“BETTER THE DEVIL YOU KNOW THAN THE SAINT YOU DON’T”: FOLLOWER UNCERTAINTY AVERSION IN THE ATTRIBUTION OF LEADER INGRATIATORY INTENT.

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Doctor of Philosophy

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ABSTRACT

Research has shown that ingratiation in the workplace is an effective approach to impression management which positively influences a number of work-related outcomes. While significant strides have been made in understanding the benefits of upward ingratiation, scholars have also pointed out its potential to backfire, that is, ingratiation has been found to elicit detrimental effects especially during situations where the ingratiator is relatively less powerful than the target, for instance, a subordinate ingratiating with his or her superior. Scholars have labelled this phenomenon as the *ingratiator's dilemma*. However, since leaders hold considerable legitimate power over their followers, the current research attempts to explore how leadership downward ingratiation (LDI) is different from its upward counterpart by investigating the boundary conditions and its outcomes on follower performance. Accordingly, by drawing on the theoretical tenets of Uncertainty Reduction Theory and Conservation of Resources Theory, the current research deviates from conventional understanding of ingratiation focusing on valence of intent (i.e., selfish or selfless) and instead proposes that the clarity or unclarity of intent serves as boundary conditions. Accordingly, it was hypothesised that a negative effect of LDI and task performance via work engagement is observed when perceived instrumental and altruistic intent are low whereas a null effect is observed when high. To test these predictions, three studies were conducted. In Study 1, a vignette experiment conducted with N = 60 participants yielded no statistically significant findings, thus offering no support for the hypotheses. In response to design flaws, Study 2 was conducted as a cross-sectional study with N = 250 participants to test the hypotheses in a field environment. To ensure theoretical robustness, the conceptual opposite of work engagement, that is, psychological withdrawal, was tested as mediator in Study 2 and the moderated mediation analysis indicated support for the hypotheses. To test whether the relationships unfold within a short time frame, Study 3 was designed as an Experience Sampling Method study with N = 74 participants. Though the data yielded statistically significant results, two unexpected conclusions could be drawn. Firstly, a positive effect of LDI on work engagement was observed at high levels of perceived intent instead of a null effect, suggesting that work engagement and psychological withdrawal are unique constructs that are independent of one another. Secondly, perceived altruistic intent exhibited a lagged moderation effect. Implications and future research directions were discussed.

Keywords: leadership downward ingratiation, work engagement, task performance, perceived altruistic intent, perceived instrumental intent, uncertainty reduction theory, conservation of resources theory

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND TO THE RESEARCH

On July 5th 1943, thousands of Indian prisoners-of-war (POWs) were gathered in a mass rally at the *Padang*, a large open field near the Singapore Municipal Buildings. These men were former British soldiers who had been demoralised by defeat at the hands of the occupying Japanese forces in erstwhile Malaya (Toye, 2009) and were poised to hear a speech soon to be delivered by the renowned Bengali revolutionary, Subhas Chandra Bose. Though a newcomer, he was handed over control of the Indian Independence League, an organisation formed to unite overseas Indians against the British Raj in India, and his first task as the newly appointed President was to inspire recruits for a fledgling but moribund army. It was on this day when he famously uttered: "… Comrades! You have voluntarily accepted a mission that is the noblest that the human mind can conceive of. For the fulfilment of such a mission no sacrifice is too great, not even the sacrifice of one's life. You are today the custodians of India's national honour and the embodiment of India's hopes and aspirations. So conduct yourself that your countrymen may bless you and posterity may be proud of you … Inquilab Zindabad! Azad Hind Zindabad!" (Ramchandani, 2015). With these words, he galvanised the troops of the newly christened *Azad Hind Fauj* (lit. "Free Indian Army"; Hussain, 2017; Pande, 2016) who have now turned against the British Raj and swiftly mobilised with Japan to wage a "Second War of Independence" in the following year (Ayer, 1951). From an organisational perspective, Bose displayed an extreme example of *leadership downward ingratiation* (LDI), an impression management technique characterised by a leader's use of praises, flatteries or compliments in order to appear attractive to followers and ultimately with the aim of influencing them (Liden & Mitchell, 1988). In the workplace context, ingratiation is a common influence tactic since organisations often reward leaders

that are perceived to have virtues such as possessing credibility, morality or trustworthiness, thereby becoming crucial to a leader's success or failure (Baumeister, 1989; Bolino et al., 2008). Some organisational benefits incurred by a well-liked leader includes having higher chances of receiving organisational rewards and are quicker than their peers at achieving promotions (Bolino et al., 2008). Furthermore, LDI has been shown to elicit several positive outcomes from followers including greater team cohesion (Rozell & Gundersen, 2003), affective commitment (Eketu, 2016) and task commitment (Yukl & Tracey, 1992). While ingratiation has been examined in a variety of ways, whether upwardly towards one's boss, laterally towards a colleague or downwardly towards a subordinate (Bozeman & Kacmar, 1997), *perceived* LDI is the focus of the current research for two key reasons. Firstly, since the ability to influence others is one of the most fundamental aspects of leadership (Parry, 1998), ingratiation becomes a crucial leadership behaviour as it has been demonstrated to be an effective means to achieve this (see Gordon, 1996; Higgins, Judge & Ferris, 2003 for review). Secondly, due to the significance of followers as co-producers of the leadership phenomena (Peck & Hogue, 2018; Shamir, 2007), there has been growing scholarly calls to emphasise follower experiences, perceptions and reasonings to advance the existing leadership literature (Alvesson & Einola, 2019; Sidani & Rowe, 2018). As a result, the current research aligns with this assertion by shifting focus onto follower experiences and thus on their *perceived* LDI.

While ingratiation has been discussed so far as an effective way to influence others and achieve likeability, this is not always the case as ingratiators may ironically find themselves becoming unlikeable or be seen as *slimy* by others (Vonk, 1998). In fact, there are some evidence of the negative consequences associated with ingratiation, for instance by inducing resentment and social undermining (Keeves, Westphal & McDonald, 2017), negatively affect supervisory assessment of the ingratiating subordinate's promotability

(Thacker & Wayne, 1995) and causing diminished relationship quality with observers of this behaviour (Kim, LePine & Chun, 2018; Kim et al., 2022). These negative findings are problematic as ingratiation is not necessarily a deceitful or manipulative attempt at achieving political goals but may instead simply represent a person's genuine efforts to be liked (Appelbaum & Hughes, 1998; Liden & Mitchell, 1988; Wortman & Linsenmeier, 1977). However, previous research findings have indicated that ingratiators may inadvertently elicit undesired impressions (Turnley & Bolino, 2001) and draw unintended reactions from their targets (Ralston & Elsass, 1989). In fact, scholars have labelled this potential risk of "backfiring" as the *ingratiator's dilemma*, that is, the more dependent an ingratiator is to their target, the more likely they are judged as manipulative and thereby elicit negative reactions from them (Frankel & Morris, 1976; Gordon, 1996; Jones, 1965). While scholars have attempted to offer solutions to "resolve" this dilemma (e.g., Westphal & Park, 2020), there remains little understanding as to whether this dilemma also applies to the leadership context. This question deserves some attention since leaders typically hold formal control over reward and punishment for a subordinate's performance (Hershcovis & Barling, 2010; Lian et al., 2014; Schilpzand, De Pater, & Erez, 2016; Shin & Hur, 2020) which means that when they ingratiate, they enact it from a position of legitimate power. As a result, ingratiatory leaders are arguably less likely to be affected by negative impressions as they are less dependent on their followers (Magee, 2009), possess greater autonomy (Lammers et al. 2016) and command more respect and admiration (Magee & Galinsky, 2008). Accordingly, there needs to be some research attention dedicated to LDI due to its unique nature and thus elicitation of positive or negative effects on followers. More specifically, the current research aims to examine the boundary conditions under which LDI is beneficial or detrimental to follower task performance.

One insightful approach to address this issue is to draw upon uncertainty reduction theory (URT) (Berger & Calabrese, 1975) – a framework which suggests that uncertainty within a social interaction is intrinsically aversive since it inhibits a person's ability to prepare or cope with an unknown and in turn creates a maladaptive environment (Bordia et al., 2004). By employing this framework, the current research proposes that followers who are unable to attribute a clear intent for a perceived LDI are prevented from obtaining relevant social information which enables predictions of future events (Maselli & Altrocchi, 1969) and reduce uncertainty (Milliken, 1987). In other words, perceived LDI becomes aversive under a specific relational context, that is, when the ingratiatory interaction is marked by uncertainty due to the lack of a clear attributable intent. By contrast, when followers are able to attribute a clear intent for a perceived LDI are thus provided with the relevant social information, this enhances predictability about the leader's behaviours and in turn diminishes uncertainty (Berger & Calabrese, 1975). Accordingly, the current research will examine the uncertainty-reducing properties of follower perceived intent by focusing on the two primary ways in which prosocial behaviours are attributed, that is, altruistic or instrumental intent (Allen & Rush, 1998; Eastman, 1994; Johnson et al., 2002). Generally speaking, altruistic intent can be defined as the desire to help others or an organisation out of a sense of selflessness, whereas instrumental intent can be described as the self-serving desire to help others with the expectation of rewards or favours (Allen & Rush, 1998; Bolino, 1999).

In addition to URT, the current research further integrates conservation of resources theory (CoR) (Hobfoll et al., 2018) to explain the process by which certain follower attributions of perceived LDI, or lack thereof, serves as the boundary condition on task performance. In brief, CoR contends that people are motivated to retain, protect and build on their existing resources when these resources are threatened or depleted, they experience stress and enter a defensive state (Hobfoll, 1989; Hobfoll et al., 2018). In the context of the

current research, the principle of *resource investment* is applied, which states that individuals who possess excess resources will reinvest them for the purpose of gaining further resources as well as to safeguard and recover from resource loss (Hobfoll, 2001). Furthermore, individuals will invest in a manner that would maximise their gains in the domain relevant to the reinvested resource, which in the present case, pertains to work-related resources that will be reinvested into the work domain. Accordingly, scholars have argued on the basis of this principle to explain why individuals with a surplus of resources often perform better at work by executing their tasks properly or engaging in extra-role behaviour (e.g., Halbesleben, Harvey & Bolino, 2009; Halbesleben & Wheeler, 2008).

Thus, in the context of the current research, cognitive resources are the focal point since they play a crucial role in the uncertainty-reduction process (Griffin & Grote, 2020; Hogg, 2021) and can be defined as the finite resources relating to a person's capacity to exert cognitive processes at work such as self-regulation, problem-solving, attention span and memory recall (Fried et al., 1998; Sarandopoulos & Bordia, 2021; Wang & Shultz, 2010). Accordingly, perceived LDI without a discernible intent elicits negative reactions from followers since it consumes their cognitive resources due to the mental exertion needed to seek the necessary social information from the environment (Parks & Adelman, 1983). This in turn activates their defensive state to retain and protect their existing cognitive resources from further loss (Hobfoll et al., 2018). Conversely, when a follower is able to discern the leader's intent, this protects them from expending cognitive resources into the uncertainty-reduction process and thus facilitates reinvestment of the existing resources into relevant work-related activities (Astakhova, 2015; Halbesleben, Harvey & Bolino, 2009; Halbesleben & Wheeler, 2008; Wheeler, Halbesleben & Shanine, 2013; Zivnuska et al., 2016).

As indicated by CoR, since followers can either undergo cognitive resource loss as a salient experience that prioritises activation of their defensive state over cognitive resource

gain (Hobfoll et al., 2018), or possess excess cognitive resources due to the presence of attributable intent which are in turn reinvested into work (Astakhova, 2015; Halbesleben, Harvey & Bolino, 2009; Halbesleben & Wheeler, 2008; Wheeler, Halbesleben & Shanine, 2013; Zivnuska et al., 2016), the current research therefore proposes *work engagement* as a linchpin in the relationship between LDI and task performance to capture this resource-based mechanism. According to Schaufeli & Bakker (2004), work engagement is a construct referring to a state of mind constituting absorption, dedication and vigour at work. More specifically, it is characterised by the positive experience of being completely engrossed ("absorption"), possessing a sense of significance ("dedication") and feeling energetic ("vigour") at work (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). This construct is relevant to the current research because, from the perspective of CoR, it reflects the decreased need of followers to conserve or withhold their cognitive resources on a particular task (Rich, LePine & Crawford, 2010) when faced with the salient experience of resource loss. In other words, work engagement encapsulates the followers' *unwillingness* to conserve cognitive resources at work. Accordingly, the presence of an attributable intent means that followers are less inclined to conserve cognitive resources at work which manifests as work engagement and in turn enhances task performance (Halbesleben, Harvey & Bolino, 2009; Halbesleben, 2011). By contrast, the absence of an attributable intent necessitates followers to expend cognitive resources into the uncertainty-reducing process which activates their defensive state due to the salient experience of resource loss (Hobfoll et al., 2018) which manifests in the form of decreased work engagement which negatively impacts their task performance.

All in all, in tying these assumptions together, the current research proposes that followers' perceived altruistic and instrumental intent serve as boundary conditions in determining the effects of perceived LDI on follower work engagement, and in turn, their task performance. More specifically, the current research proposes that a negative effect of

LDI on task performance through work engagement is observed when perceived altruistic and instrumental intent are low whereas a null effect is observed when high. The arguments for this proposal will be developed over the course of this thesis.

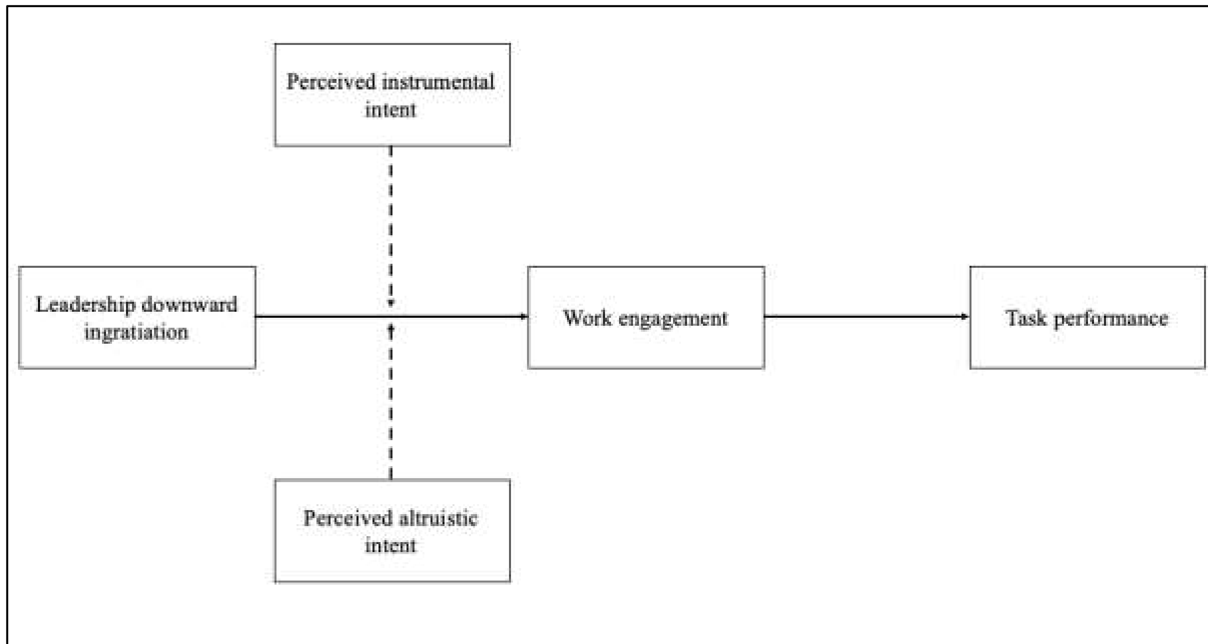

Figure 1 – Conceptual framework

The current research offers several theoretical contributions to the literature. Firstly, while scholars have often assumed that prosocial behaviours motivated by altruistic intent are judged favourably whereas those driven by an instrumental intent are devalued by observers (e.g., Bolino et al., 2013; Eastman, 1994; Johnson et al., 2002; Podsakoff, MacKenzie & Hui, 1993; Organ, 1990), the current research deviates from this dichotomy since leaders enact ingratiation from a position of power and are therefore not subjected to the same attributional processes involved in upwards ingratiation (i.e., the ingratiator's dilemma). As a result, this suggests a need for an alternative conceptualisation of what constitutes "good" or "bad" LDI. In other words, the current research departs from the traditional dichotomy between "bad" self-serving, instrumental intent versus a "good" other-serving, altruistic intent in the context

of LDI as it does not consider the notion of legitimate power held by leaders. Accordingly, by integrating URT and CoR, the current research suggests that the next step forward in the literature is to consider how uncertainty in the leader-follower relationship and the resulting need to conserve cognitive resources can impact follower behaviours and therefore delineate the negative versus positive reactions from them.

Secondly, the current research extends the leadership literature by responding to scholarly calls for greater focus on follower experiences, perceptions and reasonings to further our understanding by which ingratiatory leaders can motivate and inspire them. This concern arises from the disproportionate dominance of leader-centric approaches to leadership whereas far fewer research attention has been dedicated to followers as important contributors to the leadership process (Alvesson & Einola, 2019; Sidani & Rowe, 2018). To this end, the current research seeks to examine the boundary conditions that determine the effects of perceived LDI on follower performance at work.

Thirdly, while there have been a plethora of studies examining the effects and outcomes of upward ingratiation, whether it be in terms of positive outcomes such as achieving likeability (Gordon, 1996), developing high quality exchange relationships (e.g., Wayne & Ferris, 1990), career success (e.g., Orpen, 1996) or negative outcomes, for instance, eliciting undesirable impressions (e.g., Vonk, 1998; Turnley & Bolino, 2001) and promotes resentment and social undermining (e.g., Thacker & Wayne, 1995), it is less well-researched for LDI especially with regards to its effects on followers. Accordingly, by delineating the boundary conditions, the current research can start to uncover when and how perceived LDI can lead to negative or positive effects on follower performance at work.

1.2 RESEARCH AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this research is to explore under what conditions does perceived LDI elicit beneficial or detrimental effects on follower task performance via the work engagement as mediator. The objectives of this research are to:

(1) Describe the utility of intent attribution as an important factor for delineating the boundary conditions of perceived LDI that generate either negative or positive reactions from followers.

(2) By employing URT, the research aims to demonstrate that leader conveyance of ingratiatory intent are a crucial source of the much-needed social information to reduce uncertainty at work.

(3) Explain using CoR to show how uncertainty or certainty as experienced by followers can affect their level of *unwillingness* to conserve or withhold cognitive resources (i.e., work engagement), thereby allowing them to perform optimally in their work tasks.

1.3 STRUCTURE OF THESIS

In Chapter 2, a review of the literature will be presented where it touches upon a number of key topics related to the current research, namely, the literature on impression management, ingratiation, follower perceptions and to a smaller extent, power. Following this, the chapter proceeds to introducing the theoretical frameworks of the current research, that is, uncertainty reduction theory (Berger & Calabrese, 1975) and conservation of resources theory (Hobfoll, 1989). Here, the current research will first present the core tenets of each theory followed by a discussion of theoretical integration between the two and what we can learn from it with regards to the effects of perceived LDI on followers. Subsequently, the chapter concludes with a discussion of work engagement and task performance and how the integrated theory can be applied to formulate the hypotheses of the current research.

In Chapter 3, the research philosophy which serves as guidelines for the research methods will be discussed. More specifically, since the current research adopts an objectivist ontology with a critical realist epistemology and its aim is to expand on *mature theories* (Edmondson & McManus, 2007), this justifies a quantitative research methodology.

In Chapter 4, the Study 1 vignette experiment will be discussed. More specifically, aspects of the study that will be touched upon are its design rationale, participants, data collection procedures, measures, the analytical approach (i.e., ANOVA and independent t-test) and a discussion of the study findings and limitations.

In Chapter 5, the Study 2 cross-sectional field study will be discussed. Similarly to Chapter 4, aspects of the study that will deliberated includes the design rationale, participants, data collection procedures, measures, the analytical approach (i.e., PROCESS macro Model 9 for moderated mediation analysis) and a discussion of the study findings and limitations.

In Chapter 6, the Study 3 experience sampling method study will be discussed. Likewise, aspects of the study that will be addressed are the design rationale, participants, data collection procedures, measures, the analytical approach (i.e., multilevel modelling) and a discussion of the study findings and limitations.

Finally, in Chapter 7, a general discussion of the findings gathered so far will be presented, what they imply for future research and the general limitations of the current research. Lastly, a concluding section will be provided.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INGRATIATION LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1.1 Impression Management and Follower Perception of Leadership

In our daily lives, we are often confronted with situations where we must play the appropriate roles and characters to various audiences with the hope of gaining social, financial and moral approval from others (Giacalone & Rosenfeld, 1989). Consequently, the way a person presents themselves to others constitutes an important element of social life, making behavioural tactics and strategies that allows us to "look good" a crucial factor for social success (Vohs, Baumeister & Ciarocco, 2005). These behaviours have collectively come to be known as *impression management*, a term that is simply defined as the "conscious or unconscious, authentic or inauthentic, goal-directed behaviour individuals engage in to influence the impression others form of them in social interactions" (Peck & Hogue, 2018, p. 123).

