00:01:40-0#

7 I: Okay, interesting. And that is mainly aimed at private customers, i.e. both your work and the videos? #00:01:49-0#

8 P: Right. So, our segment or there, where I also advise currently, is in the private customer area. #00:01:57-0#

9 I: Okay. There is probably everything there, from people who have more money to, I would say, the average consumer. #00:02:06-0#

10 P: When I started being a consultant after my apprenticeship in 2019, when you are more or less an entry-level consultant, that's what I call it now, mainly looking after younger customers, young professionals, students, for example, who still have little to no income. In the meantime, however, it is the case that almost all social classes that exist are looked after. So really up to the managing director, who earns several hundred thousand euros, but also exactly the opposite, as already mentioned, students are still involved. So it's very mixed, a very broad field, from which I've already had good experiences in all areas. #00:02:57-0#

11 I: OK. great thank you Then I would now share a PowerPoint slide with you and ask you to leave it open so that you can always look again at what the task was. Namely, I would ask you to share a work-related situation in which you demonstrated voluntary behaviours that supported either another person's goals or the goals of the organization. #00:03:29-0#

12 P: Okay, wait a minute. give me a moment #00:03:33-0#

13 I: Feel free to think about it again, no problem. #00:03:37-0#

..Behaviour-Storyline

14 P: (...) Yes, well, I am a financial advisor. Ultimately, financial advisor also means I work in sales. Ultimately, sales also

..Verbal communication
..Verbal communication
..Excellent customer s
..Risk
..Behaviour-Storyline
..Customers

means that I sell financial products. And such a goal of the organization, I'll just describe the organization as the bank, that they might have, for example they sometimes set priorities for us in consulting. For example, they say, it's autumn now, what often happens in autumn? There are often some, yes, like today, some smaller storms and something like that and then you focus on, for example, the insurance business at the banks. So, what was my voluntary behaviour? I hope that's what you're aiming for, or I got that right, for example, when the bank says, "Hey, let's see if you can somehow put an emphasis on insurance with your customers," then I start, for example, and select my customers using a program and see who is in my portfolio of customers, I look after about a thousand customers who I may not have had consulted on this topic yet . Invite them to this topic and then simply advise them on it. And that's not something I'm required in the sense that I don't have any specific goals in this regard, thank God, it's different with many other banks and insurance companies. I do it more or less simply because I think: "Okay, it could actually fit with this and that customer and I'll invite him over to it". #00:05:51-0#

15 I: Does that mean if you don't have any goals for it that there would be no consequences if you didn't do it? #00:05:59-0#

..Level of risk
..Relation to formal job

16 P: Yes, that is correct. There aren’t any consequences in that we are/ yeah, it's probably because we're a public bank, as [organization]. Feel free to use the employer if it matters. I don't have a disadvantage as far as my salary is concerned, nor, let me put it like that, my boss comes at me angrily and then asks me what's going on if I don't do it like this. But it's still in my interest to supply the customers with the right area

..Relation to formal
..Level of risk
..Behaviour-Storylir
..Without instructioı

somewhere, if it fits, with this particular financial product. But I really don't have a specific goal that I'm going to say, "Okay, I need, in two weeks, I don't know, five of these contracts." Of course, it would be great if I had one, but if nothing happened in this product area, there have never been any negative consequences, neither for me nor for others. #00:07:08-0#

17 I: Okay. And that's why you would rate it as voluntary? #00:07:12-0#

18 P: Yes. Exactly. #00:07:13-0#

19 I: Okay. Yes, interesting. Are there other situations where you'd say that you've shown voluntary behaviour for the definition here? #00:07:28-0#

..Represent: externa
..Behaviour-Storylir
..Competencies & K
..Value & purpose
..Shared values
..Risk handling

20 P: Yes. For example, I am also active at the bank in the area of public relations. At the beginning of my career as a consultant, I mainly looked after young customers and students, as mentioned before, and what bothered me, back in school, is that the topic of financial education is actually pretty much forgotten there. I became aware of the job as a bank clerk myself back then, because a Volksbank in my [town] area was more or less a partner bank of our school. And I really liked it and they just came to us every now and then, taught some lessons and just explained a bit of the basics to us like, yes, it sounds so simple, but that I just spend less than I earn. Because you'd be surprised how many people can't do it and therefore simply can't build up wealth over time, which they just need later on. And that's why I said to myself, within the framework of the [organization], of course, marketing and ultimately our

4/11

..Shared values
..Risk handling

training department, they support me, but I then proactively approach schools in our area around [place] and yes, offer the teachers, the headmasters, to give one or two hour lectures there in front of the students and then give them a bit of financial education in different areas, depending on what interests them, yes, and then teach that in the end. And I actually do it completely voluntarily, I don't have to do it, but I enjoy it because I think the students get absolute added value from it. #00:09:31-0#