The scholarly inceptions of impression management can be traced back to the works of Goffman (1959) who provided the first attempt to explain how the "self" operates within social encounters and events (Kilvington, 2021). To this end, Goffman (1959) employs theatrical or dramaturgical metaphors to draw analogies between social interactions and staged theatrical performances in his seminal book *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. In his work, Goffman (1959) viewed the social world as having two separate *regional boundaries*, or as he calls it, the frontstage and backstage regions. In the frontstage, "performers" gauge the expectations of "audiences" and attempt to convey the most appropriate persona where they intensify certain aspects of their actions and behaviours while concealing those that may undermine the desired persona. Additionally, there are two

essential elements constituting the frontstage: the *setting* and the *personal front*. The setting refers to the necessary props, décors, physical lay-outs and other background items required to stage a performance whereas the personal front pertains to the appropriate appearances and mannerisms needed to produce the relevant façade. By appearances, Goffman (1959) was alluding to the visible characteristics that act as "sign vehicles" that transmit information about the performer's social status or occasion such as wearing the appropriate clothing and hairstyle. On the other hand, mannerisms relate to the performer's expressive and behavioural signals that informs the audiences' expectations of the social situation. For instance, a performer who behaves in an extraverted manner will create an impression of a person who initiates and lead conversations (Goffman, 1959, p. 15). This is in contrast with the backstage region where performers are not bound to the requirements of their role and therefore allow themselves to drop their guard and relax in a restricted area inaccessible to the public (Serpa & Ferreira, 2018). It is in the comfort of the backstage where the performer's most authentic, informal and borderline self lies (Kilvington, 2021).

Over the past few decades since Goffman first published his seminal work, the impression management literature has progressed substantially. Scholars from psychological and organisational disciplines have conducted numerous studies and investigated impression management processes in various settings (Bolino, Long & Turnley, 2016). In the context of organisational studies alone, impression management has been researched in a diverse array of topics including business ethics (Rosenfeld, 1997), career strategies (Gould & Penley, 1984), performance appraisals (Wood & Mitchell, 1981) and most significantly, leadership (Leary et al., 1986). While the scientific study of leadership has developed several distinct paths in the literature spanning from trait, behavioural and contingency theories of leadership (see Antonakis & Day, 2018 for a review), each of these schools of thought have typically analysed leadership from a leader-centric perspective. In other words, leader characteristics

and behaviours become the only independent variables that were used to predict follower outcomes whereas follower attitudes, behaviours and motivations were strictly relegated to dependent variables or moderators (Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1996; Ito et al., 2020). As a result, the leadership literature had, for the most part, neglected an essential element in the leadership phenomena, that is, followers' perceptions of the leader (Leary, 1989). In reaction to this, some scholars have gone as far as to posit anti-leadership arguments during the 1970s (Gronn, 2002). Most contentiously, Calder (1977) asserted that, rather than being a scientific construct, the notion of leadership is simply a layman's term to describe an individual who exhibits patterns of behaviours that can be attributed to what a "prototypical" leader should be like, that is, whether an influential person fits the observer's implicit theories of leadership. This is problematic as oftentimes lay attributions may hold idealised notions of leadership that places it as the most crucial factor for organisational success or failure when in fact the reasons and explanations can be complex – a tendency dubbed by scholars as the "romance of leadership" (Gray & Densten, 2007; Meindl, Ehrlich & Dukerich, 1985; Zoller & Fairhurst, 2007). Other scholars, however, had taken the middle ground and argued that followers are co-producers to the formation, consequences and nature of leadership (Carsten & Uhl-Bien, 2012; Shamir, 2007). This means that in order for a social phenomenon to be characterised as leadership, it requires a dual process of both leading and following where one party must be willing to defer themselves to another (Uhl-Bien & Carsten, 2016; Uhl-Bien et al., 2014). In other words, it may be argued that it is in the *followership* that the phenomenon of leadership is produced. Thus, according to this follower-centric approach to leadership, followers are causal agents in which their attributions, perceptions and characteristics will determine leadership outcomes and effectiveness (Aydogmus, 2018). This in turn reverses the variables involved where follower characteristics, perceptions and

behaviours have become the independent variables while leadership outcomes have become the dependent variables (Shamir, 2007; Uhl-Bien et al., 2014).

Follower perceptions, therefore, play a crucial role in the emergence of leadership (Peck & Hogue, 2018) and are inherent in a number of theoretical frameworks. For instance, transformational leadership theory posits that followers will perceive their leader as transformational when they feel admiration, loyalty, respect and trust for their leader and thereby resulting in greater motivation to perform better (Yukl, 1999). Authentic leadership theory, on the other hand, arises when followers perceive a leader to have qualities of honesty and trustworthiness while possessing *value congruence* which grants legitimacy to the leader (Sidani & Rowe 2018, Suchman, 1995; Walumbwa et al., 2008). This burgeoning interest in followership is reflected in the current empirical literature where scholars have begun garnering efforts towards examining follower experiences, perceptions and reasonings in the leadership phenomena (Alvesson & Einola, 2019; Sidani & Rowe, 2018). For example, Lin and colleagues (2017) found that the distinguishing feature between a leader being labelled as pseudo- rather than authentic transformational leadership is the attribution of supervisory behaviours to manipulative intentions. Another study conducted by Wong and Giessner (2018) revealed that when leader behaviours under- or overfulfill a follower's empowerment expectations, this led to attributions of laissez-faire, non-leadership style rather than as empowering leadership. Likewise, a study conducted by Martinko and colleagues (2018) showed that followers who possess external attribution styles tend to rate leaders unfavourably and were more receptive to anti-prototypical leadership behaviours (e.g., domineering or pushy) whereas those who possess internal attribution styles rated leaders more favourably even if exposed to anti-prototypical behaviours.

Accordingly, since follower perceptions are a crucial element of leadership emergence, the corollary is that followers primarily select their leaders based on the

impressions they perceive (Leary, 1989). For this reason, it is paramount for a leader to strive towards building an impression that elicit a sense of authority and credibility while avoiding appearing weak by ensuring their image remain untainted should they wish to maintain effective leadership and preserve their position (Gronn, 1983; Leary, 1989). Due to the importance of image and appearances to leaders, research interests in impression management have significantly impacted the leadership literature and have been investigated in various contexts including transformational leadership (Gardner & Cleavenger, 1998), charismatic leadership (Sosik, Avolio & Jung, 2002), leader-member exchange relationships (Zhang et al., 2016) and leadership romanticism (Gray & Densten, 2007). Impression management has also been studied at differing leadership levels including those amongst CEOs (e.g., Westphal & Graebner, 2010) and managers (e.g., Fisk & Friesen, 2012). With this being said, there are a variety of techniques in a leader's arsenal that allow them to influence their image formation amongst their followers. These tactics can range widely depending on the individual's objectives (for a review, see Bolino et al., 2008) with some of the most common forms includes expressing apologies (Benoit, 1995), giving excuses and defending one's innocence (Schlenker, 1980; 1982).

Among the many impression management strategies, one of the most ubiquitous tactics of all both in terms of research attention and usage by impression managers is the act of ingratiation (Bolino & Turnley, 1999; Bolino et al., 2008; Gardner; 1992; Stevens & Kristof, 1995). This occurs because people, for the most part, tend to seek a sense of belonging and therefore often desire to be liked by others (Baumeister and Leary 1995; Leary and Baumeister 2000) and ingratiation is the most direct and effective technique for inducing likeability and attraction (Gordon, 1996). Due to the nature of leadership which, at its core, involves the ability to influence others (Parry, 1998), ingratiation becomes exceedingly

relevant since influencing others entails a leader's need to manage their image and likeability amongst their followers (Peck & Hogue, 2018).

In sum, impression management can be considered one of the most fundamental aspects of our social life that is equally as important in the context of leadership since followers are co-producers of leadership and thus relies heavily on follower perceptions. While it is arguably in the "followership" in which the phenomenon of leadership is produced (Uhl-Bien & Carsten, 2016; Uhl-Bien et al., 2014), there are a number of ways that a leader can influence follower perceptions in a favourable manner and one of the most effective method to achieve this is LDI. In the following section, further deliberation of ingratiation will be presented.

2.1.2 Jones' (1964) Ingratiation Theory

Over the past few decades, a handful of scholars have conceptualised ingratiation in several ways. For example, ingratiation may refer to a particular class of strategic behaviours intended to employ "illicit" methods to influence others through raising attractiveness of their personal qualities (Jones & Wortman, 1973), or may be defined as assertive or non-assertive influence tactics that are intentionally or unintentionally designed to alter how one is viewed by others (Watt, 1993). By contrast, ingratiation may also be described in a more specific manner, that is, as an assertive organisational tactic employed to gain approval from superiors (Kumar & Beyerlein, 1991). Due to the plethora of approaches available, there has been some confusion and "noise" in the current literature as to what constitutes ingratiation-related phenomena (Sanchez-Ruiz, Wood & Long-Ruboyianes, 2021). For the current research, however, the definition adopted will be in alignment with its initial conception based on Edward E. Jones' seminal work, a pioneering social psychologist who has been described as the "Father of Ingratiation" (Stigter & Cooper, 2018). More specifically, the definition he

formulated was – in his own words, the "episodes of social behaviour that are designed to increase the attractiveness of the actor to the target" (Jones, 1964, p. 2). This definition is preferred over others since it neutrally describes ingratiation without imposing a valenced consequence to the behaviour, a characterisation that is consistent with the evidence so far, that is, ingratiation is neither intrinsically positive nor negative.

According to Jones' (1964) Ingratiation Theory, he identified three major forms of ingratiatory behaviours: other-enhancement, opinion conformity and self-presentation. Other-enhancement refers to behaviours that involve expressing positive opinions and evaluations about a target individual, or in simple terms, a direct flattery of another person. An example of other-enhancement in the workplace would be situations where if a supervisor hears about a team member who has been engaged in a fitness regiment, he or she compliments the member on looking fit and healthy (Ralston & Elsass, 1989). Earlier scholars have posited that the effectiveness of flattery hinges on the fact that we are attracted to people who value and think highly of us (Condon & Crano, 1988; Jones, Gergen & Davis, 1962; Katz & Beach, 2000). In other words, since we generally view ourselves in a positive light via the self-serving bias, this therefore means that we are cognitively predisposed to favour others who hold views that are consistent to ours (Ditto & Lopez, 1992), thereby reciprocating with liking in kind (Heider, 1958). Indeed, a meta-analysis conducted by Gordon (1996) revealed that other-enhancement behaviours increases the likeability of the ingratiator which in turn spills over onto positive performance evaluations.

Opinion conformity involves the tactical use of expressing opinions or enacting behaviours consistent with the views, judgements and behaviours of another even if the ingratiator differs in attitudes, beliefs and norms (Bohra & Pandey, 1984), thereby making it an indirect form of flattery. In many ways, opinion conformity could be considered a type of other-enhancement since expressing agreement is essentially an act of validating or affirming

the other person's beliefs (Westphal & Stern, 2006). An example of this behaviour in the workplace would be a supervisor adopting and expressing the same political views as a team member's (Ralston & Elsass, 1989). Previous scholars have suggested that the effectiveness of opinion conformity arises from the *similarity effect* to generate attraction (Byrne et al., 1969; Collinson & Howell, 2014; Liden & Mitchell, 1988; Stevens & Kristof, 1995; Wayne & Kacmar, 1991). Research has provided evidence that supports this proposition, as results have indicated that people respond with a higher liking towards individuals who share similar attitudes (Tan & Singh, 1995), personality traits (Strauss, Barrick & Connerley, 2001) and even hobbies (Werner & Parmelee, 1979).

Finally, self-presentation refers to the adoption of behaviours perceived to be most appropriate by others or likely to elicit attraction. An example of this behaviour in the workplace includes an interviewee emphasising their willingness to work hard for a company during a job interview (Ralston, 1985). Self-presentation may come in the form of verbal or nonverbal cues such as smiling, eye contact and touching (De Paulo, 1992; Ralston & Elsass, 1989). In fact, nonverbal tactics can be further distinguished between expressive behaviours and artefactual displays, that is, displaying momentary moods and affect or displaying possessions in order to present a particular status, respectively (Schneider, 1981). Additionally, Jones (1964) have identified favour rendering as a form of self-presentation. With that being said, scholars have contended that self-presentation is a distinct influence tactic and therefore should be treated as theoretically and conceptually separate from ingratiation (Higgins, Judge & Ferris, 2003; Godfrey, Jones & Lord, 1986).

Between the three ingratiatory tactics, an individual may choose to employ one over another depending on the ingratiator's available resources and environmental setting (Jones & Pittman, 1982). For instance, an individual may employ opinion conformity as opposed to self-presentation during informal conversations, or employ self-presentation during job

interviews whereas other-enhancements and flattery may be used if a high-status individual intends to appear attractive to a lower-status individual as opposed to opinion conformity (Ralston & Elsass, 1989). This suggests that one tactic is superior to another depending on the situations and contexts at hand and therefore, in line with this assertion, the current research is also of the view that other-enhancements and flattery are the most appropriate ingratiatory tactics from a leadership perspective.

Additionally, ingratiatory behaviours can also be further distinguished between assertive or defensive ingratiation (Strutton & Pelton, 1998). Assertive ingratiation refers to overt efforts to increase attractiveness and is often described as “political” in nature. This form of ingratiation is often enacted in an obvious manner in order to enhance the ingratiator’s position relative to other alternatives or competitors with the goal of gaining favours from the target person. An example would be an employee who utilises assertive ingratiation in order to promote their good performances (Steiner, 1997). Defensive ingratiation, on the other hand, pertains to ingratiatory behaviours intended to protect the ingratiator’s self-esteem or image from threat, criticism or negative feedback. This means that defensive ingratiation includes justifying or providing excuses for poor performance (Steiner, 1997) with the use of external attributions (Wood & Mitchell, 1981). As a result, this produces a *discounting effect* where people assign less responsibility, become less personal in their evaluation and less punishing for the ingratiator’s poor performances.

In short, despite the diversity and even conflicts in defining ingratiation which in turn impacts the way it manifests as alluded to earlier, what all these definitions have in common can be summarised into one component, that is, simply the attempts by individuals to increase attractiveness in the eyes of their targets (Jones, 1964; Liden & Mitchell, 1988). With that being said, the nature of ingratiation is by no means a singular action but rather encompasses entire classes and types of behaviours. As a result, LDI may sound vaguely similar to several

prosocial or influence behaviours which therefore calls for a need to elaborate how ingratiation relates to and differs from other similar-sounding constructs that will be explored in the following sections.

2.1.5 The Conceptual Uniqueness of Leadership Downward Ingratiation

On the surface, LDI may have much in common with constructs relating to influence prosocial behaviours including workplace politics, organisational citizenship behaviour (OCB), leader charisma and transformational leadership. However, there are conceptual distinctions between LDI and these constructs. For the purposes of the current research, we will first explore LDI in relation to workplace politics.

Ingratiation has often been referred to as a form of political behaviour in organisations (e.g., Appelbaum & Hughes, 1998; Kumar & Beyerlein, 1991; Ralston, 1985) as both requires the use of influence tactics by individuals seeking to achieve self-directed goals from outside formal authority and are therefore not sanctioned by the organisation (Allen et al., 1979; Ferris et al., 1995; Mayes & Allen, 1977; Porter, Allen & Angle, 1981; Ralston, 1985). In fact, the word "political" is almost always used to denote ill-viewed influence behaviours arising from a conflict that are detrimental to organisational effectiveness since they often deviate from techno-economic decision-making (Gandz & Murray, 1980; Vredenburgh & Maurer, 1984). In an interview study involving 87 managerial personnel conducted by Allen et al. (1979), the authors identified several influence tactics associated with workplace politics and the most prevalent forms included blaming or attacking others, using information to extort another, impression management, idea support building and ingratiation which evidently illustrates the negative views associated with workplace politics as most of the tactics mentioned involves dominating or subjugating another (Fairholm, 2009). However, while both ingratiation and by extension impression management may be politically

motivated, this is not always the case (Liden & Mitchell, 1988) and in some circumstances may even be considered altruistic and sincere (Bolino, 1999; Eastman, 1994; Ferris et al., 1995; Nguyen, Seer & Hartman, 2008).

Another similar-sounding construct worth noting is OCB which has been defined as "individual behaviour that is discretionary, not directly or explicitly recognised by the formal reward system, and that in the aggregate promotes the effective functioning of the organisation" (Organ, 1988, p. 4). Other scholars, by contrast, characterised OCB as a class of behaviours consisting of obedience to orderly structures and processes, loyalty to the community by promoting, protecting and volunteering for the common good and lastly, participation in issues pertaining to the community (Van Dyne, Graham & Dienesch, 1994). On the surface, these descriptions closely resemble ingratiation as both constructs touch on overlapping behaviours including volunteerism, conformity, listening to the problems of others and demonstrating selflessness (Bolino, 1999; Kumar & Beyerlein, 1991). However, ingratiation is conceptually distinct from OCB since the supposed goals of both constructs differ, that is, ingratiation is concerned specifically with achieving likeability as opposed to a concern for effective functioning at the organisational level.

Additionally, ingratiation may be related conceptually to leader charisma as both involve building a desirable image that inspires and motivates followers toward a vision by appearing as a role model and heightening their positive affect and self-esteem (Sosik, Avolio & Jung, 2002), thereby earning their compliance and loyalty (Bass, 1985; Conger; 1988; Gardner & Cleavenger 1998). It is for this reason that scholars argued that charismatic leaders often employ ingratiation in order to strategically achieve their vision (Gardner & Avolio, 1998; Gardner & Cleavenger, 1998) since charismatic leaders need to portray themselves as warm, friendly and morally-credible individuals which requires competent social skills involving actions such as smiling, compliments and flattery (Rozell &

Gundersen, 2003; Shah & Mulla, 2013). Though historically ill-defined where it was simply described as the leader's ability to articulate a clear vision of an ideal future and persuade followers to achieve it (e.g., Awamleh & Gardner, 1999; Beu & Buckley, 2004; Carton, Murphy & Clark, 2014; see Antonakis et al., 2016 for review), the most recent conceptualisations have adopted the view that charisma is a "signalling" process where followers discern verbal and nonverbal cues to assess an individual's capacity to lead others (Antonakis et al., 2016; Grabo, Spisak & Van Vugt, 2017; Reh, Van Quaquebeke & Giessner, 2017) which places emphasis on delivery, as opposed to content, as the dominant source of perceived charisma (Caspi, Bogler & Tzuman, 2019). In this sense, ingratiation is conceptually distinct as it is a type of behaviour (e.g., Capezio et al., 2017) whereas leader charisma can be described as a trait (e.g., Maran et al., 2020) that involves goals beyond merely appearing attractive and likeable towards followers.

Lastly, there are reasons to believe that ingratiation is closely related to, and yet conceptually distinct from, transformational leadership. Scholars have claimed that ingratiation is often utilised by transformational leaders to elicit positive feelings that could realign the followers' value systems towards the pursuit of goals and ideals (Emans et al., 2003; Lian & Tui, 2012). In a study conducted on a sample of 347 respondents consisting of executives and managers, transformational leadership was found to be positively associated with ingratiation, inspirational appeals and consultation whereas it was found to be negatively associated with the influence tactics of exchange and pressure (Lian & Tui, 2012). Most compellingly, however, were the evidence offered by Gardner and Cleavenger (1998) who conducted a psycho-historical study of transformational leaders at the world-class level where they found that not only were ingratiatory leaders more likely to be evaluated as transformational, effective and more competent at satisfying followers' needs, the authors have also found that ingratiation was most strongly correlated with one of the subdimension

of transformational leadership, that is, individualised consideration. Accordingly, the result suggests there are some conceptual overlaps between ingratiation and individualised consideration (Gardner & Cleavenger, 1998), implying that ingratiation may contribute to fostering a transformational image. However, ingratiation is a distinct construct and this is clear in the definition of individualised consideration, that is, the leader's ability to give personalised attention and support for each follower by attending to their individual needs and development (Avolio, 1999; Bass, 1985; Bass & Riggio, 2010) in order to ensure maximum potential (Hetland et al., 2011) whereas ingratiation refers to the behavioural attempt to increase attractiveness in the eyes of their followers.

In summary, LDI is a unique construct that is distinguishable from a number of prosocial and influence behaviours, namely workplace politics, OCB, leader charisma and transformational leadership. Accordingly, since LDI is a distinct construct, this would mean it offers its own set of consequences and outcomes (Liden & Mitchell, 1988). However, scholars have engaged in intense discussions over the "backfiring" nature of this behaviour, that is, ingratiation can equally draw both positive as well as negative reactions from their targets (Sanchez-Ruiz, Wood & Long-Ruboyianes, 2021). A discussion of this duality will be presented in the following section.

2.1.3 The "Backfiring" Nature of Ingratiation

Due to its ubiquity and impact in the workplace, scholars over the past decades have expectedly invested much research into ingratiation and its potential effects at all levels of hierarchy and direction of influence within the organisation – whether it is upwards towards a boss, laterally towards a colleague or downwardly towards a subordinate (Gordon, 1996). For example, researchers have found that employees who ingratiate with their supervisors enhance their likelihood of receiving positive performance appraisals (Higgins, Judge &

Ferris, 2003; Wayne & Kacmar, 1991), greater career success (Judge & Bretz, 1994; Orpen, 1996) as well as intrinsic success at work (Kim, LePine & Chun, 2018). In the context of job interviews, ingratiators have also been found to enhance interviewer evaluation of person-job and -organisation fit (Chen, Yang & Lin, 2010) which in turn influences hiring recommendations (Chen & Lin, 2014; Higgins & Judge, 2004). Employees who ingratiate with their colleagues have also been found to associate with team satisfaction (Nguyen, Seer & Hartman, 2008), lateral interpersonal attachment (Strutton & Pelton, 1998) and team member likeability (Turnley & Bolino, 2001). Given that interpersonal attraction plays a central role in ingratiation, scholars have also examined the relationship between ingratiatory influences and perceived likability, as well as its effects on interpersonal relationships. For instance, research has shown that ingratiating employees achieve higher supervisor ratings of likeability (Wayne & Ferris, 1990; Wayne & Liden, 1995; Wayne et al., 1997) while also developing high-quality exchange relationships with their supervisors (e.g. Kim, LePine & Chun, 2018; Kim et al., 2022; Koopman et al., 2015; Wayne & Ferris, 1990). Likewise, ingratiatory leaders can also reap the benefits of ingratiation. For example, studies have revealed that CEOs acquire a higher chance of receiving recommendations for board appointments (Stern & Westphal, 2010; Westphal & Shani, 2016; Westphal & Stern, 2006) while leaders who engage in LDI facilitate greater team cohesion (Rozell & Gundersen, 2003), affective commitment (Eketu, 2016) and increased charismatic appeal (Shah & Mulla, 2014).

In contrast, while individuals who ingratiate tend to be perceived in a positive light, once the behaviour is detected or appears to be “insincere” and self-serving, the opposite of the intended result occurs (Vonk, 2002; Wu et al., 2013). For instance, an often-cited research is a series of experimental studies conducted by Vonk (1998) who revealed that individuals who ingratiate with their supervisors are deemed “extremely dislikeable and slimy” (p. 849)

especially when it is enacted while treating their own subordinates differently, that is, a behavioural pattern labelled as “licking upward-kicking downwards”. Other scholars have also found that leaders who ingratiate upwards towards their bosses will reduce their LMX quality with their own subordinates (Kim, LePine & Chun, 2018) whereas an employee who “sticks out” by ingratiating with their supervisors decreases their LMX quality with their team members (Kim et al., 2022). Interestingly, this hostile sentiment against self-serving motives can also be found in the views of the general public where it has manifested in the form of degrading monikers including “brown noser”, “boot licker” and “apple polisher” (Kim, LePine & Chun, 2018; Ralston & Elsass, 1989). These negative reactions could likely be attributed to the nature of human behaviours in social settings (Stengel, 2000). According to Goffman (1959), people often gauge the expectations that others have in a particular social context and then use this information as a guide for the appropriate theatrical performances that one would enact in order to achieve a desired image for the situation. Coupled by the cognitive inaccessibility of behaviours since it is difficult to judge the internal states of others, ingratiation thus becomes a highly elusive behaviour since our true feelings, goals and ulterior motives are often concealed for much of our social interactions (Stengel, 2000). As a result, it resembles lying or manipulation as it involves deliberate attempts to convey false information to others while keeping true intentions hidden from them (Adler, 1997; Barnes, 1990), leading some scholars to posit that ingratiation, and by extension impression management in general, is deceitful and thus considered a form of dysfunctional behaviour (Gardner & Martinko, 1998; Marchand & Vonk, 2005; Shulman, 2007).

These juxtaposing views and research findings suggest a problematic pattern for potential ingratiators. On the one hand, it is well-established that ingratiation is generally an effective method of forming positive impressions and engaging in interpersonal influence (Westphal & Park, 2020) across time (Bolino, Klotz & Daniels, 2014). On the other hand,

some scholars have contended that ingratiation in some circumstances can be part of a normal interaction that serves as a “social glue” between people or colleagues (Cooper, 2005; Long, 2017; 2021; Ralston, 1985; Strutton & Pelton, 1998). The rationale for these claims is that ingratiation may simply involve “framing” certain aspects of a person in a different manner and does not require the addition of false information, for instance, describing a leader as having firm convictions as opposed to being stubborn or accommodating rather than being weak (Provis, 2010). In this sense, ingratiation is not necessarily a negative behaviour involving deceit or manipulation but may instead reflect a person’s genuine concern to be liked (Appelbaum & Hughes, 1998; Liden & Mitchell, 1988; Wortman & Linsenmeier, 1977). As a result, this has led some scholars to believe that ingratiation, and by extension impression management in general, is not intrinsically moral or immoral (Provis, 2010; Schlenker, 1980). Indeed, a previous study conducted by Long (2021) demonstrated that this is also relevant in the context of follower perceptions as ingratiation can positively influence the way they appraise a leader’s trustworthiness along three dimensions, that is, their ability, benevolence and integrity. This implies that ingratiation does not necessarily imply manipulation or deceit to the extent originally conceived by previous scholars.

Despite this argument, previous research on the negative effects of ingratiation suggests that ingratiators often run the risk of “backfiring” and eliciting unintended reactions from their targets, for example, being perceived as a braggart and losing social credibility (Ralston & Elsass, 1989). Previous research has found that the risks may vary depending on several factors including the type of ingratiatory behaviours used (e.g., giving praises versus rendering favours), its transparency (i.e., whether the ingratiation is attributed to internal or external factors) and the direction of the influence attempt (i.e., towards a subordinate, colleague or supervisor) (Gordon, 1996; Turnley & Bolino, 2001). However, in relation to personal characteristics of the ingratiator specifically, it is most ineffective for individuals

who lack political skills (Liu et al., 2014), self-monitoring (Turnley & Bolino, 2001), possess self-serving motives (Fein, 1996; Vonk, 1998) and most significantly, when the individual is dependent on a comparatively powerful person such as an employee who is dependent on their supervisor or a student dependent on a teacher (Vonk, 2007). For this reason, the notion of dependency and its consequence – power (Emerson, 1962; 1964), are crucial elements that underlie the rationale of the current research.

In short, ingratiation is a double-edged sword. On the one hand, it is one of the most effective means of enhancing attractiveness in the eyes of others (Gordon, 1996), on the other hand, ingratiation may backfire in some circumstances and result in the loss of social credibility (Ralston & Elsass, 1989). One of the most significant factor that determines the success of an ingratiatory effort is power and dependency which will be explored further due to its importance to the rationale of the current research. To this end, the relationship between leadership and power will be discussed first in the following section.

2.1.4 Power Asymmetry and the Ingratiator's Dilemma

The leadership phenomenon is greatly intertwined with the notion of power. In fact, some scholars have claimed that a person cannot be a leader without holding at least some level of power (Sturm, Herz & Antonakis, 2021; Williams, 2014). As Fairholm (2009, p. 33) succinctly puts it: "Power is the essence of leadership. It is the extra element in interpersonal relations that allows the leader to affect others and secure their willing compliance".
In a similar tone, Antonakis and Day (2018) commented that power is the means by which leaders influence others and is therefore an indispensable component of leadership. To provide a definition of power, scholars have described it as a state where an individual possesses the relevant means and discretion to asymmetrically impose their will over others, whether it is towards another individual, a team or institution (Sturm & Antonakis, 2015).

Furthermore, leaders can vary in terms of the amount and types of power they hold which are exercised through a number of behaviours (Atwater & Yammarino, 1996), for instance, using threats of punishment to exercise their coercive power. A useful framework to elaborate on the various ways in which leaders exercise power is through French and Raven's (1959) bases of social power consisting of legitimate, reward, coercive, referent and expert power.

Legitimate, reward and coercive power are the three forms of power that is derived specifically from the leader's position in the organisation (Bass, 1990). Legitimate power refers to the formal right imparted by the organisation to enforce a leader's will onto others, making it a duty of the followers to comply (Raven, 2001). Relatedly, reward and coercive power are in essence the leader's legitimate right to administer positive or negative outcomes on followers, respectively. More specifically, leaders possess the organisational resources to provide and recommend pay increases, promotions and favourable work assignments (Rupp & Cropanzano, 2002) or to mete out punishment on them in the form of reprimands, dismissals and loss of rewards (Arvey & Ivancevich, 1980). The two other forms of power, that is, reference and expert power, are derived from the leader's personal attributes and characteristics (Yukl & Falbe, 1991). Referent power refers to the extent to which followers are attracted to and in turn approving of the leader whereas expert power is the extent of knowledge, information and expertise that a leader holds and thus control over others (Hinkin & Schriesheim, 1989).

However, power cannot be understood without consideration of another important concept, that is, relational dependence. To begin with, Mechanic (1962) theorised that there is a plethora of ways one could become dependent on another individual in an organisational setting which can all be condensed into three sources, that is, control and access to the relevant information, persons and instrumentalities. Information pertains to the required knowledge about the organisation such as the proper norms and procedures or the knowledge

about the relevant people involved. Persons refers to the access one has to the relevant network of individuals within or outside the organisation. Instrumentalities refers to any components relating to the physical plant of the organisation or its resources (e.g., money, equipment, machines).

Accordingly, power asymmetry arises when a person is more dependent on another as opposed to vice versa (Galinsky, Rucker & Magee, 2015). This is in contrast to a relationship in which two parties are equally dependent on each other (i.e., a state of mutual dependence) where power is equally shared between the persons involved as well as a relationship where no two parties are dependent on each other (i.e., a state of independence) which in this case would mean that the power relationship is non-existent (Galinsky, Rucker & Magee, 2015). The notion of dependence is inherent in Emerson's (1962; 1964) theory on power-dependence relationships and, in his own formulation, characterises the dependence that Actor A has on Actor B is "(1) directly proportional to A's *motivational investment* in goals mediated by B, and (2) inversely proportional to the *availability* of those goals to A outside of the A-B relation" (p. 32). In other words, the more urgent a goal is needed to be attained through another person which also cannot be accomplished elsewhere, the more dependency there is in the relationship and in turn more power asymmetry. This theory has been extended by Gargiulo and Ertug (2014) who argued that apart from control over goals, it is also worth taking into consideration the control over resources. In this sense, a powerful person would have control over whether to grant or withhold the resources needed for the attainment of the dependent individual's goals (Keltner et al., 2003). For instance, a follower would be dependent on a leader since he or she would have control over the relevant resources (e.g., guidance or promotion) that are crucial for attaining the follower's career goals (Wilson, Sin & Conlon, 2010). Indeed, previous research has shown that individuals who hold comparatively less power tend to encounter negative experiences such as increased sensitivity

to threat or punishment (Keltner, Gruenfeld & Anderson 2003), being hindered by situational inhibitions and constraints on their behaviour and actions (Galinsky, Gruenfeld & Magee, 2003) and have less access to resources (Smith et al., 2008). Consequently, this leads low-power individuals to become more concerned with projecting a positive image and are more vigilant on the impressions they make on others (Overbeck & Park, 2006). Thus in an organisational context, this concern is prevalent amongst followers as it is crucial for them to maintain credibility in the eyes of their leaders as it will impact their chances of survival and development in the workplace (Yukl, 2006). In contrast, a follower who appears foolish or unworthy are more likely to receive negative evaluations which are detrimental to their job security and progress (Bisel, Messersmith & Kelley, 2012). This has been demonstrated in an experiment conducted by Copeland (1994) who found that low-power participants tend to report greater need for self-promotion, that is, they were more concerned with projecting an image of competence and effectiveness when communicating with high-power individuals. Likewise, according to Scrimpshire et al. (2021), employees often withhold information from their managers when reporting negative events, a phenomenon described by scholars as the *hierarchical mum effect* (Bisel et al., 2012; Rosen and Tesser, 1970) which arises due to their fear of being associated with the message (e.g., a hurtful truth) which could harm their image and the relationship with their managers.

As a result, this sense of vulnerability provides the incentives for followers to eliminate the power asymmetry by improving their positioning and outcomes in the relationship (Jones, 1965) and one significant way for a follower to secure more power is to increase one’s own personal attractiveness (Jones, Gergen & Jones, 1963). This is because it allows individuals to gain easier access and control over the relevant people, information and instrumentalities of dependency (Blackburn, 1981; Mechanic, 1962) which increased independence from their leaders. Accordingly, ingratiation becomes a crucial influence tactic

since it heightens their personal attractiveness and value in the eyes of their target while raising the costs of sanctioning or punishing the ingratiator (Jones, 1965). In other words, ingratiation is considered a power-enhancing and dependence-reducing behaviour – effects that have been revealed in a field experiment by Pandey (1981) to be a significant motivator for employees as ingratiation restricts their superiors' decision-making freedom and directs them towards desired goals while avoiding costs. However, the increased incentive also comes at a price, that is, ingratiators become more likely of being suspected of deceit and manipulation which ultimately leads to failure in their ingratiatory efforts (Frankel & Morris, 1976; Gordon, 1996; Jones & Wortman, 1973). This seemingly paradoxical phenomenon, as noted earlier, has been labelled by scholars as the *ingratiator's dilemma* (Jones, 1965) and it has been described as such because ingratiators are faced with a challenge, that is, the situations in which they are most dependent on a powerful person and thus require ingratiation are the most likely conditions in which it would backfire and fail. This dilemma occurs because high-power individuals are conscious of power asymmetries and therefore more vigilant in assessing their subordinate's authenticity for signs of manipulation (Berscheid & Regan, 2016). Empirical research on the ingratiator's dilemma began almost as soon as Jones (1964) first formulated his Ingratiation Theory. In these studies, their findings indeed revealed that when an ingratiator is clearly dependent on their targets and therefore possess relatively less power, the more likely their flattery attempts were perceived in a negative way (Jones, 1964, pp. 169-180; Jones & Davis, 1965; Kleinke, Staneski, & Weaver, 1977). These findings are consistent with Jones' (1964) curvilinear model of ingratiation efficacy which suggests that low to moderate levels of ingratiation increase attraction whereas ingratiation at high levels (i.e., indicating a person is highly dependent on the target) risks provoking suspicion as targets become more vigilant of potential ulterior motives.

With this being said, scholars have attempted to "resolve" the ingratiator's dilemma. In particular, Westphal and Park (2020) proposed two factors worth considering when engaging in ingratiation. The first factor is to enact "sophisticated" forms of ingratiation that are subtle and least likely to be interpreted as attempts to curry favour. Stern and Westphal (2010) conducted interviews to examine how executives employ ingratiation in ways that can maximise the chances of forming desirable impressions while avoiding negative reactions from targets. The interviews uncovered seven sophisticated forms of ingratiation which includes framing a flattery as an embarrassing or uncomfortable remark, framing a flattery as advice-seeking, arguing before conforming with targets, expressing conformity to targets' opinions to others, praising the targets to others, engage in value conformity prior to ingratiation and lastly referencing mutual social affiliations with targets prior to ingratiation. Stern and Westphal's study further revealed that executives were more likely to yield board appointments when employing these sophisticated ingratiatory techniques compared to other methods of impression management. The second factor posited by Westphal and Park (2020) is to consider self-regulated cognition as another solution to the ingratiator's dilemma. More specifically, when low-power individuals engage in a social interaction with a powerful person, they may engage in a pattern of cognition where they reflect on similar personal and social characteristics they share with the high-power individual while avoiding thoughts of characteristics in which they differ. In turn, this pattern of cognition produces genuine positive affect and respect for the powerful person, thereby increasing the credibility of their ingratiatory behaviours while avoiding suspicion of manipulation (Westphal & Shani, 2016; Westphal & Zajac, 2013).

Moving on to the leadership context, however, LDI is in some ways similar to its upwards influence counterpart. More specifically, leaders are also incentivised to increase their referent power (French & Raven, 1959) by appearing warm, friendly and accepting to

their followers (Leary, 1989). This occurs because leaders are likewise dependent on their subordinates to achieve group performance objectives that they otherwise impossible to fulfil alone (Liden et al., 2006). As a result, they are required to disperse power amongst their followers in order to sustain continued collective activity (Hollander & Offermann, 1990). In this sense, followers possess a great deal of *counter power* such as their ability to leave the organisation or hinder the organisation's goals by forming coalitions and restricting group productivity (Thibaut & Kelley, 1959). Another reason that leaders are incentivised to boost their referent power may be to receive positive evaluations from their own superiors by earning the affections and loyalty of their followers (Jones, Gergen & Jones, 1963). Indeed, Wilson, Sin and Conlon (2010) has identified several ways in which a leader may be dependent on their followers that includes matters relating to (1) affiliation (e.g., follower loyalty), (2) status (e.g., positive word of mouth praises from followers), (3) service (e.g., follower effort and performance), (4) information (e.g., laterally from other peers or departments), (5) goods (e.g., gifts from followers) and lastly (6) money (e.g., follower performance that indirectly affect leader's pay). For this reason, it is imperative for leaders to foster a likeable image that builds positive relations with their followers (Leary, 1989).

With that being said, scholars have argued that LDI differs from upward ingratiation as it is comparatively easier for high-power individuals to ingratiate with a less powerful person without appearing disingenuous or deceitful (Vonk, 2007). As mentioned previously, this can be attributed to their positions of legitimate power which confers them considerable amount of control over the fate of their followers especially both in terms of rewards and punishments (Schilpzand, De Pater, & Erez, 2016; Hershcovis & Barling, 2010; Shin & Hur, 2020) and enabling leaders to become independent (Magee, 2009), possess greater autonomy (Lammers et al. 2016) and command more respect and admiration (Magee & Galinsky, 2008). In other words, power can be described as the capacity to be *uninfluenced* by

situational cues and social norms as well as the attitudes and behaviours of others (Galinsky et al., 2008). Indeed, in a series of experiments, Galinsky and colleagues (2008) revealed that powerful individuals were immune to conformity pressures, more likely to express new ideas, tend to be dismissive and are less concerned or affected by external forces. Briñol and colleagues (2007) likewise conducted experiments which demonstrated that power increases a person's sense of self-confidence while decreasing the perceived need to attend and process information. In turn, this allowed for greater resistance against the beliefs and persuasions expressed by others. In another study, Eaton and colleagues (2009) found that middle-aged adults, who disproportionately occupy high-power roles and occupations relative to younger or elderly adults, were more likely to possess greater attitude strength and therefore more resistant to persuasion and change.

In sum, the power asymmetry suggests that ingratiatory leaders – due to their greater capacity to become uninfluenced by external forces – are less affected by the ingratiator's dilemma which calls into question the applicability of the ingratiator's dilemma in the context of LDI. For this reason, an alternative mechanism is required to elucidate when and why LDI elicits positive or negative reactions from followers. To this end, the following sections will examine the role of uncertainty reduction theory uncertainty reduction theory (URT) (Berger & Calabrese, 1975) and conservation of resources theory (CoR) (Hobfoll et al., 2018) as the central theoretical frameworks of the current research in identifying the boundary conditions of LDI.

2.2 OVERVIEW OF THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

2.2.1 Berger and Calabrese's (1975) Uncertainty Reduction Theory

Uncertainty is a fundamental attribute of the human experience (Goldsmith, 2001) and a basic component in the way we relate with one another (Knobloch, 2010). This can be observed in our everyday lives, whether it be expectant parents who are preparing for the arrival of their baby, a student's first day at school, an airport traveller journeying to their desired destination, or down to the normal daily interactions we have with strangers, acquaintances, colleagues, friends or families (Knobloch, 2010). For this reason, uncertainty has been a deeply researched topic by scholars from psychological and organisational disciplines alike (Katsaros & Tsirikas, 2021). While it has been described both in terms of a psycho-phenomenological state as well as a particular condition of an environment (Bordia et al., 2004), the current research will employ the definition of the former, that is, of a psycho-phenomenological state, as opposed to the latter since it deals with the objective state of an environment, for example, an organisation undergoing restructuring (Allen et al., 2007) or a crisis situation such as COVID-19 (Yoon et al., 2021). For this reason, uncertainty can be defined simply as "an individual's perceived inability to predict something accurately" (Milliken, 1987, p. 136), whether it be in the form of predicting events in the future or to explain certain past events (Berger & Bradac, 1982). This lack of confidence in their ability occurs when an event possesses several possible outcomes that are all equally likely to occur (Knobloch, 2010).

According to Berger and Calabrese (1975), there are seven axioms of URT that outlines the connection between uncertainty and relationship development: information-seeking, intimacy, liking, reciprocity, similarity, verbal and nonverbal communication Berger and Calabrese (1975). Most fundamental to URT is the axiom of information-seeking where it posits that individuals use information obtained from their environment in order to reduce ambiguity, distinguish between decision-making alternatives and to increase the predictability

of the environment around them (Bauer et al., 2007; Brashers, 2001). To accomplish this, there are three types of information-seeking strategies that people often use to get to know one another: passive, active and interactive strategies (Berger & Calabrese, 1975). Passive strategies refer to behaviours involving unobtrusive observation of a target person and obtaining information without interaction. Active strategies, on the other hand, allude to behaviours that involve proactive efforts in seeking information without contacting the target person, for example, by asking information from a third-party. Finally, interactive strategies are behaviours that involve direct confrontation with the target person and obtain information by asking questions and engaging in reciprocal self-disclosure (Antheunis et al., 2012).