..Value & purpose
..Feelings

21 I: I was just about to ask for the goals of another person or organization. What goal does this support? #00:09:41-0#

22 P: In fact, it also helps on the bank side, on the organizational side, as the bank also gains a higher level of awareness, which ultimately has the advantage of winning new customers, for example when the students have finished and then remember: “Ah, I once had such a cool lecture by [person] at our school. I don’t’ have a current account yet, maybe I'll just go to the [organization] and see how things are going and then open one with them". So that's the goal of the organization, simply increasing the level of awareness, and on the other hand it also helps, just as it helped me back then, that you ultimately get new employees within the bank, so that you get to draw attention, aha, this job still exists and it can be fun, and that person just showed me that. #00:10:44-0#

..Behaviour-Storyline
..Customer awareness
..Candidate awareness

23 I: So also from your own experience, #00:10:56-9#

24 P: Yes. #00:10:57-9#

25 I: did that happen? #00:10:51-0#

..Behaviour-Storyline

26 P: Right. #00:10:52-0#

27 I: Yes, exciting. You also said earlier that you are also active on social media. Is that related or is that something else? #00:11:02-0#

..Organisational stru
..Working style: use
..Value & purpose
..Behaviour-Storylir
..Self-concept
..Shared values
..Verbal communica
..Attitudes
..Competencies & K
..Job variability

28 P: My entire range of activities is somehow connected. I'll put it this way, based on my job description, my original one, you really couldn't have known that everything is going in this direction for me now, that I'm focusing on these young customers. But that, yes, is so much fun for me, because I see in my circle of acquaintances and relatives, yes, I am [age range 20-29] and I know many who are leaving school, finishing their studies and unfortunately, as far as the financial aspect is concerned, have no idea what they should actually do now. That means building up assets, what kind of problems they are going to face. They don't even know, well what kind of insurance do I need anyway? Which ones do I not need? And sometimes live beyond their means. And that sometimes led to the fact that not only with my customers, but perhaps also with friends and acquaintances, they simply bit off more than they could chew. And that's why I've made it a bit of a task for myself, and my superiors are totally supportive, thank God, that I'm allowed to do it besides of normal consulting. And with social media, there was an internal call at the time, saying who can imagine doing that, a so-called finance-fluencer, so that’s ultimately the person who then presents himself in the videos, to show in public and impart financial knowledge. And that fitted in pretty well, I've always enjoyed it anyway. I used to shoot private YouTube videos like this from time to time and that made it a good idea. I applied then and I didn't have to do

..Job variability
..Behaviour-Storylir
..Self-affirmation
..Impression manag

that. So in the end it was also on a voluntary basis, but it offers me extreme versatility as far as my job is concerned. And in addition to advising, I also have other tasks now. And that's what I'm known for within the bank. (laughs) #00:13:25-0#

29 I: Okay. Yes, very interesting. Can you think of another situation? If at some point you say no, that's okay too. I do just ask again. #00:13:38-0#

30 P: Yes, I'm just thinking about it. So what did we have? We had school, we had social media, then with the counseling itself. No, right away I can’t think of anything else or do you have a situation that might arise with me as a bank consultant, I now can't figure it out myself ? (laughs) #00:14:02-0#

31 I: In fact, it's about what you experience and if you tell me that, then it's important for you, so I don't want to influence it at all. But I want to give food for thought in another direction, #00:14:27-9#

32 P: Yes, // gladly. #00:14:28-4#

33 I: namely, // think again about it, other people in the company. What behaviours do you perceive there that you would describe as voluntary and that support the goals of another person or organization? Maybe even your own goals? #00:14:36-0#

..The formal manager
..Perception
..Behaviour-Storyline

34 P: Yes, well, for example, if I now think about my manager, then yes, he has a fairly full schedule and I really notice that and also many meetings et cetera . And unfortunately, due to

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..Perception
..Support: Explore sup
..Career advancement
..Efficiency

high demand, but also on the customer side, he is not able to handle all his e-mails , etc. , meetings, and accordingly I support him in relieving him of tasks. I offer that to him, so to speak, simply to gain a bit of experience in this management track, I would say, because there are completely different tasks than the ones I do every day, like that. And ultimately, because I take care of his tasks, yes, we as an organization, as a branch, as a bank, we have absolute added value from it, we can pursue our goals because nothing remains open, because everything will be done. #00:15:55-0#