Although URT originated from the communications literature on interpersonal interaction between strangers, scholars have expanded the theory to incorporate established relationships that extend beyond initial contact between individuals such as those of romantic relationships (Berger, 1979; Parks & Adelman, 1983). As Berger and Bradac (1982, p. 12-13) remarked: "in order for a relationship to continue, it is important that the persons involved in the relationship consistently update their fund of knowledge about themselves, their relational partner, and their relationship". Ever since then, it has been featured as a significant motivational force in a number of social psychological theories, for instance, Social Identity Theory (Hogg, 2000; 2001), Social Comparison Theory (Festinger, 1954) and Social Self-Regulation Theory (Abrams, 1994). Not only that, there has been empirical research investigating the destructive consequences of uncertainty on interpersonal relationships including relationship dissatisfaction (Theiss, Estlein & Weber, 2013), perceived relational turmoil (Knobloch, 2007), heightened threat appraisals (Theiss et al., 2009) and negative affect (Knobloch, Miller & Carpenter, 2007). The notion of uncertainty has also been applied to organisational studies where it has been well-established that employees likewise act to seek information in the workplace to boost their understanding of the environment and reduce

uncertainty (Yoon et al., 2021). Additionally, uncertainty research has also found its way into the leadership literature. For instance, previous research has found that followers often search for individuals who can portray certain leadership qualities. More specifically, followers search for leaders who emanate confidence, decisiveness and strength as well as having the ability to provide a sense of direction, order and clarity (Nevicka et al., 2013; Rast, 2015; Simpson, French & Harvey, 2002; Waldman et al., 2001). Indeed, previous research has found that followers during times of uncertainty are more accepting of assertive leadership (Padilla, Hogan & Kaiser, 2007) with strong agentic qualities (e.g., assertiveness, independence, decisiveness) (Hoyt, Simon & Reid, 2009). In fact, scholars have found that people may even favour leaders who can demonstrate strength, decisiveness and authority during times of crises and uncertainty even if their leadership is flawed or dysfunctional (Kramer, 2003; Lipman-Blumen, 2006; Madera & Smith, 2009; Reicher & Hopkins, 2003; Williams et al., 2009). For instance, Nevicka and colleagues (2013) demonstrated experimentally that participants undergoing uncertainty were more likely to choose high narcissists as leaders compared to those experiencing less uncertainty. Likewise, Rast, Hogg and Giessner (2013) demonstrated that followers preferred autocratic leaders when they felt more uncertain whereas those who felt less uncertain preferred non-autocratic leaders. Lastly, a study conducted by Kakkar and Sivanathan (2017) showed that individuals experiencing economic uncertainty (i.e., relating to poverty, housing vacancy and unemployment) were more supportive of a dominant leader.

Accordingly, URT is indispensable for the current research as uncertainty is an integral part of dyadic involvements (Knobloch & Solomon, 2005) which becomes ever more significant when we consider that leader-follower relationships are arguably some of the most important dyadic involvements in organisational and workplace settings (Knobloch & Solomon, 2005; Kong & Ho, 2018; Sias, 2009). Their importance can be ascribed to two

primary factors. Firstly, leaders constitute a major source of *relational uncertainty* (Knobloch & Knobloch-Fedders, 2010; Knobloch & Solomon, 1999; Kramer, 2009). According to URT, there are three ways in which uncertainty may be derived from interpersonal relationships, that is, uncertainty about the self, the partner and the relationship itself (Berger & Bradac, 1982; Berger & Calabrese, 1975; Knobloch & Solomon, 1999). *Self-uncertainty* pertains to the lack of knowledge or inability to identify, predict and explain their personal attitudes and behaviours. *Partner uncertainty* refers to the lack of knowledge about the communicating partner of the relationship. Lastly, *relationship uncertainty* stems from the lack of knowledge or predictability with regards to the state of the relationship. Scholars have pointed out that relational uncertainty in the workplace is often associated with leader-follower dyads as peers and colleagues are comparatively more available and accessible sources of information relative to supervisors in the workplace (Kramer, 2009; Louis, Posner & Powell, 1983; Nelson & Quick, 1991). The relational uncertainty experienced with leaders often emerge from the followers' need of clarity in the workplace, whether it be in terms of performance expectations and role clarity or concerning the clarity of communication with their leader (Eberly et al., 2011; O'Driscoll & Beehr, 1994). Accordingly, since the ability to communicate clearly and effectively to followers play a crucial role in leadership (Nemanich & Keller, 2007; Vera & Crossan, 2004), LDI becomes a significant source of uncertainty as it is an ambiguous behaviour where it may sometimes prove difficult to distinguish between a simple gesture of friendliness or a calculated attempt at manipulation.

Despite being a major source of uncertainty, they are also deemed to be an important source of information that enables uncertainty reduction in the workplace (O'Driscoll & Beehr, 1994; Tu et al., 2019). For example, Tu and colleagues (2019) found that ethical leadership provided teams with the necessary reduction in uncertainty, thereby resulting in enhanced individual- and team-level creativity through psychological safety climate as the

mediating mechanism. In a similar vein, Gkorezis, Bellou and Skemperis (2015) found that supervisors' effective use of kinesics, that is, facial, head and bodily expressions, provides the necessary information for followers to "read between the lines" (p. 1009) which facilitates uncertainty reduction, resulting in greater relational identification with supervisor via LMX as mediator. Finally, a study conducted by Neves, Pires and Costa (2021) revealed that the uncertainty-reducing influence of empowering leadership led to decreases in follower cognitive, affective and behavioural intentions to resist organisational change through psychological and structural empowerment.

Thus, based on the tenets of URT, leadership impression management including LDI plays a significant role in providing relevant social information to followers as they are arguably a form of self-disclosure that requires conveying or protecting a particular image (Bolino, Long & Turnley, 2016) which the follower subsequently perceives through passive, active or interactive strategies (Berger & Calabrese, 1975). As Baumeister (1989, p. 57) puts it succinctly: "... for individuals to pursue their goals in an organizational context, it becomes vitally important to communicate certain information (or misinformation) about themselves to others. Thus, self-presentation, or impression management, is of central importance".

For this reason, perceived ingratiatory intent serves as an important source of uncertainty-reducing information as behaviours in general are a cognitively inaccessible phenomenon (Stengel, 2000) where followers must rely on the assessment of their leader's motives in order to make sense of the ingratiatory attempt. This process is possible because behavioural motives provide the relevant information about the particular need, goal and function (Omoto & Snyder, 1995; Penner, Midili & Kegelmeyer, 1997) being pursued by the leader. It is for this reason that perceived intent is key to behavioural differentiation, a process underpinned by the evaluation, interpretation and assignment of meaning to an observed behaviour (Dasborough & Ashkanasy, 2002). As a result, the same behaviour or

action enacted by a leader may have contrasting consequences depending on the way it was perceived by followers (Bolino & Turnley, 1999; Jones & Baumeister, 1976). As mentioned in previous chapters, the importance of follower perceptions is further elevated due to their status as co-producers of the leadership phenomena (Carsten & Uhl-Bien, 2012; Shamir, 2007), thus making the perceived impressions they receive from their leader's behaviour a crucial factor in the emergence of leadership (Leary, 1989; Peck & Hogue, 2018).

Thus, building on this line of thought, followers' perceived ingratiatory intent of the leader is an essential source of information that enables them to reduce uncertainty about their leader. In this sense, the current research uses the term "uncertainty" or "relational uncertainty" to refer specifically to *partner uncertainty*, that is, the followers' lack of knowledge or inability to predict the attitudes and intents of their leader (Knobloch & Solomon, 1999). Followers, much like any other people, often have tendencies to be *naïve psychologists* (Heider, 1958) by forming and testing hypotheses about the causes of their leaders' behaviours which in turn influences the way they interpret, judge and respond to these events (Dasborough, 2019; Dasborough & Ashkanasy, 2002). In fact, URT owes much of its advancements to Heider (1958) since many of its basic premises about uncertainty were derived directly from attribution theory (Knobloch, 2010). More specifically, URT – much akin to attribution theory – asserted the notion of the average "naïve psychologist" who is driven by the need to "attain a cognitive mastery of the causal structure of his environment" (Kelley, 1967, p. 193). For this reason, attribution of intent lends itself naturally to URT since it constitutes an important source of information which enables causal inferences and predictions about others' behaviours (Kelley, 1967; 1973; Kelley & Michela, 1980; Thomas & Pondy, 1977). Additionally, its relevance in leader-follower phenomenon is reinforced when we consider that leadership in essence is a process of social interaction and thus more

appropriately explored in terms of basic social psychological theories including attribution theory (Dasborough & Ashkanasy, 2002).

While Calder (1977) was the first to integrate the notion of follower intent attributions with leadership behaviour, Dienesch and Linden (1986) in their seminal review paper introduced the notion of follower attribution of intent as a significant factor to consider in leader-member dyads. Indeed, an accumulated number of studies have investigated attribution of leader's intent since then. For example, Kim and colleagues (2019) found that the negative consequences of abusive supervision in the form of follower withdrawal behaviours can be mitigated when the cause was attributed to personal disposition of the leader. Another study conducted by Furst and Cable (2008) found that followers with high LMX relationships were more likely to attribute leader influence tactics to supportive and credible intentions which led to lower resistance to organisational change. Followers with low LMX, however, exhibited greater change resistance as leader influence tactics were more likely attributed to selfishness and insincerity. Finally, a study conducted by Fedor, Eder and Buckley (1989) revealed that follower perceived feedback intent of their leader significantly contributed to their feedback responses. More specifically, nonconstructive intent was found to weaken the relationship between positive feedback and follower positive affect.

Expectedly, these attributional processes carry over onto leader prosocial behaviours, and by extension, ingratiation. According to scholars, the two ways in which followers attribute the intent of a leader's prosocial behaviours are either to a selfless, altruistic motive or a selfish, instrumental motive (e.g., Eastman, 1994; Allen & Rush, 1998; Johnson et al., 2002). For decades, the question of whether prosocial behaviours are primarily attributed to selflessness or selfishness has been a controversial point of contention (Batson & Shaw, 1991; Cialdini, 1991) as it deeply touches on debates about morality (Staub, 1978; 1979). The argumentative positions are many, as some scholars contend that prosociality which benefits

the actor, especially in the form of *warm glow*, is considered “impure” (Andreoni, 1990) and are thus rare, while others assert that prosociality retains its altruistic “purity” so long as it was evoked by *empathic concern* (Batson & Shaw, 1991), whereas other scholars have advocated *psychological egoism* where altruism is necessarily egoistic since people with empathic concern enact prosociality only with the presence of perceived *oneness* with others (Cialdini et al., 1997). Regardless of the argumentative positions, a group of scholars have examined *lay theories* of altruism versus egoism and found that an observers’ perception of motives indeed remains an important factor since a prosocial act perceived as having the aim of accruing material or social benefits is considered “counter-altruistic” and therefore morally inferior (Carlson & Zaki, 2018).

While it is not within the scope of the current research to provide a full account of the debate on prosociality and morality, it is relevant to point out a common assumption within the literature, that is, perceived altruistic and instrumental intent elicits different responses from an observer. In particular, a selfless, altruistic intent leads to a favourable evaluation while the opposite occurs for a selfish, instrumental intent (e.g. Eastman, 1994; Podsakoff, MacKenzie & Hui, 1993; Organ, 1990). Consequently, this has often led to the dichotomous view that followers perceive the relationship with their leader in only two ways: either “I am being used” or “the leader is trying to help me develop professionally” (Dienesch & Linden, 1986, p. 629). However, drawing on URT, the current research proposes that the content of the leader’s intent has no bearing on whether an LDI elicits negative or positive outcomes on the followers, but rather, the presence of an attributable intent – or lack thereof – behind the ingratiation that functions as the boundary condition. In other words, an attributable intent irrespective of a selfish or selfless motivation leads to reduced relational uncertainty whereas the lack of an attributable intent leads to a heightened sense of uncertainty.

With that being said, URT alone does not sufficiently explain how clarity or unclarity of intent carries over to its respective beneficial or detrimental effects on follower work outcomes. For this reason, there is a need for theoretical integration which will be elaborated in the following section.

2.2.2 The Necessity of Theoretical Integration for URT

Over the past decades since the inception of URT, there have been numerous criticisms levelled against the theory. The most significant criticisms of URT have come from scholars who questioned the validity of its core assumption, that is, the axiom of information-seeking. Sunnafrank (1986) was one of the first scholars to do this by contending that, as opposed to being primarily motivated to reduce uncertainty in a relationship, people make predictions about the perceived rewards and costs of maintaining a relationship based on their initial impressions of a stranger. The assessment as to whether a relationship is worth continuing or should be halted is termed by Sunnafrank (1986) as the Predicted Outcome Value (POV). To illustrate this point, when an individual expects a high positive POV from a stranger, he or she would begin seeking proximity and increase their communication with the stranger in order to build a relationship whereas the opposite occurs if the stranger is predicted to have negative POV assessment (Sunnafrank & Ramirez, 2004). This theory has been helpful in understanding ongoing relationships where people continue to evaluate the POV levels of their relationship long after the initial interactions (Ramirez, Sunnafrank & Goei, 2010). Ever since Sunnafrank (1986) first formulated the POV theory, other scholars have attempted to reformulate URT by introducing the Uncertainty Management Theory (UMT) (e.g., Babrow, 2001; Brashers, 2001) which argues that uncertainty is neither an inherently negative nor positive state but instead involves an appraisal of its meaning, that is, whether uncertainty is evaluated as hopeful or dangerous (Brashers, 2007; Brashers & Hogan,

2013). If an uncertainty is appraised as hopeful, this would elicit feelings of optimism for a positive outcome whereas uncertainty that is appraised as dangerous would elicit fear and anxiety (Rains & Tukachinsky, 2015). However, in a rebuttal to criticisms from Sunnafrank (1986), Berger (1986) asserted that POV theory merely expanded on URT. More specifically, the notion that individuals must assess the potential POV of a relationship to guide their actions reinforces the idea that people are primarily motivated to reduce uncertainty. Arguably, the same contention could be made for UMT whereby the need to evaluate valence of an uncertainty (i.e., hopeful or dangerous) constitutes a motivated attempt to reduce uncertainty.

In the context of the current research, however, one matter that remains unclear regarding URT is the relationship between uncertainty and the negative reactions to it by followers, that is, although uncertainty is known to be an aversive phenomenon, what remains unclear relates to *why* it is aversive thereby eliciting negative reactions. One particular line of research that has touched upon this question is the literature on interpersonal topic avoidance, a behaviour defined as the purposeful evasion of discussions about sensitive issues with a communicating partner (Afifi & Burgoon, 1998; Afifi & Guerrero, 2000; Knobloch & Carpenter-Theune, 2004). As an illustration, Knobloch and Solomon (2003) revealed that romantic couples experiencing events that increases relational uncertainty were more likely to engage in distancing behaviours and topic avoidance. In another study, Afifi and Schrodt (2003) demonstrated that children undergoing periods of uncertainty, that is, post-divorce family life, engage in greater topic avoidance about the state of their family relationships. Accordingly, scholars have reasoned that individuals experiencing uncertainty often engage in more avoidance and less relationship-building communication strategies (Knobloch & Solomon, 2003; Maguire, 2007) as a defence mechanism to protect the relationship and thus enact topic avoidance (Afifi & Schrodt, 2003; Baxter & Wilmot, 1985).

However, in the context of leader-follower relationships, the motivation to protect the relationship is insufficient to explain how uncertainty can negatively affect follower performance at work. This is because work relationships are often, though not always, described as instrumental-exchange relationships whereas intimate relationships (e.g., friendships, romantic relationships, family relationships) are characterised as affective-communal relationships (Clark & Mills, 1979; Kark, 2012), meaning that each of these forms of relationships are governed by different norms as to how one should handle costs and benefits (Clark & Mills, 1993). More specifically, communal relationships involves the willingness to incur costs for the benefit of another while in exchange relationships, benefits are given with the expectation of receiving comparable rewards. Accordingly, the central distinguishing norm between the two is that communal relationships involve keeping track of others' needs whereas exchange relationships involve tracking inputs relative to repayment. (Clarks & Mills, 1994; Clark, Mills & Corcoran, 1989; Clark, Mills & Powell, 1986). As a result, it is unlikely that followers are motivated to protect a relationship with their leader in response to uncertainty. Thus, to close this gap in our understanding, the current research introduces CoR as the theoretical framework linking uncertainty to follower task performance. More specifically, by offering a resource-based explanation, the current research deviates from the conventional understanding which investigated valence of intent (i.e., altruistic or instrumental intent) as boundary conditions and instead examines the clarity or unclarity of perceived intent, regardless of altruistic or instrumental motives, as crucial factors that determine the differential effects of LDI on follower performances. This argument will be developed over the course of the forthcoming sections.

2.2.3 Hobfoll's (1989) Conservation of Resource Theory

CoR was first developed by Hobfoll (1989) in response to the need for an integrated theory of stress that takes into account both the perceived and objective environment (Hobfoll & Schumm, 2002). More specifically, CoR emphasises the *perceived* imbalance between coping capacity and the environment (i.e., the cognitive component) as well as the objective environmental circumstances itself, thereby introducing the notion of *resources* to the theory. In other words, the core tenet of CoR is that individuals are motivated to retain, protect and build on their resources. According to Hobfoll (1989, p. 516), resources refer to particular objects, conditions, personal characteristics or energies which are valued by an individual or those employed as means to achieve these values. To clarify, resources in the context of CoR pertains to values that are shared across all sociocultural differences (Hobfoll & Schumm, 2002).

Accordingly, Hobfoll (1989) identified four different types of resources whereby losses and gains of it will elicit stress or positive well-being: object, condition, personal and energy resources. Object resources refer to values that are physical in nature or those that offer value based on their expense or rarity, for example a house that provides adequate shelter or a mansion that displays socioeconomic status. Condition resources, on the other hand, pertain to specific environmental states or circumstances that provide further values to an individual which may include having a network of supportive relationships, being employed in a well-paying job, seniority and so forth. Personal resources relate to values at the individual level which includes personality traits (e.g. conscientiousness, self-esteem), positive affect or their own personal values and goals. Lastly, energy resources are those that can be traded in exchange for more values, such as money, time and knowledge.

Accordingly, CoR can be summarised into four central principles (Hobfoll et al., 2018): the primacy of resource loss, the principle of resource investment, the gain paradox

principle and the desperation principle. Firstly, primacy of resource loss contends that an individual's resource losses is a highly salient experience that takes priority over resource gain and therefore more impactful on the individual. On the other hand, the resource investment principle argues that in order for an individual to protect and gain resources or to recover from resource loss, they must further reinvest resources into these processes. The gain paradox principle states that when resource losses are high, resource gain likewise increases in salience and value. Finally, the desperation principle posits that when an individual's resources are expended or outstretched, they enter into a defensive mode in order to preserve the self. From these four principles, there are three key corollaries that can be derived (Hobfoll et al., 2018).

Corollary 1 predicts that individuals with greater resources are more resilient to resource losses and have higher capacity to gain more resources. By contrast, those with less resources are more vulnerable to resource loss and are less able to gain resources. Corollary 2 predicts a resource loss spiral which means that since resource losses are highly salient experiences that in turn elicits stress, at each cycle results in fewer resources to offset the losses, thereby increasing in impact and momentum. Lastly, Corollary 3 predicts that resource gain spirals in the same manner whereby the more resources an individual gains, the more they are able to reinvest to obtain additional resources. However, resource gain spirals are slower and weaker as compared to the salient experiences of resource loss. With that being said, resource gain spirals increase in saliency under high resource loss circumstances.

Since the late 1980s, CoR has been used extensively by researchers to study stress responses in a wide range of phenomena, ranging from chronic physical illnesses (Dirik & Karanci, 2010), post-traumatic stress disorders (Schumm, Briggs-Phillips & Hobfoll, 2006) and natural disasters (Blaze & Shwalb, 2009; Zamani, Gorgievski-Duijvesteijn & Zarafshani, 2006). However, the bulk of the research attention on CoR comes from organisational

scholars (Hobfoll et al., 2018) who are interested in topics such as emotional exhaustion (Halbesleben & Bowler, 2007), work-family conflict (Grandey & Cropanzano, 1999), job satisfaction (Judge, Van Vianen & De Pater, 2004) and more commonly, work engagement (Xanthopoulou et al., 2009a). In the context of the current research, however, the most relevant tenet of CoR is the principle of resource investment (Halbesleben et al., 2014; Hobfoll, 2001). As previously stated, it posits that individuals with surplus resources are driven to reinvest them for the purpose of obtaining, protecting and replenishing resources. Additionally, individuals utilise these resources in a manner that will maximise their gains in the relevant domain associated with the resource. In an organisational context, this means that individuals would prefer to reinvest work-related resources into the work domain (Hobfoll, 2001). Indeed, previous research has revealed that work-related resources are often reinvested into greater engagement in the workplace. For instance, Hakanen, Perhoniemi and Toppinen-Tanner (2008) conducted a study involving Finnish dentists found positive associations between task-level job resources (i.e., craftsmanship, pride in profession and positive results) and work engagement. In another instance, Mauno, Kinnunen and Ruokolainen (2007) conducted a study on Finnish health professionals and found that job control and organisation-based self-esteem were the job resources positively related with work engagement. Finally, in a study involving religious workers conducted by Bickerton and colleagues (2014), spiritual resources (i.e., secure attachment with God, religious collaboration and religious calling) which are arguably a distinct type of personal resource, were found to have positive effects on work engagement. Accordingly, the relationship between work engagement and both URT and CoR requires an elaboration which will be delved into in the following section.

2.2.4 Cognitive Resource Expenditure and Work Engagement

Since uncertainty is a psychologically aversive state stemming from the inability to accurately predict future events (Milliken, 1987; Knobloch & Solomon, 1999), uncertainty is thus primarily a cognitive phenomenon which places heavy demands on a person's cognitive resources as it requires active attention and investigation of the environment to reduce or mitigate (Duronto, Nishida & Nakayama, 2005; Griffin & Grote, 2020; Gudykunst & Nishida, 2001; Hogg, 2021). In the context of the current research, cognitive resources simply refer to the finite resources involving a person's capacity to exert cognitive processes at work such as self-regulation, problem-solving, attention span and memory recall (Fried et al., 1998; Sarandopoulos & Bordia, 2021; Wang & Shultz, 2010). Indeed, previous research has shown that uncertainty-reduction processes require the use of a person's cognitive resources. For instance, Randles and colleagues (2018) revealed that the working memory capacity is engaged when people are faced with uncertainty due to the increased vigilance in the search for new information in the environment. In another study, Walker and colleagues (2019) found that when individuals are faced with uncertainty, they increase their attentional processing in order to achieve a deeper encoding of information as well as to reinforce learning. Similarly, Beesley and colleagues (2015) demonstrated in an experiment that participants in an uncertain environment tend to spend more time and attention on an experimental task in order to gain more information for an accurate response.

With that being said, cognitive resources can be viewed as having a limited pool much akin to energy where the ability to expend cognitive effort diminishes with repeated use (Hobfoll, 2002). This conceptualisation of cognitive resources is consistent with a number of theories. For example, ego depletion theory asserts that self-control requires purposeful effort that is sustained by cognitive resources which, once depleted due to prolonged use, will temporarily render the individual unable or unwilling to engage in volitional action

(Baumeister et al., 1998; Barnes et al., 2011; Muraven & Baumeister, 2000). Likewise, cognitive load theory (Sweller, 1988; 1994) suggests that individuals facing highly stressful challenges will experience cognitive overload due to a shortage of available cognitive resources required to attend to task-relevant processes and uncertainties (De Rue & Wellman, 2009). Another example would be the notion of "cognitive misers" (Taylor, 1981) where people often strive to make the most efficient and conservative use of their mental effort in order to avoid overconsuming their cognitive resources (Corcoran & Mussweiler, 2010; Hogg, 2021; Taylor, 1981). Accordingly, the current research argues through the lens of CoR to posit that work engagement, comprising of absorption, dedication and vigour as defined by Schaufeli and colleagues (2002), are crucial indicators of cognitive resource levels since it encapsulates the diminished need to conserve or withhold one's resources on a particular task (Rich, LePine & Crawford, 2010) and thus a psychological manifestation of excess cognitive resources. In other words, work engagement indicates that an individual possesses an abundance of cognitive resources which enables them to remain in a continuous workflow state (i.e., absorption), feel a sense of significance for their work (i.e., dedication) and the ability to persevere and overcome challenges in the workplace (i.e., vigour) (Salanova, Bakker & Llorens, 2006; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004; Schaufeli et al., 2002).

Thus, by integrating URT and CoR, the current research proposes that since knowledge about the leader's intent provides the relevant social information that reduces uncertainty, this protects the follower's cognitive resources from expending on uncertainty-reduction processes and instead allowed to be reinvested back into work tasks. As a result, this manifests in the form of higher work engagement as it represents the follower's reduced need to conserve cognitive resources on task performance (Rich, LePine & Crawford, 2010). Conversely, followers who are unable to discern an attributable intent will be forced to expend cognitive resources into seeking the relevant social information from the environment

(Parks & Adelman, 1983) which elicits the salient experience of resource loss and activates their defensive state to retain and protect cognitive resources (Hobfoll et al., 2018), thereby manifesting as lower levels work engagement. Due to the crucial role that work engagement plays in the current research, an overview of the construct will be explored in the following section.

2.3 OVERVIEW OF WORK ENGAGEMENT

2.3.1 Definitions of Work Engagement

The concept of work engagement gained prominence due to widespread acknowledgement that employees need *psychological* capabilities as much as their physical capabilities to thrive which ultimately holds increasing organisational and economic significance. This was achieved through a process described by scholars as the "psychologisation" of the workplace (Schaufeli, 2013a). Accordingly, work engagement emerged at the turn of the century and was at first used primarily by human-resource professionals and consultants in the context of business practices and then followed by its appreciation in the scientific community through the rise of positive psychology (Schaufeli & Salanova, 2014). Scholarly interest in its effects on organisational competitiveness had accelerated to the extent that over 1,100 scientific publications were made on work engagement alone between 2001 to 2012.

While there has been substantial progress made in the work engagement literature (e.g., Christian, Garza & Slaughter, 2011; Cole et al., 2012; Parker & Griffin, 2011; Rich, LePine & Crawford, 2010; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2010) there are some inconsistencies in the way it is being defined. Beginning with Kahn (1990) who defined personal engagement as the state of "harnessing of organisation members' selves to their work roles" (p. 694) in such

a way that individuals are psychologically present energetically, behaviourally and emotionally in the workplace. Kahn's (1990) definition was the first of many that all other scholars drew upon (Christian, Garza & Slaughter, 2011).

Maslach, Schaufeli and Leiter (2001), on the other hand, simply defined work engagement as the direct antithesis of burnout. More specifically, rather than experiencing emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation and reduced feelings of personal accomplishment, engaged employees feel energetic, involved and efficacious in their work. In this sense, work engagement constitutes the reversed pattern of scores on the MBTI dimensions. Relatedly, Schaufeli and colleagues (2002) views work engagement as an independent, distinct construct that is negatively associated with burnout (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2010) and subsequently described it as the positive and fulfilling psychological state at work characterised by the experience of absorption, dedication and vigour. More specifically, absorption refers to the experience of total concentration and deep engrossment in work to the extent of feeling that time passes quickly, a state closely resembling to the idea of "flow" (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Dedication refers to the sense of enthusiasm, pride, inspiration and significance for work. Finally, vigour represents having high energy levels and resilience to persevere at work. Meanwhile, Saks (2006) has described engagement as a distinct and unique construct that comprises of cognitive, emotional and behavioural dimensions that are linked to "individual role performance". Similarly, Shuck and Wollard (2010) characterises it as the cognitive, emotional and behavioural state that are focused on attaining desired organisational outcomes, whereas Yalabik and colleagues (2013) attempted to encompass all aspects of work engagement and defined it as "an independent, persistent, pervasive, positive and fulfilling work-related affective-cognitive and motivational-psychological state" (p. 2801). For the purpose of the current research, the definition posited by Schaufeli et al. (2002) will be adopted as it is the most widely accepted description of work engagement in majority of

organisational research publications (Motyka, 2018). While there are controversies relating to its factorial validity where scholars are unable to settle the debate as to whether work engagement is most appropriately measured with a three-factor (i.e., absorption, dedication and vigour) or a single factor structure (e.g., Schaufeli et al., 2002; Schaufeli, Bakker & Salanova, 2006; Sonnentag, 2003; Viljevac et al., 2012; Wefald et al., 2012), the current research follows the recommendations of Kulikowsky (2017) to use the nine-item Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES-9) and interpret it as a unidimensional construct.

2.3.2 Work Engagement and its impact in the workplace

Regardless of the plethora of definitions offered by scholars, studies have consistently demonstrated the wide-ranging benefits incurred by organisations with a highly engaged workforce. In addition to previous studies that have established a positive relationship between work engagement and job performance (e.g., Alessandri et al., 2015; Bakker et al., 2008; Halbesleben, 2010; Halbesleben & Wheeler, 2008; Yalabik et al., 2013) as well as task performance (e.g., Bakker, Demerouti, & Ten Brummelhuis, 2012; Christian, Garza & Slaughter, 2011; Gorgievski, Bakker & Schaufeli, 2010; Neuber et al., 2021), work engagement has also been found to positively relate with organisational commitment (Kim et al., 2017). For example, in a study comprising of 294 frontline employees from the Jordanian banking sector, Albdour and Altarawneh (2014) demonstrated that while job and organisational engagement was positively related to affective and normative commitment, however, it was negatively associated with continuance commitment. These three types of organisational commitments can be described as the employee's emotional connection, sense of perceived obligation and the awareness of the costs of leaving their organisation, respectively (Meyer & Allen, 1991). The negative relations could be explained by the fact that highly engaged employees likewise exhibit high resilience in the workplace, thereby

reporting lower levels of continuance commitment (Albdour & Altarawneh, 2014). Furthermore, work engagement has also been associated with work-unit innovativeness (Hakanen, Perhoniemi & Toppinen-Tanner, 2008), personal initiative (Den Hartog & Belschak, 2012) and financial returns (Xanthopoulou et al., 2009b). Conversely, work engagement has been found to negatively associate with turnover intention (Halbesleben, 2010) as well as frequency of errors committed at work (Prins et al., 2009). In addition, work engagement has also been found to elicit positive outcomes at a team level such as collective flow (Salanova et al., 2014), team performance (Torrente et al., 2012) and collective efficacy beliefs (Salanova, Llorens & Schaufeli, 2011) as well as at an organisational level in terms of profit, customer satisfaction, productivity, accidents and employee turnover (Harter, Schmidt & Hayes, 2002).

There are four main reasons why work engagement elicits positive outcomes (Bakker, 2009). The first is that engaged individuals often experience positive emotions at work and as a result are more outgoing and helpful to their colleagues, more confident and optimistic, more able to take risks and more sensitive to opportunities in the workplace (Cropanzano & Wright, 2001). Likewise, according to the broaden-and-build theory (Fredrickson, 1998), positive emotions enable employees to broaden their momentary thought-action repertoires which prompt them to pursue a wider range of thoughts and actions such as building stronger social connections with others (Fredrickson, 2000). The second reason why engaged employees elicit positive outcomes is to do with their improved health. This is because engaged employees tend to report fewer psychosomatic complaints (Demerouti et al., 2001; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004; Schaufeli, Taris & Van Rhenen, 2008) and are therefore more able to perform their work tasks properly. The third reason is that engaged employees are more able to mobilise and gain more resources. According to research conducted by Xanthopoulou and colleagues (2007), there are reasons to believe that there is an upward

spiral associated with work engagement and resources as their results suggested that job and personal resources at T1 led to increased levels of work engagement at T2 which in turn further enhances job and personal resources over time. The final reason as to why engaged employees elicit positive outcomes is that work engagement can be transferred from person to person. Since work engagement is often characterised by positive emotional expressions such as having an open attitude or an active alert posture, it is therefore highly observable by others and readily internalised via mimicry (Van Mierlo & Bakker, 2018). For example, a study conducted by Bakker, Emmerik and Euwema (2006) revealed that individuals working in teams that are characterised by high prevalence of engagement will likewise experience increased engagement themselves, a phenomenon the authors call the "crossover" of work engagement.

Indeed, previous research have established the mediating role of work engagement in predicting task performance. For instance, in a study involving employees from a Dutch unemployment agency, Hulshof, Demerouti and Le Blanc (2020) revealed that work engagement mediated the relationship between work meaningfulness and service-oriented task performance. Likewise, Wei and colleagues (2018) conducted a study with a Chinese company in Shanghai and showed that authentic leadership was positively associated with task performance via work engagement as mediator. Finally, Xanthopoulou and colleagues' (2008) study on flight attendants showed that work engagement mediated the relationship between self-efficacy and in-role performance.

However, by employing the resource investment principle of CoR (Hobfoll, 2001) as mentioned in the previous sections, the current research argues that work engagement elicits positive outcomes on work performance because individuals who possess an excess of work-related resources are driven to reinvest the surplus into gaining further resources as well as to safeguard and recuperate from resource loss (Halbesleben et al., 2014; Hobfoll, 2001).

Furthermore, they would do so in a way that would maximise rewards in the domain most appropriate to the reinvested resource. Accordingly, by possessing a surplus of work-related resources, the excess are reinvested into the workplace by performing well both in terms of in-role and extra-role performances (Astakhova, 2015; Halbesleben, Harvey & Bolino, 2009; Halbesleben & Wheeler, 2008; Wheeler, Halbesleben & Shanine, 2013; Zivnuska et al., 2016). To illustrate this principle, an employee who has honed their skills at work would reinvest these newly obtained resources into improving their task performance to gain more resources such as pay or a promotion (Halbesleben, Harvey & Bolino, 2009). Thus, in the context of the current research, work engagement is proposed as the mediating mechanism between LDI and task performance. The decision to focus on work engagement is because, from a CoR perspective, work engagement reflects the decreased tendency of followers to conserve or withhold cognitive resources at work (Rich, LePine & Crawford, 2010). In other words, it encapsulates the followers' *unwillingness* to conserve cognitive resources at work. Accordingly, the proposed resource-based mechanism that bridges the relationship between clearly or unclearly attributed LDI to task performance can be illustrated via two separate sequences. Firstly, when followers encounter LDI that is clearly attributable to a particular intent irrespective of an altruistic or instrumental motive, the supply of social information about the leader protects followers from expending cognitive resources into the uncertainty-reduction process. Due to the resulting surplus of cognitive resources, followers will reinvest them into the workplace where they are subsequently enabled to continue engaging in work and executing tasks properly (Astakhova, 2015; Halbesleben, Harvey & Bolino, 2009; Halbesleben & Wheeler, 2008; Wheeler, Halbesleben & Shanine, 2013; Zivnuska et al., 2016). By contrast, when followers come across LDI that cannot be attributed clearly to a particular intent, the inability to extract relevant social information compels them to expend cognitive resources into the uncertainty-reduction process. As a result, this depletes them of

cognitive resources which activates their defensive state to retain and protect from further resource loss (Hobfoll, 2001, Hobfoll et al., 2018).

All in all, it is clear that work engagement is an indispensable part of organisations as it allows them to gain a competitive edge through the enhanced performances of their employees (Rich, LePine & Crawford, 2010). In other words, work engagement is inextricably linked to task performance as highly engaged employees are more likely to be experiencing happiness, have better health, greater ability to mobilise resources and, in the context of group-level performance, transfer engagement to each other (Bakker, 2009; Bakker & Albrecht, 2018; Bakker, Demerouti & Ten Brummelhuis, 2012). However, by incorporating the resource investment principle of CoR (Hobfoll, 2001), the current research argues that work engagement leads to task performance because individuals with a surplus of work-related resources tend to reinvest them into the work domain, thereby allowing them to perform well and engage in extra-role behaviours at work (Astakhova, 2015; Halbesleben, Harvey & Bolino, 2009; Halbesleben & Wheeler, 2008; Wheeler, Halbesleben & Shanine, 2013; Zivnuska et al., 2016). To this end, the final section of this chapter will examine the outcome variable of the current research.

2.4 OVERVIEW OF TASK PERFORMANCE

2.4.1 Definition and Nature of Task Performance

The higher-order construct of task performance, that is, job performance, is unsurprisingly considered one of the most researched work-related criterion amongst scholars and practioners alike (Devonish & Greenidge, 2010) and has been described as the most important dependent variable in organisational studies (Kahya, 2007; 2009; Hunter, Schmidt & Judiesch, 1990; Viswesvaran & Ones, 2017). For this reason, it is a highly valued construct

as it represents the primary contribution that an employee can give to the development of organisational effectiveness as well as the primary reason they are employed for (Schat & Frone, 2011). There are a number ways that scholars have defined job performance (Motowildo, Borman & Schmit, 1997; Campbell, 1990), for instance, Campbell (1990) broadly described it as the actions or behaviours that are considered relevant for the organisational goal, whereas scholars such as Abramis (1994) defined it as an employee's ability to proficiently carry out tasks or jobs that are useful to the social work environment. For Motowildo (2003), on the other hand, job performance refers to an employee's "total expected value to the organization of the discrete behavioural episodes that an individual carries out over a standard period of time" (p. 39). Regardless of the definitions used, however, there are two crucial features that defines job performance: the behavioural and the outcome aspect (Sonnentag & Frese, 2002). The behavioural aspect refers to the actions that the individual take in a work setting and this includes behaviours such as performing heart surgery as a heart surgeon or a schoolteacher who teaches lessons to students. While not every behaviours in the workplace can be considered as "performance", however, behaviours that are relevant to the achievement of organisational goals do. As Campbell and colleagues (1993) puts it: "Performance is what the organisation hires one to do, and do well, performance is not the consequence or result of action, it is the action itself. Performance consists of goal-relevant actions that are under the control of the individual, regardless of whether they are cognitive, motor, psychomotor, or interpersonal" (p. 40-41). By contrast, the outcome aspect is simply the consequences and results of the employee's behaviour. However, the relationship between behaviour and outcomes do not always overlap as there are other variables beyond the core behaviours that needs to be taken into account. To take the previous examples, while a schoolteacher may perform in a classroom which results in

increased student proficiency in a class topic, there will be some students who have failed due to other factors such as low conscientiousness on their part.

With that being said, Motowildo, Borman and Schmit (1997) argues that job performance is a multi-dimensional construct that consists of two components: task performance and contextual performance. While contextual performance refers to work-related behaviours that support an organisation beyond the technical core tasks such as helping a colleague with their work, task performance on the other hand, simply refers to in-role work-related behaviours consisting of the core technical tasks (Griffin, Neal & Neale, 2000). Indeed, a meta-analysis conducted by Koopmans and colleagues (2011) confirmed the multi-dimensionality of job performance consisting of both task and contextual performance, however, scholars have argued that task performance is considered the most basic and widely-used dimension and may in some cases be synonymised with "overall job performance" (Finch, Edwards & Wallace, 2009; Jalalkamali et al., 2016; 2018; Naseer et al., 2016). Hence, task performance is the central focus in the current research as it is concerned with whether the presence of an attributable intent allows followers to have excess resources to be reinvested back into work-related activities thereby becoming effective and efficient, whereas the lack of an attributable intent forces followers to expend resources into the uncertainty-reduction process, resulting in the activation of their defensive mode.

2.4.2 Leadership Downward Ingratiation and Task Performance

As discussed earlier in the present paper, scholars have often studied task performance in the context of supervisory performance appraisals (Bolino, Long & Turnley, 2016). For example, it has been well-established in the literature that upwards impression management is positively related to supervisory evaluations of likeability, interpersonal skills and perceived similarity of the employee which in turn leads to higher supervisory ratings of

their job performance and promotability (Wayne & Kacmar, 1991; Wayne & Liden, 1995; Wayne et al., 1997). In a similar vein, Bolino and colleagues (2006) revealed that impression managing employees are more likely to be seen as "good soldiers" by their supervisors and therefore provide higher ratings of organisational citizenship behaviour. Indeed, meta-analysis studies have further supported the notion that impression management elicits favourable appraisals from supervisors (Gordon, 1996; Higgins, Judge & Ferris, 2003).

Likewise, the ingratiation literature also found similar effects of eliciting positive supervisor appraisals of performance (Higgins, Judge & Ferris, 2003) and promotability (Kim, LePine & Chun, 2018; Wayne et al., 1997). A major flaw with these studies is that focusing on supervisory appraisals neglects the actual performance exhibited by followers (Bolino, Long & Turnley, 2016) and this is more relevant when we consider LDI and its effects on follower work-related outcomes. However, as with the LDI literature in general, there remains little research attention on this matter. Most relevant is a study conducted by Rozell and Gundersen (2003) where they revealed that leaders who engage in LDI elicit greater team cohesion. Furthermore, there is indirect evidence to suggest the aforementioned effects. For instance, a study conducted by Zheng and colleagues (2015) suggests that positive supervisor developmental feedback, a form of feedback that is characterised by favourable behaviours including giving praise and appreciation for a subordinate's personal and professional development, has been found to positively associate with employee task performance. In another study, Tjosvold (1984) revealed that leader warmth, a behaviour described as a leader's conveyance of interest, openness and friendliness in their interactions with subordinates, led to an increase in motivation to complete a subsequent experimental task. Furthermore, meta-analyses have also shown that leaders demonstrating consideration behaviour, that is, leaders who exhibit concern, friendliness and respectfulness towards their

subordinates, have also been found to enhance group performance (De Rue et al., 2011; Judge, Piccolo & Ilies, 2004).

2.5 HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

2.5.1 Perceived Leadership Downward Ingratiation and the Ingratiator's Dilemma

Impression management is a set of behaviours that constitutes one of the most fundamental aspects of social behaviours especially in the context of organisations (Giacalone & Rosenfeld, 1989; Gilmore et al., 1999; Vohs, Baumeister & Ciarocco, 2005). Amongst the various types of impression management tactics such as giving nonverbal cues, expressing apologies or self-handicapping (see Bolino et al., 2008 for a review), the most frequently studied and used tactic comes in the form of ingratiation (Bolino & Turnley, 1999; Bolino et al., 2008; Gardner; 1992; Stevens & Kristof, 1995). In the context of the current research, *perceived* LDI is the focus of study due to the increasing scholarly emphasis on follower perspectives (Alvesson & Einola, 2019; Sidani & Rowe, 2018) due to their importance as co-producers of the leadership phenomenon (Peck & Hogue, 2018; Shamir, 2007). This is argued on the basis that the emergence of leadership is impossible without the *followership* of others, that is, one party of individuals must be willing to defer themselves to another in order for the leadership phenomenon to arise (Uhl-Bien & Carsten, 2016; Uhl-Bien et al., 2014).

While it is well-established that ingratiation is an effective behaviour in achieving likeability and influence (Gordon, 1996) as well as to equalise power imbalances (Jones, 1965), it has also been known by scholars for its potential risk of "backfiring" where instead of becoming likeable as intended, the ingratiatory attempt fails and inadvertently produce negative impressions (Liu et al., 2014; Ralston & Elsass, 1989; Turnley & Bolino, 2001).

These ingratiatory failures are most likely to occur when it is enacted in an upward direction from a low- to a high-power individual. For example, an employee giving praises and compliments to their supervisors (Ralston & Elsass, 1989). This happens because individuals who hold greater hierarchical power in an organisation are conscious of power asymmetries which leads them to become warier of manipulation and in turn more vigilant in assessing their subordinate's authenticity (Berscheid & Regan, 2016). As a result, scholars have designated this phenomenon as the *ingratiator's dilemma*, a name deliberately phrased to encapsulate the paradoxical challenge faced by ingratiators, that is, those who are dependent on another are most incentivised to ingratiate in a bid to equalise power but simultaneously have the most likelihood to be judged negatively (Frankel & Morris, 1976; Gordon, 1996; Jones, 1965). By contrast, leaders are in a unique context as they enact LDI from a legitimate position of power relative to their followers. Since leaders are largely depended upon by followers due to their hold over their fate both in terms of rewards and punishments in the workplace (Schilpzand, De Pater, & Erez, 2016; Hershcovis & Barling, 2010; Shin & Hur, 2020), this in turn allows leaders to become more *uninfluenced* by their followers especially with regards to the attitudes and behaviours of others (Galinsky, et al., 2008). As a corollary to this power asymmetry, leaders are therefore less susceptible to have their ingratiatory attempts interpreted negatively by followers, or in other words, are less likely to be affected by the ingratiator's dilemma. As a result, this calls into question as to whether the potential effects of LDI on followers can be studied through conventional understandings associated with prosocial behaviours, that is, a "good" altruistic intent versus a "bad" instrumental intent (e.g. Bolino et al., 2013; Eastman, 1994; Johnson et al., 2002; Podsakoff, MacKenzie & Hui, 1993; Organ, 1990).