35 I: What kind of tasks can you take on for him? #00:15:59-0#

..Support: Take on add
..Behaviour-Storyline
..Reduction of efforts

36 P: Well, for example, it's about meetings where I sometimes even take part in the managerial level of our bank and there, yes, simply pick up information and sometimes these meetings last one or two hours and then I make a kind of summary for him so that he stays up to date. There are always minutes afterwards, but we have to be honest, hardly anyone has the time to read them given the number of meetings that you have every day. And then it might be a bit more efficient if I summarize for him in two or three minutes what is really important for us as a unit, for him as a manager and for me as a consultant. Instead of looking for this log in the drive for twenty minutes, it can sometimes be a (laughing) hurdle and then read the whole thing afterwards. And then questions may still arise because not everything was formulated in the minutes as it was said in the meeting. And sometimes you also have to say that during the meeting you can tell if someone formulates a sentence, with emotions and of course you don't see them in the minutes either, right? So maybe you recognize priorities differently and can read them out better if you were actually

..Reduction of efforts
..Efficiency

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..Reduction of efforts
..Efficiency

there, live in the meeting instead of just reading the minutes. #00:17:54-0#

37 I: And how did he react when you offered to take on tasks? #00:18:04-0#

38 P: Yes, well, first he did that/ yes, he first checked, okay, what kind of tasks can I assign to [person] now? But in the end he was happy that someone recognized that he has quite a lot on his mind at the moment and can't manage it in his working hours. And yes, I just noticed it because he comes very early and leaves very late, (laughs) I'd say, and it's not like I don't have anything to do, we already discussed it earlier that I also take on other, yes, additional functions in addition to advising, but still, I have a small leeway / or free window in the end from time to time. And then he was happy about it and then also appreciated that I approached him actively and asked if I could take something on. But on the other hand, it's also really good for me, because I can get a taste of what a manager actually does. #00:19:15-0#

..Feelings
..Perception
..Attitudes
..Reaction
..Behaviour-Storyline
..Career advancement

39 I: Now you just said he appreciated it. How did you determine that he appreciated that? #00:19:23-0#

40 P: Yes, well, from his reaction, he just thanked me, and I also notice that since I mentioned that, we have had much more detailed discussions about what my professional future could look like and he has been supporting me in a much more targeted way since then. I've noticed that. And that, in my view, is a form of appreciation. So I notice that my manager wants me to make progress. And shows me that in the form of the meetings, gives me tips, shows me tricks and structures a plan with me, because he doesn't have to do

..Reaction
..Relational Effects
..Support: Individual a

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..Relational Effects
..Support: Individual advanc

that. #00:20:26-0#

41 I: So he also supports you in your professional development and does it voluntarily? Would that also be a behaviour that fits in here? #00:20:42-0#

..Without instruction
..Relational Effects
..Behaviour-Storyline

42 P: Yes (hesitant), it can fit in here. What I just don't know is, if I hadn't approached him, would we be having the same conversations we're having right now? From that point of view, I'm not exactly sure whether I would call it voluntary, because ultimately there was a trigger for it and that was that I originally approached him. Nevertheless, it could have been like that: I approach him, I take over his tasks and he still doesn't support me in return. From that point of view, it is somehow a voluntary initiative on his part, that he is having these talks with me. So from that point of view, I would just say yes to the whole thing and say yes, it is a voluntary behaviour on his part. #00:21:37-0#

43 I: Now think about it if he had said, "Yes, here you have some assignments, thank you very much" and had not shown you this appreciation. Would that have changed your attitude towards this voluntary behaviour of supporting him? #00:21:56-0#

..Change in individual
Change in relational pc

44 P: Maybe my passion for it would have decreased a bit (laughs) while working on the tasks. Well, I always try to do them very conscientiously, but I'll put it this way, that's something I do on top, that I don't have to do and then I'd definitely have to go to one or the other meeting, where I might have one myself If I have an appointment that I consider important, I might have postponed the meeting, yes, and then not worked on it for him or just worked less

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..Behaviour-Storyline
..Change in individual potentia
..Change in relational potential

than at the current time. #00:22:33-0#

45 I: Well, then I'll ask again in conclusion whether you can think of another situation? If not, that's okay too. #00:22:45-0#

46 P: I can't think of any other situation right now. #00:22:48-0#

47 P: Okay. Well, then I would also like to explain to you what it was actually about. I asked for voluntary behaviour. The concept behind it is so-called followership in an organizational context. So, it 's about leadership and on the other side followership. And a follower is a role that you have within an organization and that relates to another person. And followership includes those voluntary behaviours that support the goals of either the organization or an individual, usually the leader. When you hear the definition like this, is there anything else that goes through your mind? #00:23:36-0#

48 P: Do you mean if I can think of anything else? #00:23:42-0#

49 I: Exactly, do you say, ah yes, I want to say something about that? #00:23:45-0#

50 P: No, actually I can't think of anything more. #00:23:54-0#

51 I: Okay. Good. Then thank you very much. #00:23:59-0#