With that being said, it is worth mentioning that the current research is by no means suggesting that followers are powerless individuals in the organisation. Instead, the current

research posits that while leaders hold legitimate power that is granted by their position in the organisation, followers by contrast hold significant amount of *counter power*, for instance, having the potential to quit their jobs or hinder organisational goals by forming coalitions or restricting productivity (Thibaut & Kelley, 1959). In turn, this incentivises leaders to employ LDI to offset this dynamic by gaining the affection and loyalty of their followers as well as earning the favours of their own supervisors (Jones, Gergen & Jones, 1963). However, since they are less affected by the ingratiator's dilemma, a question arises as to what boundary conditions would lead perceived LDI to produce beneficial or detrimental effects on followers. To this end, URT is utilised to gain insight into this matter by arguing that uncertainty, or lack thereof, plays a significant role in this phenomenon. The rationale for this argument will be developed in the forthcoming sections.

2.5.2 Sources of Uncertainty-Reducing Information: The Role of Perceived Ingratiatory Intent

Uncertainty is a phenomenon that is prevalent across organisational contexts and may take on different forms (Alison et al., 2014) and emerge from multiple sources, whether it be from organisational changes and restructuring (Allen et al., 2007; Bordia et al., 2004) or from impacts due to COVID-19 (Yoon et al., 2021). However, *relational uncertainty* is at the centre of the current research since it is a crucial process in dyadic involvements (Knobloch & Solomon, 2005) which is made more significant when we consider that leader-follower dyads are arguably some of the most important dyadic relationships in organisational settings (Kong & Ho, 2018; Sias, 2009). Scholars have posited that relational uncertainties in the workplace are more closely associated with leader-follower dyads since peers and colleagues are readily available and accessible sources of information compared to supervisors (Kramer, 2009; Louis, Posner & Powell, 1983; Nelson & Quick, 1991). Relational uncertainties about

a leader would often stem from followers needing clarity in the workplace, whether it be in terms of performance expectations and role clarity or concerning the quality of communication with their leader (Eberly et al., 2011; O'Driscoll & Beehr, 1994). Accordingly, since leadership requires a leader who can communicate effectively and clearly to their followers (Nemanich & Keller, 2007; Vera & Crossan, 2004), LDI can therefore become a significant source of uncertainty since it is an ambiguous behaviour where the same action may be viewed as a simple gesture of friendliness or a manipulative attempt at influencing someone.

While leaders are a major source of uncertainty, they are also crucial providers of information in the workplace (Knobloch & Solomon, 1999; Kramer, 2009; O'Driscoll & Beehr, 1994; Tu et al., 2019). This is especially the case during stressful and uncertain situations where followers tend to rely on individuals who can carry the burden of their uncertainty and offer a clear vision and direction for the future (Rast, 2015; Rast & Hogg, 2016). More specifically, they would often seek leaders who exudes confidence, decisiveness and strength in addition to delivering guidance, order and clarity (Nevicka et al., 2013; Simpson, French & Harvey, 2002; Waldman et al., 2001).

Despite the diverse range of information that a leader could present to alleviate uncertainty in the workplace, the primary form of information in the context of LDI is arguably the followers' perceived ingratiatory intent. This is because behaviours are a cognitively inaccessible phenomenon (Stengel, 2000) which requires evaluation of the leader's motives to assign meaning to the ingratiatory attempt as it gives information about the particular need, purpose and function (Omoto & Snyder, 1995; Penner, Midili & Kegelmeyer, 1997) pursued by the leader. Thus, according to URT, impression management including LDI can be considered forms of reciprocal self-disclosure (Antheunis et al., 2012) which constitutes an important element of the followers' information-seeking process. This is

because both impression management and LDI requires information disclosure about oneself in order to convey or protect a particular image or impression (Bolino, Long &. Turnley, 2016; Baumeister, 1989) which is then perceived by followers either through passive, active or interactive strategies (Berger & Calabrese, 1975). Indeed, the significance of follower perceptions is highlighted by the fact that leadership emergence itself relies on the impressions and images they receive from their leader (Leary, 1989; Peck & Hogue, 2018). Thus, in this sense, the term "uncertainty" is used in the current research to mean primarily of *partner uncertainty* which refers to the followers' ability, or lack thereof, to predict the attitude and intent of the leader (Knobloch & Solomon, 1999). With that being said, it is worth mentioning that the current research acknowledges not every behaviour that an individual enacts is motivated by uncertainty reduction (Brashers et al., 2000) and in some contexts may even actively seek uncertainty in the form of surprising or unexpected events such as gambling, reading mystery novels or watching suspenseful movies (Pyszczynski et al., 2006). What the current research argues, however, is that uncertainty reduction processes represent a fundamental aspect in the way we relate to one another (Knobloch, 2010) and the lack of relational information from a leader carries tremendous impact on followers as uncertainty is an intrinsically aversive phenomenon (Bordia et al., 2004).

Accordingly, followers' perceived ingratiatory intent of their leader serves as an important source of information to reduce uncertainty. In the context of the current research, the types of intent attribution investigated for LDI is of the two main ways in which prosocial behaviours are attributed, that is, whether LDI is attributed to a selfless, altruistic intent or a selfish, instrumental intent (e.g., Eastman, 1994; Allen & Rush, 1998; Johnson et al., 2002). However, by incorporating URT, the current research deviates from previous studies which examined the valence of intent (i.e., altruistic vs instrumental) as boundary condition (e.g., Bolino et al., 2013; Eastman, 1994; Johnson et al., 2002; Podsakoff, MacKenzie & Hui,

1993; Organ, 1990) and instead will investigate the clarity or unclarity of altruistic and instrumental intent in determining the effects of LDI on followers. More specifically, when a leader's ingratiatory attempt is enacted without conveying a clear intent, this creates relational uncertainty whereas a clear conveyance of intent by the leader, regardless whether it is motivated by altruistic or instrumental intent, provides the necessary social information to reduce uncertainty and therefore produces no aversive reaction amongst followers.

As it stands, URT alone is insufficient to explain how clarity of intent, or lack thereof, leads to its respective beneficial and detrimental effects on followers at work. Accordingly, by integrating CoR, a resource-based explanation is proposed that links uncertainty with its effects on followers. This will be further discussed and the first set of hypotheses presented in the following section.

2.5.3 Clarity of Perceived Ingratiatory Intent as Boundary Conditions

While resources at work may come in a wide variety of forms such as having the necessary tools for work, stable employment or support and understanding from a boss or colleague (Hobfoll, 2001, p. 342), the most relevant resource in the context of the current research are cognitive resources. This is because uncertainty is primarily a cognitive phenomenon (Duronto, Nishida & Nakayama, 2005; Gudykunst & Nishida, 2001) which demands a great deal of mental effort to reduce and mitigate (Griffin & Grote, 2020; Hogg, 2021). As a result, this requires followers to be strategic in the way they expend their limited pool of cognitive resources by only solving uncertainties that are important and immediate to them (Corcoran & Mussweiler, 2010; Hogg, 2021; Taylor, 1981).

Thus, to delineate how LDI with clear or unclear intentions can impact follower outcomes through the proposed resource-based explanation, a deliberation of CoR is required. More specifically, the principle of *resource investment* is relevant to the current

research where it postulates that individuals who acquire a surplus of resources are motivated to reinvest them to gain additional resources as well as to safeguard and recover from resource loss (Halbesleben et al., 2014; Hobfoll, 2001). Not only that, individuals aim to reinvest in ways that would maximise their resource gains in the relevant domain associated with the resource they plan to reinvest (Hobfoll, 2001). For instance, work-related resources would be reinvested into the workplace (Halbesleben, Harvey & Bolino, 2009). Accordingly, the current research uses work engagement as an indicator of the followers' cognitive resource levels because, when seen from the perspective of CoR, it signifies the reduced need to conserve or withhold their cognitive resources from work (Rich, LePine & Crawford, 2010), or in other words, it encapsulates the level of *unwillingness* to conserve cognitive resources.

Accordingly, the current research integrates URT and CoR to contend that when followers come across a perceived LDI with a clear, attributable intent, this protects them from the need to exert mental effort and thus are able to redirect their surplus cognitive resources into work-related activities (Astakhova, 2015; Halbesleben, Harvey & Bolino, 2009; Halbesleben & Wheeler, 2008; Wheeler, Halbesleben & Shanine, 2013; Zivnuska et al., 2016) which allows them to continue engaging in their work. In other words, by redirecting surplus cognitive resources into the workplace, they enter a state of mind where they become engrossed ("absorption"), acquire a sense of significance ("dedication") and feeling energetic ("vigour") for their work (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). By contrast, followers encountering a perceived LDI without a clear intent are unable to extract relevant social information which would lead them to expend cognitive resources into the uncertainty-reduction process. Consequently, this elicits the salient experience of resource loss which activates their defensive state to retain and protect their available resources (Hobfoll et al., 2018) and in turn become less able to engage with their work. Indeed, previous research has

demonstrated the close relationship between a wide range of work-related resources and work engagement (e.g., Bickerton et al., 2014; Hakanen, Perhoniemi & Toppinen-Tanner, 2008; Halbesleben, 2010; Mauno, Kinnunen & Ruokolainen, 2007; Saks, 2006). Thus, based on the arguments presented so far, the first set of hypotheses can be formulated as follows:

Hypothesis 1a: A negative effect of Leadership Downward Ingratiation on Work Engagement is observed when Perceived Instrumental Intent is low and a null effect is observed when high.

Hypothesis 1b: A negative effect of Leadership Downward Ingratiation on Work Engagement is observed when Perceived Altruistic Intent is low and a null effect is observed when high.

A direct main effect of LDI on work engagement is not hypothesised since it has been theoretically argued that the effects of ingratiation are dependent on the context it was enacted, or with regards to LDI, whether the leader's ingratiatory intent was conveyed clearly or unclearly to the followers. This is supported by the plethora of findings that revealed both positive (e.g., Rozell & Gundersen, 2003; Judge & Bretz, 1994; Orpen, 1996) and negative (e.g., Vonk, 1998; Keeves, Westphal & McDonald, 2017) outcomes of ingratiation. Furthermore, a null effect is hypothesised because perceiving a clear intent is not theorised to expand the followers' limited cognitive resource pool but rather elicits a protective effect against the resource-depleting process of uncertainty reduction.

With that being said, the arguments presented so far has yet to explain what the work-related outcomes are when cognitive resources are protected from or depleted by uncertainty. Accordingly, this resource-based mechanism linking LDI to the work-related outcome of the

current research, that is, task performance, will be elaborated and the final set of hypotheses presented in the following section.

2.5.4 Work Engagement as Mediator between Leadership Downward Ingratiation and Task Performance

As mentioned previously, individuals who possess a surplus of resources are driven to reinvest into the appropriate domain to maximise their resource gains (Hobfoll, 2001). This means that followers who possess excess work-related resources would reinvest them into their jobs by fulfilling their tasks properly or engaging in extra-role behaviours (Astakhova, 2015; Halbesleben, Harvey & Bolino, 2009; Halbesleben & Wheeler, 2008; Wheeler, Halbesleben & Shanine, 2013; Zivnuska et al., 2016). This link between work engagement and performance outcomes can be ascribed to several factors, namely that highly engaged employees tend to be happier in the workplace (Cropanzano & Wright, 2001) which allows them to broaden their range of thoughts and actions (Fredrickson, 2000), are healthier (Demerouti et al., 2001; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004; Schaufeli, Taris & Van Rhenen, 2008) and more able to mobilise and gain more resources (Bakker, 2009; Van Mierlo & Bakker, 2018; Xanthopoulou et al., 2007), thus overall becoming more productive in the workplace (Demerouti & Cropanzano, 2010). Indeed, previous research have established the mediating role of work engagement in predicting task performance (e.g., Hulshof, Demerouti & Le Blanc, 2020; Wei et al., 2016; Xanthopolou et al., 2008).

In following this line of thought, the current research proposes work engagement as the mediating mechanism between perceived LDI and task performance because, from a CoR perspective, it reflects the lowered tendency of followers to conserve or withhold cognitive resources from their job tasks (Rich, LePine & Crawford, 2010). Thus, the proposed resource-based mechanism linking clearly or unclearly attributed LDI to follower task

performance can be played out in two different sequences. Firstly, as a result of perceived LDI with an unclear and unattributable intent, followers are forced to expend valuable cognitive resources into the process of seeking social information (Parks & Adelman, 1983) in an effort to reduce uncertainty. In turn, this depletes their resources and activates their defensive state (Hobfoll et al., 2018) which decreases their level of work engagement and subsequently reduces task performance. Secondly, due to perceived LDI with an attributable intent irrespective of an altruistic or instrumental motive, followers are protected from cognitive resource expenditure from the uncertainty-reduction process which allows them to reinvest the surplus resources into work-related activities (Astakhova, 2015; Halbesleben, Harvey & Bolino, 2009; Halbesleben & Wheeler, 2008; Wheeler, Halbesleben & Shanine, 2013; Zivnuska et al., 2016), thereby enabling followers to continue engaging in their work and thus in executing their tasks properly. Based on the arguments presented thus far, the final set of hypotheses can be formulated as follows:

Hypothesis 2a: A negative effect of Leadership Downward Ingratiation on Task Performance via Work Engagement is observed when Perceived Instrumental Intent is low and a null effect is observed when high.

Hypothesis 2b: A negative effect of Leadership Downward Ingratiation on Task Performance via Work Engagement is observed when Perceived Altruistic Intent is low and a null effect is observed when high.

With that being said, it is worth pointing out an additional test that will be conducted in this thesis, that is, examining psychological withdrawal as mediator. This is done to test the theoretical robustness of the proposed relationships by investigating the *willingness* (i.e.,

psychological withdrawal) in addition to the *unwillingness* (i.e., work engagement) to conserve cognitive resources. This way, further generalisability is provided for the proposed mechanism by demonstrating that it applies in the reversed direction, that is, low levels of perceived instrumental and altruistic intent leads to cognitive resource loss which increases psychological withdrawal and in turn detrimental to follower task performance. Accordingly, the hypotheses as stated previously can be further formulated as follows:

Hypothesis 1a: A positive effect of Leadership Downward Ingratiation on Psychological Withdrawal is observed when Perceived Instrumental Intent is low and a null effect is observed when high.

Hypothesis 1b: A positive effect of Leadership Downward Ingratiation on Psychological Withdrawal is observed when Perceived Altruistic Intent is low and a null effect is observed when high.

Hypothesis 2a: A negative effect of Leadership Downward Ingratiation on Task Performance via Psychological Withdrawal is observed when Perceived Instrumental Intent is low and a null effect is observed when high.

Hypothesis 2b: A negative effect of Leadership Downward Ingratiation on Task Performance via Psychological Withdrawal is observed when Perceived Altruistic Intent is low and a null effect is observed when high.

Psychological withdrawal is a relevant indicator because it represents a motivational state characterised by mental distancing and disengagement from effort (Schaufeli & Taris,

2005) which serves as a protective mechanism against exhaustion (i.e., lack of energy) (Schaufeli, 2013b) and to help return to a baseline state (Scott & Barnes, 2011). According to Lehman and Simpson (1992), the characteristics of psychological withdrawal includes putting little effort into work, letting others do the work, desire to be absent, thoughts of leaving current job, daydreaming, spending worktime on personal matters and chatting excessively with colleagues.

CHAPTER THREE: GENERAL METHODOLOGY

3.1 RESEARCH PHILOSOPHY

3.1.1 Research philosophy in the Social Sciences

The philosophical position adopted by a social scientist reveals their implicit beliefs – whether consciously or not – about certain fundamental, unavoidable questions that arise when reflecting on the nature of the social sciences (Ladyman, 2002). It is the answers to these philosophical questions that guide the approach to scientific inquiry and thereby provide the foundation for the methodological choices a researcher will carry out, be it either through quantitative surveys to qualitative interviews which are then applied in approaches that can vary from ethnographic research in natural settings to well-controlled laboratory experiments (Lee & Lings, 2008). More explicitly, the choice of methodology is derived from the researcher's position in three different subfields of philosophy, that is, *ontology*, *epistemology* and *axiology*.

At the level of ontology, the matter of concern is the researcher's beliefs about the nature of social entities in reality, and the two broad and contrasting paradigms that are often posited are the ideas of objectivism and subjectivism (Bryman, 2012; Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009). As the name implies, objectivism refers to the position that social entities possess a reality independent of the mind and are therefore external to social actors. For instance, an objectivist ontology in organisational management would indicate that the essence of management is an objective entity that exists separately from the individual managers and therefore the process of management would remain the same across different structures or personnel between organisations. By contrast, subjectivism refers to the doctrine that reality is socially and discursively constructed which is therefore shaped by a social

actor's own subjective consciousness or experiences. For example, a subjectivist view would argue that there is no definitive social entity called 'customer service', but rather it arises from the interaction between the customer and the service providers and therefore is a phenomenon that is in constant flux and differs across social contexts.

While ontology reflects the researcher's views about the nature of social entities in reality, epistemology reflects their views about what can be known about reality and how one can set out to acquire knowledge. Here, three broad schools of thought can be distinguished – namely positivism, realism and interpretivism (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009). Positivism, which stems from an objectivist ontology, is concerned with discovering general laws that govern reality much akin to the methodologies found in the physical and natural sciences. As a result, there are several components associated with the positivist approach to research (Holden & Lynch, 2004): firstly, the information and phenomena that can be verified via the sensory experiences are the only sources of valid knowledge. Secondly, science must be conducted, as far as possible, in a value-free way whereby research is driven primarily by objective criteria rather than by personal interests, values and beliefs. Thirdly, the role of the researcher is to be an independent observer that is separate from the phenomena being studied.

Realism, likewise as positivism is rooted in the objectivist tradition and asserts that social reality exists independent of the researcher's conscious efforts to observe and confirm the existence of an external reality (Holden & Lynch, 2004). There are two major schools of thought within realism: naïve realism and critical realism. Naïve realism, otherwise known as direct realism, posits that a researcher's sensory experiences and perception directly corresponds to, and therefore perfectly portrays, the external reality (Bryman, 2012). By contrast, critical realism expands on this idea by acknowledging the fallibility of the senses and postulates that any attempts to acquire knowledge about the external reality is simply a

way of knowing (Bryman, 2012). In other words, although an objective social reality exists, it is nevertheless subject to multiple interpretations and therefore multiple "realities" are being constructed in people's minds (Healy & Perry, 2000). Accordingly, a critical realist approach to research is to be value-cognizant, meaning that while reality is an objective absolute, a researcher must remain mindful about their own social conditioning and how it can potentially influence their knowledge of reality (Krauss, 2005).

The third and final epistemic position is interpretivism, which is derived from a subjectivist ontology and therefore opposes the central tenets of positivist and realist knowledge by positing that researchers can never independently observe a phenomenon, but rather, is deeply involved in the knowledge generation process that is both highly contextualised and temporalised, thus creating knowledge that is "relatable" but not generalisable (Allan, 1998). It is for this reason that an interpretivist approach to research is described as being value-laden which means that research is heavily driven by the researcher's own biases, interests and values (Holden & Lynch, 2004).

Another significant aspect of research philosophy is axiology, where it is concerned with what the researcher's overall aims are in the pursuit of knowledge (Lee & Lings, 2008). From a positivist or a realist axiology, the aim of research is to establish a causal explanation for reality as well as the ability to draw predictions of phenomena across different situations. In this regard, they employ the hypothetico-deductive reasoning where the researcher first formulates a series of falsifiable hypotheses which are developed from theory-driven conceptualisation followed by the verification of these hypotheses through deduction (Holden & Lynch, 2004). This process would involve a clear operationalisation in order to allow facts to be measured quantitatively, employ reductionism where complex problems are simplified to its most fundamental elements and lastly, require ample data from a representative sample.

Interpretivist axiology, on the other hand, is unconcerned with cause-and-effect relationships, but rather, aims to achieve *Verstehen* (i.e., an empathetic understanding) of phenomena (Porta & Keating, 2008). For this reason, inductive reasoning is at the heart of interpretivist logic whereby the researcher forms ideas and conclusions based on observation of evidence (Holden & Lynch, 2004).This process would therefore entails the usage of qualitative research methods involving smaller sample sizes being studied extensively over a longer period of time, utilising a holistic approach to investigating problems and finally, employing an emerging research design that evolves as the study progresses.

3.1.2 Research Philosophy in Leadership Research

For most of its history, leadership research has been dominated by a positivist and/or critical realist epistemology which has favoured the adoption of hypothesis-testing through statistical analyses on large dataset as the primary form of investigation (Alvesson, 1996; Bryman, 2012; Case, French & Simpson, 2011). This means that leadership scholars often undertake studies on theory-laden constructs that are not immediately perceivable to the observer (e.g., perceptions and wellbeing) but nevertheless are objectively measurable and knowable which therefore are integrable to an overarching theoretical framework (Lee & Lings, 2008). The aim of this method is to produce generalisable knowledge that explains and predicts relationships between leadership and a diverse array of work-related outcomes (Alvesson, 1996). For instance, research into leadership ingratiation and by extension the impression management literature as a whole, often employs large-scale data collections using survey scales to measure the desired constructs followed by statistical analyses to obtain meaningful conclusions (Bolino, Long & Turnley, 2016). Occasionally, research may also be supported with experimental studies where impression management behaviours are manipulated an independent variable (e.g., Wayne & Ferris 1990; Wayne & Kacmar 1991)

which allows accounting for as many confounding variables as possible and making causal inferences from relationships, that is, internal validity (Cook, Campbell & Shadish, 2002).

There are fewer leadership studies employing an interpretivist approach and its corollary, the qualitative research methods (Bryman, 2012). For example, Lowe and Gardner (2000) reviewed publications from the first ten years of The Leadership Quarterly and revealed that one-third of all journal articles utilised qualitative methodologies. This gap has significantly widened a decade later where Gardner and colleagues (2010) demonstrated that the proportion is as low as 12% of all articles published up to the year 2009 published. In more recent years from 2010 to 2019, the proportion of qualitative studies further dropped to approximately 10% (Gardner et al., 2020). However, this is not to say there are no qualitative studies in the field of leadership ingratiation. For instance, Stern and Westphal (2010) conducted interviews to examine how executives employ ingratiation in ways that could maximise the chances of drawing favourable attributions while avoiding negative reactions from targets.

In short, the state of the art in leadership research as well as the literature on leadership ingratiation consists of a strong positivist and/or critical realist tradition where most studies feature hypothetico-deductive reasoning as the basis of investigation thereby employing quantitative approaches as the primary research method, i.e. large-scale data collections through surveys and associated statistical analyses. In contrast, far fewer studies utilise qualitative methods such as interviews, focus groups and case studies with the purpose of gaining Verstehen of context-specific phenomena (Alvesson, 1996; Bryman, 2012).

3.1.3 Thesis Research Philosophy and Design

The philosophical position adopted by the current research will be of an objectivist ontology with a critical realist epistemology. In other words, the present study adopts the

stance that an objective and discoverable social reality exists independently of the mind and unobservable constructs such as perception of leadership ingratiation motive can be meaningfully gauged and studied through the employment of scales and questionnaires (Lee & Lings, 2008). Accordingly, the current research seeks to produce theory-laden hypotheses with the aim of developing generalisable knowledge about the effects of leader ingratiation on follower work-related performance, as opposed to achieving Verstehen of context-specific phenomena. For this reason, a quantitative methodology and its respective research designs are deemed most appropriate for the current research for a number of reasons. Firstly, the current research can be classified as a *mature theory research* (Edmondson & McManus, 2007) which involves the use of previously developed constructs and measures that have been studied by previous scholars, that is, the constructs of LDI, perceived intents, work engagement and task performance. Accordingly, all the studies conducted in the current research employs the use of quantitative data for the purpose of hypothesis testing through statistical inference. Secondly, the aim of the current research is to add theoretical specificity into the existing literature, that is, to identify the exact boundary conditions that elicit a positive or negative response towards LDI from followers, thereby making quantitative research designs the most appropriate for the current research (Edmonson & McManus, 2007).

An experiment design was conducted for Study 1 in response to a wider issue of low internal validity that has frequently plagued the leadership literature (Bryman, 2011; Podsakoff & Podsakoff, 2019). This is because the typical leadership study often employs cross-sectional research designs (Friedrich, Byrne & Mumford, 2009; Hunter, Bedell-Avers & Mumford, 2007) which does not assess the hypothesised cause prior to its effect and instead measures all variables simultaneously which in turn makes the notion of causality or directionality impossible to establish from the obtained data (Aguinis & Edwards, 2014).

Rather, cross-sectional designs produces associations between variables as opposed to identifying causal relationships (Bryman, 2012). This is detrimental to the literature as it does not allow a researcher to confidently rule out alternative explanations or reverse causality for a given set of variables (Bryman, 2012; Spector, 2019). More recently, leadership scholars have begun confronting this issue by conducting causal empirical research in greater frequency as evidenced by the growth in number of publications that use experimental methods to supplement their cross-sectional field studies (Podsakoff & Podsakoff, 2019). Accordingly, Study 1 employed an experimental design in order to evidence causality of the proposed relations.

Experiments are a class of research methods which involves randomly assigning participants into group conditions where the variables of interest (independent variables) are manipulated by the researcher by exposing each group to a particular value of the independent variable, for example, high versus low (Breitsohl, 2021). This way, it enables researchers to establish temporal precedence for a cause relative to the effect, that is, by observing a sequence of events where variations in the independent variable led to variations in the dependent variable under a highly controlled environment (Duckworth, Tsukayama & May; 2010; Podsakoff & Podsakoff, 2019). Furthermore, random assignment contributes to establishing causality because it ensures that alternative influences that may explain a hypothesised cause and effect relationship are distributed identically throughout a sample (Cartwright, 2010). In other words, randomisation allows for the differences and similarities between participants to only exist by chance, thus minimising a confounded or biased result (Bruhn & McKenzie, 2009; Kennedy et al., 2008; Lin, Zhu & Su, 2015). In the context of Study 1, the experimental design employed was of an experimental vignette methodology (EVM) where participants were presented with a vignette, that is, a brief description or scenario about a hypothetical person, object or situation in order to assess dependent

variables through their responses such their attitudes, intentions or behaviours (Atzmüller & Steiner, 2010).While experimental methods often have low external validity due to its limited semblance to real-life scenarios (e.g., Colquitt 2008; Greenberg & Tomlinson, 2004; Taylor, Goodwin & Cosier, 2003), the same cannot be said for EVM. More specifically, EVM allows for greater experimental realism as researchers can include additional explanatory and contextual factors for a given description or scenario. As a result, this enhances both internal and external validity simultaneously (Aguinis & Bradley, 2014; Atzmüller & Steiner, 2010). While EVM designs are recognisably distinct for their use of vignettes, there are a number of different formats that vignettes can take such as a written description, video or an image (Hughes & Huby, 2002). Regardless of the diverse arrays of formats, all EVM designs can be distinguished in two major ways (Aguinis & Bradley, 2014): the first is called *paper-people studies*, which involves assessing explicit processes and outcomes by asking directly for the participants' decisions, judgements, choices and behavioural preferences; the second is called *policy capturing and conjoint analysis* which involves assessing implicit processes and outcomes by asking participants to make decisions between scenarios (Aiman-Smith et al., 2002). Study 1 follows the paper-people studies approach by randomly assigning participants to a group condition consisting of vignette manipulations in the leadership ingratiation and perceived intent variables followed by a series of scales measuring all variables of interest.

In line with the increasing scholarly calls to foster a culture of *constructive replication* in organisational studies (Köhler & Cortina, 2021), the current research will corroborate and strengthen the validity of its findings by employing multiple research designs. Simply put, constructive replication (Lykken, 1968) refers to the act of conducting a replication study which retains the positive qualities of the previous study but with the addition of one improvement at a minimum (Köhler & Cortina, 2021). For this reason, Study 2 is designed as a cross-sectional self-report survey study as there remains a number of advantages to be

gained from conducting surveys compared to other research methods (Bryman, 2012). For instance, surveys allow researchers to retrieve a tremendous amount of data from a sizeable population while being cost-effective and time-efficient to administer and when conducted appropriately, the results generated will offer high levels of reliability and external validity. Furthermore, data that are obtained from surveys are highly standardised due to its frequent use of validated scales which enables for comparison of different findings across samples as well as provide a more straightforward explanation and understanding of results. With that being said, another major limitation of narrow one-time administered surveys is its neglect of time which is a crucial factor in leadership since it involves a dynamic process of successive interactions and behaviours between leaders and followers to jointly produce the leadership phenomenon over time (Collinson, 2005; Hunter, Bedell-Avers & Mumford, 2007; Riggio & Mumford, 2011; Shamir, 2011). As Bluedorn and Jaussi (2008) put it: "because relationships between followers and leaders occur over time, it is difficult, if not impossible, to consider leadership without time playing a role" (p. 657). Indeed, numerous studies have demonstrated the importance of time. While longitudinal studies in the leadership literature can vary in lengths from years (e.g., Keller, 2006), months (e.g., Liden, Wayne & Stilwell, 1993) or even to the end of a team's lifecycle (e.g., Naidoo et al., 2010), leadership scholars have recently begun adopting within-person approaches in their investigations which involves examining leaders behaviours and processes at a daily level, thereby answering interesting and important research questions that cannot be examined by utilising between-person study designs (Kelemen, Matthews & Breevaart, 2020). For instance, while abusive supervision is likely to be negatively related to constructive person-oriented and task-oriented behaviours when examined at the between-person level, Liao et al. (2018) demonstrated positive correlations between abusive leadership and consideration (person-oriented) as well as initiating structure (task-oriented) behaviours on a daily level. Similarly, Breevaart and colleagues (2014) found

that supervisors can enact leadership behaviours ranging from transformational, contingent reward and active management-by-exception behaviours all on the same day, demonstrating that within-person leadership can fluctuate on a daily basis. Likewise, within-person designs have also investigated processes that occur from a follower's perspective, for example, Kuonath and colleagues (2021) found that followers' daily perceptions of servant leadership were associated with daily experiences of self-efficacy whereas general perceptions of servant leadership functioned as a boundary condition that linked daily servant leadership with daily optimism, a finding that aligns with tenets of information processing theory (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978).

Following this stream of research, Study 3 used an Experience Sampling Method (ESM) research design to investigate daily level processes that affect followers due to leadership ingratiation. ESM, otherwise known as *daily diary method*, is an intensive longitudinal design first formalised as a research procedure by Larson and Csikszentmihalyi (1983) which involves examining how individuals go about their daily lives by requesting participants to self-report their current or most recent experiences, affective states, thoughts and behaviours once or multiple times throughout a day or possibly even a week (Fisher & To, 2012). There are a number of advantages associated with an ESM research design (Ohly et al., 2010). Firstly, ESM allows researchers to collect data on events as soon as they occur while under natural workplace settings, thus producing richer quality data. As Bolger, Davis and Rafaeli (2003, p. 597) put it, ESM provides data on "life as it is lived". A related advantage is the reduction in retrospective bias (Reis & Gable, 2000) as participants are no longer required to recall events or experiences that happened in the distant past. Another advantage associated with ESM is its ability to answer research questions that are normally impossible with traditional cross-section designs (Ohly et al., 2010). More specifically, it allows researchers to answer questions relating to change trajectories of a single variable,

relationships between fluctuating variables or with regards to the effects of stable characteristics such as personality and work environment on transient variables.

There are three types of schedules available to the ESM: interval-contingent, signal-contingent or event-contingent (Bolger, Davis & Rafaeli, 2003). The interval-contingent design requires participants to initiate a report at certain prescribed times of the day. The signal contingent schedule, on the other hand, requires participants to record their data once a signal (e.g., text messaging, beeps from a pager or wristwatch) notifies them to respond. In this scheduling, there are no prescribed times and participants have to report randomly throughout the day. Lastly, the event-contingent ESM requires participants to report each time a particular event of interest occurs. In Study 3, an interval-contingent ESM was employed. This is because in addition to its ability to collect "right-now" ratings as in the case of signal- and event-contingent ESM, the interval-contingent design also allows for daily ratings over a period of time, for example, ratings since the last report (Bolger, Davis & Rafaeli, 2003). This is especially helpful for studies that require self-reports of events that may occur during certain times of the day, for instance, the study on abusive supervision conducted by Barnes and colleagues (2015). Furthermore, an interval-contingent schedule is comparatively less intrusive on participants compared to the signal- and event-contingent designs due to its predictable timings each day. In addition, an interval-contingent schedule does not require any special signalling technology as with the signal-contingent ESM. Instead, a simple pen-and-paper or email for data collection is sufficient. Thus, the interval-contingent ESM is the design of choice for Study 3 to investigate within-person processes as it offers greater versatility and simplicity without being overly intrusive on participants.

In short, the present research aims to produce generalisable knowledge about leadership ingratiation and how it affects follower performance by employing a combination of an experimental, cross-sectional and longitudinal research designs. This way, it enables the

current research to conduct a *constructive replication* of the findings that could boost confidence in the hypothesised relationships being tested (Lykken, 1968). Having provided an overview of the philosophical research underpinnings and methodological choices, the following sections will provide an overview of the three studies as well as a detailed, individual account of each study.

3.2 DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

3.2.1 Sampling method

Broadly speaking, there are two sampling methods that can be identified: probability sampling and non-probability sampling (Bryman, 2012). Probability sampling can be described as a method of selecting participants on a random basis in order to acquire a representative sample of the population and to minimise the chance of sampling error. In contrast, non-probability sampling refers to the selection of participants through non-random means where it involves human judgement during the selection process. This results in having certain strata of the population being more likely to be recruited than others which produce a non-representative sample, that is, a selection bias.

Despite probability sampling often being touted as the “gold standard” of participant recruitment strategies (Acharya et al., 2013), non-probability sampling dominates the social sciences and organisational studies especially in the use of convenience sampling which involves selecting participants based on ease of access to the researcher (Bryman, 2012). This frequent occurrence can mostly be attributed to the difficulty and costs associated with implementing a probability sampling approach, leading to its widespread avoidance. Nonetheless, the pervasiveness of non-probability sampling is no indication of its acceptance, as evidenced by its lack of esteem amongst many organisational scholars (Landers &

Behrend, 2015). However, it can be argued that convenience sampling is not immediately an indication of poor sampling methodology. In fact, Landers and Behrend (2015) asserted that practically all samples used in organisational research can be described as convenience sampling since every sample will possess particular characteristics that would call into question its external validity. Instead, the authors urged scholars to consider these factors as strengths by taking into account how these characteristics may help better inform research findings. This has been demonstrated by Staw and Ross (1980) where rather than simply attributing the different ratings between two convenience-sampled groups to sampling error, the authors instead uncovered new research questions and paved the way for future studies.

With that said, an increasingly popular type of convenience sampling amongst organisational scholars is the use of crowdsourcing which involves "the paid recruitment of an online, independent global workforce for the objective of working on a specifically defined task or set of tasks" (Behrend et al., 2011, p. 801). This form of sampling is gaining momentum in organisational research due to the rise of "Internet lancing" (otherwise known as "eLancing") where an increasing number of individuals are taking up freelance work on a variety of tasks online which could range from contracting out website development to online freelancing programmers to simply filling online surveys (Aguinis & Edwards, 2014). In other words, eLancing has provided researchers with greater ease of access to participants by "hiring" them online. Additionally, there are situations where an online crowdsourced sample for research is not only a suitable – but in fact, the perfect source for participants. For instance, the shift from face-to-face (F2F) to virtual interaction induces followers to place more emphasis on certain leadership behaviours than others which consequently affects how they perceive their leaders (Horner-Long & Schoenberg, 2002), thereby highlighting the importance of research in virtual leadership – also termed as "eLeadership" (Avolio & Kahai, 2003). Studies such as those conducted by Zimmerman, Wit and Gill (2008) where they

found that followers place higher significance on leaders' relationship-enhancing behaviours in medium- to high virtual settings as opposed to F2F settings, would have required the exclusive use of online participants and therefore would have benefitted tremendously from a crowdsourced sample. Indeed, previous research have shown the viability of crowdsourced participants where they demonstrated similar psychometric properties to samples drawn from traditional participant pools (Behrend et al., 2011; Walter et al., 2019). More relevantly however, the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic has cemented the internet's role as a mainstay source for research participants. As COVID-19 forced nations around the globe to impose social distancing restrictions, this has generated a sudden and massive change in the way people work and therefore has accelerated the gradual takeover of full-time teleworking across many sectors worldwide (Contreras, Baykal & Abid, 2020). Since most employees must now work away from the office, crowdsourcing platforms were used to gather participants for the present research, that is, Study 2 and Study 3. More specifically, the platform of choice was Prolific Academic (ProA) as previous research has shown that participants recruited from Prolific Academic outperformed other platforms (e.g. MTurk, Crowd Flower) in participant honesty, naïvety, diversity while producing higher-quality data overall (Palan & Schitter, 2018; Peer et al., 2017). With that being said, it is worth discussing participant rewards and how this may affect quality of data generated. Since monetary incentives has always been the primary motivation for participants taking part in research (Grady et al., 2017; McGonagle, 2015), scholars have voiced concerns over whether responses from paid participants are more prone to *insufficient effort responding* (IER), that is, a participant response set characterised by inattentiveness to the instructions and items of the survey and carelessness in providing responses (Huang et al., 2012). This is especially relevant when we consider "professional" participants who may attempt to maximise their income by rushing through surveys and pay little attention to accuracy of response (Sparrow,

2007; Walter et al., 2019). However, research has shown that issues of IER are not as worrisome as it seems to be. For instance, in addition to financial rewards as a primary motivator, scholars have found that participants are also incentivised by a variety of reasons including curiosity or interest in the topic, desire to voice opinions, altruism or simply personal enjoyment (Behrend et al., 2011; Brüggen et al., 2011; Paolacci, Chandler & Ipeirotis, 2010). Furthermore, research has found no evidence linking professional respondents and IER and instead was found to be less biased in their responses compared to infrequent survey participants (Hillygus, Jackson & Young, 2014). For this reason, it may be safe to assume there are no concerns of participant rewards affecting data quality.

In addition to crowdsourcing, the current research also employed another form of convenience sampling, that is, snowball sampling of the researcher's personal contacts for Study 1. This sampling method involves enlisting a small initial group of participants who are then asked to recruit further participants, thus creating a "snowball" effect where the sample size multiplies as the recruitment process advances. This method was carried out for Study 1 via the distribution of e-mails or messages through online social networks such as Facebook, LinkedIn, Whatsapp and Instagram. While snowball sampling also suffers from low generalisability due to its likelihood of generating a non-representative sample as a result of selection biases (Bryman, 2012), it remains appropriate for the purposes of the current research as it offers a relatively inexpensive and quick method to increase sample sizes (Waters, 2015).

It is also worth noting that all studies in the current research were conducted through the use of SoSci Survey GmbH which is a non-commercial company headquartered in Munich, Germany that provides a free-to-use software to create online questionnaires (Leiner, 2019). This platform was chosen for the current research due the number of available features offered which includes its ability to incorporate custom scripts in HTML, JavaScript

and PHP that allow for a number of functions such as generating an automated randomisation algorithm and enabling multi-wave surveys for longitudinal research designs. These features would not only prove useful for Study 1 but for the subsequent Study 2 and Study 3 due to their experimental and ESM research designs respectively.

3.2.2 Participants

All samples for this research project were obtained through the use of non-probability convenience sampling approach. More specifically, the sample for Study 1 was gathered through the use of snowball sampling where the initial wave consisted of direct contacts of the researcher including family, friends and acquaintances who were reached either through email or via social media platforms comprising of Facebook, LinkedIn, Whatsapp and Instagram. In this study, participants were not compensated for their participation. Following their completion of the vignette experiment, the initial participants would then go on to recruit further participants from their own direct contacts. With regards to Study 2 and 3, the samples consisted of participants gathered through ProA. In Study 2, participants were requested to complete a survey where they were then allowed claim their compensation through ProA. In Study 3, upon indicating their consent, participants from ProA were required to complete a pre-survey that consisted of a series of initial questions that includes measuring demographic characteristics and stable variables such as personality. Once completed, the diary study lasting over 16 consecutive workdays was initiated on the following Monday. In the ESM phase of the study, participants were compensated for their time based on the number of daily surveys completed throughout the duration of the study. Furthermore, participants were further incentivised to complete as many daily surveys as they could by offering monetary bonuses should they complete at least three-quarters of the entire diary study.

3.3 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

3.3.1 Code of Human Research Ethics

When conducting any research that involves human participants, there are several ethical considerations that must be taken into account. The British Psychological Society (BPS) has laid out a set of codified principles named the Code of Human Research Ethics (British Psychological Society, 2014) that provides a tool for all psychological researchers to make reasoned judgements on the treatment of human participants. The ethical guidelines outlined by the BPS are: (1) respect for the autonomy, privacy and dignity of individuals and communities, (2) social responsibility, (3) scientific integrity and (4) maximise benefit whilst minimise harm.

The code *respect for the autonomy, privacy and dignity of individuals and communities* refers to the duty of all psychological researchers to safeguard the rights for autonomy, privacy and dignity of all persons regardless of individual, cultural or social differences such as age, race, gender, education, socioeconomic status, marital status, religion, disability, language or nationality. Consequently, psychological researchers are responsible for ensuring an informed and autonomous consent from participants, provide them the right to withdraw at any time and debrief them thoroughly before, during and after the research study. This works to ensure that participants are given a choice to either involve themselves or turn down any involvement with the research study. Furthermore, psychological researchers are to respect participant confidentiality by maintaining their anonymity to prevent their data from being tracked by any other third parties.

The code *social responsibility* relates to the responsibility of all psychological researchers to create new knowledge that contributes to the “common good” of society. In

other words, psychological researchers must be able to engage in self-reflection, open to criticism and challenges of their work, be attentive to both personal and professional responsibility, be aware of possible unexpected consequences, acknowledge the imperfection of interpreting research findings and possesses the ability to collaborate with others especially with colleagues, participants or any other individuals.

The code *scientific integrity* alludes to the obligation of all psychological researchers to conduct research studies that are of the highest scientific standards, quality and contribution. This will involve a researcher dedicating much detail to a robust research design as well as developing rigorous protocols that address any potential ethical issues should they arise. Furthermore, the research must be as transparent as possible and ensure that the aims and objectives are clear.

The code *maximise benefit whilst minimise harm* urges all psychological researchers to seek for the most benefits at all stages of their research while avoiding as much harm and risks as possible. However, should there be risks that are unavoidable and are an integral feature of the research, robust protocols and risk assessments must be developed in order to mitigate participant exposure to harm that are greater than those experienced during ordinary life. Where complications arise, the researcher must employ the best of their reasoned judgement to assess the probability and severity of such risks as well as developing countermeasures to mitigate it. Furthermore, it is the duty of researchers to be mindful of the potential impact that their research may cause and be attuned to the power distance that occurs between participants and researchers.

CHAPTER FOUR: STUDY 1

4.1 RATIONALE

As pointed out by a number of scholars, there is a prevailing issue of low internal validity in the current leadership literature due to the pervasive use of cross-sectional survey designs as it is the preferred method of inquiry in this line of research (Bryman, 2011; Friedrich, Byrne & Mumford, 2009; Podsakoff & Podsakoff, 2019; Hunter, Bedell-Avers & Mumford, 2007). In response to this, the aim of Study 1 is to provide an initial experimental test of Hypotheses 1a and 1b through the use of an EVM design. In particular, Study 1 will test whether the negative effect of perceived LDI on work engagement is observed when perceived instrumental and altruistic intent are low and a null effect observed when high, respectively.

4.2 PARTICIPANTS AND PROCEDURE

Participants were recruited through snowball sampling of the researcher's personal contacts using personal emails as well as social media platforms including Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram and Whatsapp. Each participant was sent a link which transferred them directly to SoSci Survey. Upon clicking the link, they were taken to an information sheet webpage and were asked to indicate their informed consent before participating. Once they proceed to the next page, they were randomised into one of six conditions based on a 3 (Perceived Intent: Altruistic versus Instrumental versus Ambiguous) x 2 (Leadership Downward Ingratiation: high versus low) factorial design (see Table 1).

Table 1 – Visualisation of the 3 x 2 Factorial Design

		Ingratiation (IG)	
		Low	*High*
Perceived Intent	*None / Ambiguous*	Ambiguous – low IG	Ambiguous – high IG
	Perceived altruistic intent (PL)	PL – low IG	PL – high IG
	Perceived instrumental intent (PI)	PI – low IG	PI – high IG

The participants started the experiment by answering a number of initial questions about themselves in general. Afterwards, the participants were exposed to their respective experimental conditions where they were asked to read a two-part vignette comprising of a hypothetical conversation with a friend that reveals the supervisor's motives for improving his or her treatment of an employee, followed by a conversation with the aforementioned employee about performance appraisals which showcased the supervisor's ingratiatory behaviours (see Appendix A). More specifically, each variable was manipulated by including certain phrases that are consistent with the items of their respective scales. For participants in the perceived altruistic intent condition, the hypothetical supervisor's conversation with a friend contained phrases that are in line with the items of Allen and Rush's (1998) scale, that is, being attributed to personal values of right and wrong, commitment to the organisation, involvement in the work, loyalty to the organisation, a sense of moral standards and desire to share expertise. This scale was selected for the purpose of vignette generation for Study 1 as it aligns with a specific idea of selfishness most relevant in organisational studies, that is, the notion of *instrumentality* which refers to the self-serving phenomenon where individuals are motivated to behave in certain ways in order to attain desirable outcomes while avoiding undesirable ones in the workplace (Dansereau, Cashman & Graen, 1973; Graen, 1969; Hui,

Lam & Law, 2000; Mitchell & Knudsen, 1973; Vroom, 1964). To represent the supervisor's sense of moral standards and personal values of right and wrong, the hypothetical conversations contained the phrase (1) *"I'm their boss and to me, a big part of being a good boss is to understand that I have a moral obligation to give all the encouragement and support they can get from me. So that's why I think treating them better is the right thing to do for them".* These two items were integrated into one vignette phrase as they constitute intrinsic motivation often ascribed to altruism, that is, voluntary prosocial behaviours that were enacted without expecting external rewards (Bar-Tal, 1982; Eisenberg & Miller, 1987; Leeds, 1963). To represent commitment, involvement and loyalty to the organisation as well as desire to share expertise is showcased with the phrase (2) *"After all, as an employee it's also my responsibility to show my commitment and loyalty to my company and that involves carrying out my job as properly as I can in making sure that my team is learning all they can from me and doing their best"*. These items were combined to form this phrase since it represents the behavioural element of altruism, that is, behaviours that are enacted with the intention of achieving positive outcomes for others (Fehr & Fischbacher, 2003; Kanungo & Conger, 1990; Rushton, 1982). Likewise, the perceived instrumental intent condition contained phrases consistent with Allen and Rush's (1998) scale comprising of the desire to enhance own image, build up favours for later exchange, "show-off" expertise, impress own supervisor or boss, to seek the spotlight and to obtain recognition or other organisational rewards. These items were represented by the phrases (1) "*I'm not ever going to improve my image if I'm constantly driving them up the wall. Besides, I have my own appraisals around the corner so I'm going to need all the favours I can get and that means keeping both the team AND my boss happy if I'm ever going to get a shot at a promotion"* and (2) *"After all, it doesn't hurt to show everyone how I get things done the right way"*. These items were combined into these vignette phrases to reflect instrumentality associated with this causal

label, that is, enacting prosocial behaviours for the purpose of obtaining external rewards that benefit the actor (Batson, 1994; Lynn & Oldenquist, 1986; Hsu & Chang, 2007) which, in the context of the current research, mostly come in the form of social acceptance and approval (Jerdee & Rosen, 1974). For the ambiguous intent condition, that is, the control group, portions of the conversation that would otherwise be filled with relevant phrases were replaced with fictitious dialogue which reads as follows: "*Michael! Good to hear from you! How have you been? ... Sure, absolutely! But listen, I'm afraid I can't do it right now 'cause I've got a 1-on-1 meeting with a member of my team. ... Yes, I have to deliver a performance appraisal. ... No, no, I'll be nicer this time and go a little easier on the team. ... You're right. That's exactly why I'll be nicer this time. But anyways, have you been in contact with Greg lately? I haven't been able to get a hold of him since yesterday. ... That'd be great, thanks. And when you do, please remind him about the appointment next Wednesday, I completely forgot to mention it to him. Alright then, I've got to go now so I'll call you back later. You take care, bye!*".

Moving on to the second part of the vignette, participants in the high ingratiation condition were presented with ingratiatory instances in the conversation in line with the four-itemed scale developed by Bolino and Turnley (1999), that is, complimenting, taking an interest in personal life, praise for an accomplishment and rendering personal favours. This scale was used as the basis for vignette construction as its development was based on Jones and Pittman's (1982) taxonomy of impression management behaviours where its description of ingratiation matches closely with the adopted definition of this thesis. Furthermore, Bolino and Turnley's (1999) scale is well-validated (Bolino et al., 2008; Kacmar, Harris & Nagy, 2007) and represents the most widely used measure for ingratiation (Long, 2019). To demonstrate praise and complimenting behaviour, the supervisor was shown to say phrases including (1) *"I think you're a really pleasant person to have around and I don't think the*

team knows just how lucky they are to be working with you", (2) *"You should be really proud of yourself, so keep that in mind"* and (3) *"It's been wonderful talking to you"*. To illustrate an interest in personal life and rendering favours, the supervisor is shown to say (1) *"I hope your family is also doing well lately? Tell you what, I'll leave my personal phone number with you by the end of this meeting so if you have any trouble especially regarding personal matters, I'll only be a phone call away if you need anything, alright?"* and (2) *"I've included my personal number in the email I've just sent you, so text or call me and let me know when we can meet again to discuss my comments in detail and decide what your next performance objectives will be"*. In the low ingratiation condition, the aforementioned phrases were removed from the hypothetical conversation, leaving the vignette to contain only the base vignette as follows: "*Hello there, I hope you've been safe and well. I know situations have been tough lately with the current lockdown and all, so before we begin with your appraisal, I just want to reassure you that you have absolutely nothing to be worried about. All you need to focus on is managing your day-to-day work as usual. So now, onto today's appraisal. Overall, it seems that your performance so far has been fairly decent. Based on feedbacks I've received about you, it appears that you're making progress in some areas of your work. Just to give you an example, your co-workers have been saying that you're starting to be a more effective team member ever since your communication skills improved. Now, I've already completed your appraisal form and it's attached in the email I've just sent you. As you'll see on your form, I've included comments alongside each section which explains why I've given you a certain rating. So, have a read through it and please come back to me if any clarifications are needed. And before I let you go for today, don't forget to drop me an email once you're ready and let me know when we can meet again to discuss my comments in detail and decide what your next performance objectives will be. Alright? Great, we'll speak soon – bye"*.

After reading their respective vignettes, each participant was presented with a series of scales based on what they have read in the vignette and once completed, they were asked to fill a post-experimental manipulation check and a second set of scales (see Appendix B). More specifically, the first set of scales comprised of questions relating to demographics and general personality scales that will be used as control variables. The second set will contain the ingratiation (Bolino & Turnley, 1999) and perceived intent (Allen & Rush, 1998) scales as manipulation checks followed by the work engagement scale (Schaufeli, Bakker & Salanova, 2006). While the inclusion of manipulation checks in the current study is to ensure that participants were attentive during the span of the experiment (Oppenheimer, Meyvis & Davidenko, 2009) and, more significantly, to discern the effectiveness of the experimental conditions (Sigall & Mills, 1998), previous scholars have questioned the necessity of manipulation checks. One noteworthy criticism of manipulation checks is the issue of obtrusiveness where the experiment may influence participant thoughts and behaviours while also running the risk of inadvertent disclosure of research hypotheses (Parrott & Hertel, 1999). It is for this reason that recent scholars have offered a number of recommendations with the use of *unobtrusive measures*, that is, manipulation checks that are collected without participant awareness such as videotaping behaviours, analysing participant speech or measuring physiological variability (Hauser, Ellsworth & Gonzalez, 2018). However, for the purpose of the current study, scale-based manipulation checks remain a befitting tool for a number of reasons. Firstly, data collection for Study 1 took place during the COVID-19 pandemic which has made online surveys an indispensable method of data collection. Consequently, this does not lend itself well to videotaping as it would require participants to record themselves. Secondly, unobtrusive measures predominantly rely on observing participant behaviours, for example, frowning to infer anger, pupil dilation to infer arousal or analysing the frequency of certain word usage. This is problematic as it is subject to the

researchers' assumptions which does not suit the purpose of the current research since the independent variables are focused on follower perceptions. However, in response to criticisms associated with manipulation checks, the experiment duration for Study 1 was kept at a minimum and scales with no longer than six items were selected for each independent variable to reduce the risk of obtrusion and participant inattention.

A sample size of $N = 60$ participants, that is, 10 participants per condition, was recruited on a voluntary, non-incentivised basis through snowball sampling of the researcher's personal contacts. A sample size of 10 per condition was selected in response to the difficulties in recruiting participants due to the COVID-19 pandemic while maintaining the bare minimum for a reasonably accurate effect size estimations (Hedges, 1982). Among all the participants, 58% were female and 42% were male whereby their ethnicities consisted of White/Caucasians (8.3%), South Asians (43.3%), East Asians (31.7%), Black/African/Caribbean (6.7%) as well as other ethnic groups (10%). Participant ages ranged from 23 to 59 years old with a mean age of 27 ($SD = 4.77$). Furthermore, participant employment status comprised of full-time (56.7%), self-employed (1.7%), pensioners (3.3%), civil servants (5%), unemployed (33.3%), but no part-time employees were recruited.

4.3 MEASURES

Leadership Downward Ingratiation. As a manipulation check, participants were asked to rate the perceived level of supervisor's downward ingratiation based on the experimental vignette they had just read using the modified four-item scale developed by Bolino and Turnley (1999). More specifically, the instructions and item wordings were changed to make direct reference to the hypothetical supervisor in the vignette. A sample item includes "the supervisor complimented me so I will see her/him as likeable". Responses were made on a Likert scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree.

Perceived Intent. Likewise, as a manipulation check, participants were also requested to rate the perceived ingratiatory intent of the supervisor based on the experimental vignette they have read with the modified scale developed by Allen and Rush (1998). Likewise, the item wordings were modified to make direct reference to the hypothetical supervisor in the vignette. The example items include "personal values of right and wrong" for perceived altruistic intent and "desire to build up favours for later exchange" for perceived instrumental intent. Responses ranged on a Likert scale from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree for both perceived instrumental and altruistic intent.

Work Engagement. Following the recommendations of Kulikowsky (2017), work engagement was measured using the nine-item scale developed by Schaufeli, Bakker and Salanova (2006; UWES-9) where participants were required to self-report the extent to which, in the described scenario, they believe they would experience positive and fulfilling mental states characterised by absorption, dedication and vigour at work. Participants rated on a Likert scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. An example item includes "I would be enthusiastic about my work".

4.4 ANALYTICAL APPROACH

The gathered data was analysed on the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) by using analysis of variance (ANOVA) which is considered one of the few analytical techniques most appropriate for experimental designs such as EVMs (Aguinis & Bradley, 2014; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). More specifically, a two-way ANOVA was conducted as it is relevant for testing the interaction effects between two or more categorical variables on a quantitative dependent variable (Lee, 2022; Muraina, Rahman & Adeleke, 2016). In the context of the current research, the ANOVA compares the mean scores of work effort between participants of each perceived intent conditions to determine whether a negative

effect of LDI on work effort is observed for participants who read the perceived ambiguous intent vignettes. To this end, dummy variables were generated for the perceived LDI conditions as predictor (low = 0, high = 1) and perceived intent conditions containing descriptions of a hypothetical supervisory behaviour as the moderator, that is, the perceived ingratiatory intents (0 = ambiguous intent, 1 = instrumental intent, 2 = altruistic intent). Furthermore, to assess whether the LDI and perceived intent conditions sufficiently manipulated the variables of interest, an independent t-test was conducted to examine whether there were statistically significant differences in LDI and perceived intent scores between conditions.

4.5 RESULTS

4.5.1 Manipulation check

The results from the independent t-tests revealed that participants' perceived LDI were sufficiently manipulated, that is, participants in the high LDI condition viewed the hypothetical supervisor as being more ingratiatory ($M = 3.86$, $SD = 0.86$) than the participants in the low LDI condition ($M = 3.22$, $SD = 1.11$, $t(55) = 2.5$, $p = .02$).

Likewise, the results revealed sufficient experimental manipulation between the perceived instrumental intent conditions, that is, participants in the instrumental intent condition more strongly attributed the hypothetical supervisor's ingratiation to instrumental intent ($M = 3.72$, $SD = 0.84$) than the participants in the ambiguous intent condition ($M = 2.97$, $SD = 0.78$, $t(36) = 3.3$, $p < .01$).

Finally, the results showed sufficient experimental manipulation between the perceived altruistic intent conditions, that is, participants in the altruistic intent condition more strongly attributed the hypothetical supervisor's ingratiation to altruistic intent ($M =$

3.55, *SD* = 0.52) than the participants in the ambiguous intent condition (*M* = 3.17, *SD* = 0.68, $t(48) = 2.4$, $p = .02$).

4.5.2 Hypotheses testing

In Hypothesis 1a and 1b, it was predicted that a negative effect of LDI on work engagement is observed when perceived instrumental intent (H1a) and perceived altruistic intent (H1b) are low and a null effect is observed when high. As shown in Table 2, the results from the 3x2 ANOVA revealed no statistically significant interaction effects ($F(2, 54) = 1.165$, n.s., $\eta^2 = .041$), thus offering no support for the proposed hypotheses. Table 3 presents the means scores for work engagement across the experimental conditions.

Table 2 – Analysis of Variance

	df	***F***	***p***	η^2
LDI	1	.068	.795	.001
Perceived intent	2	1.155	.323	.041
LDI x Perceived intent	2	1.165	.319	.041
Error df	54			

Note. $^*p < .05$; $^{**}p < .01$.

Table 3 – Means and standard deviations of work engagement scores across each experimental condition

Dependent variable: Work engagement	Leadership Downward Ingratiation (LDI)					
	Low			*High*		
	M	*SD*	*N*	*M*	*SD*	*N*
Perceived ambiguous intent	4.38	1.06	10	4.13	1.11	10
Perceived instrumental intent	3.30	1.57	10	4.06	1.35	10
Perceived altruistic intent	4.04	0.92	10	3.78	1.13	10

4.6 DISCUSSION

All in all, the experimental findings from Study 1 offered no support for the proposed relationship in Hypotheses 1a and 1b which predicted that a negative effect of LDI on work engagement is observed when perceived instrumental intent (H1a) and perceived altruistic intent (H1b) is low and a null effect is observed when high. Although the results were non-significant, a quick glance of the means scores for work engagement across experimental conditions in Table 3 reveals that the participants who read the low ingratiation and perceived ambiguous intent vignettes were most willing to engage with work whereas those who read the low ingratiation and perceived instrumental intent were the least. To explain these incoherent findings, steps were taken to verify whether it could be attributed to error in the execution of the experiment. More specifically, the dummy variables were re-examined to look for any possible coding mistakes, vignettes were rechecked if any they were placed in the wrong order or condition and finally, whether the correct wordings were placed in its respective vignettes. Subsequently, there were no errors found in the execution of the experiment.

Accordingly, this incoherent finding may be attributed to a number of research flaws to Study 1. The first issue worth pointing out is to do with the low sample size. As the data collection was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic that was declared an international public health emergency since the end of January, 2020 (World Health Organisation, 2020). While there has been a number of studies demonstrating the negative impacts stemming from enforced restrictions and lockdowns due to COVID-19 (e.g., Palumbo, 2020; Wanberg, 2020; Yoon et al., 2021), Study 1 was particularly affected as most respondents were recruited from the researcher's personal contacts from overseas with no financial compensation for participating. As a result, the participation rate was low which may have affected the findings.

Another limitation of Study 1 would be the construction of the vignette itself. More specifically, while it has been argued in the current research that EVMs may offer greater realism compared to other experimental designs (Aguinis & Bradley, 2014; Atzmüller & Steiner, 2010), this would highly depend on how well the vignettes were designed and executed which has been pointed out to be a difficult task by scholars as it requires scenarios that sufficiently replicate real-life events (e.g., Cullen, 2010; Stolte, 1994; Taylor, 2006; Wallander, 2012). Accordingly, scholars have pointed out three types of validity that needs to be considered with regards to vignette experiments (Evans et al., 2015; Finger & Rand, 2005):construct validity, internal validity and external validity. *Construct validity* refers to the degree of *simulation*, that is, whether a particular vignette scenario is to the real-world, and thus measures what it intends to measure, *internal validity* pertains to the extent to which a change in the dependent variable can be causally attributed to changes in independent variables (i.e., the vignette conditions) and lastly, *external validity* relates to the level of generalisability the findings. In the context of the current research, it could very well be that Study 1 suffered from low construct validity where the vignettes were poorly constructed and bore little resemblance to real-life scenarios, thereby elicited little investment from participants into the vignette experiment.

In response to the artificiality of Study 1, the following study (Study 2) will be conducted using a cross-sectional field design with the aim to test the proposed hypotheses in real-life work settings. The details and findings of Study 2 will be discussed in the following chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE: STUDY 2

5.1 RATIONALE

A major advantage of cross-sectional designs is its speed and efficiency in gathering large amounts of data without incurring costly expenses (Bryman, 2012) which has positive implications for its external validity. Its utility is further bolstered by its highly standardised research procedures which enables greater ease in comparing results across different studies. However, a cross-sectional field design for Study 2 is pertinent to the current research as it is conducted in response to the limitations of Study 1, that is, the artificiality of the vignette experiments. As mentioned previously, in order to test the theoretical robustness of the proposed relationships by examining the *willingness* (i.e., psychological withdrawal) to conserve cognitive resources, a significant modification was introduced to Study 2, that is, psychological withdrawal was measured and tested as mediator in place of work engagement. For this reason, the hypotheses for Study 2 can be formulated as follows:

Hypothesis 1a: A positive effect of Leadership Downward Ingratiation on Psychological Withdrawal is observed when Perceived Instrumental Intent is low and a null effect is observed when high.

Hypothesis 1b: A positive effect of Leadership Downward Ingratiation on Psychological Withdrawal is observed when Perceived Altruistic Intent is low and a null effect is observed when high.

Hypothesis 2a: A negative effect of Leadership Downward Ingratiation on Task Performance via Psychological Withdrawal is observed when Perceived Instrumental Intent is low and a null effect is observed when high.

Hypothesis 2b: A negative effect of Leadership Downward Ingratiation on Task Performance via Psychological Withdrawal is observed when Perceived Altruistic Intent is low and a null effect is observed when high.

Based on Lehman and Simpson's (1992) definition, the characteristics of psychological withdrawal includes putting little effort into work, letting others do the work, desire to be absent, thoughts of leaving current job, daydreaming, spending worktime on personal matters and chatting excessively with colleagues.

Another significant point worth expanding on is the performance measure in Study 2. More specifically, no other scales were considered (e.g., proactivity, adaptivity; Griffin, Neal & Parker, 2007) except task performance as this is consistent with the hypotheses previously asserted in this thesis where a clear perceived intent is not theorised to have a broadening effect on followers' cognitive resource pool but instead protects it from the depleting nature of the uncertainty reduction process.

5.2 PARTICIPANTS AND PROCEDURE

Participants recruited from ProA were pre-screened according to the following criteria: full-time employment and currently in a working relationship with their supervisors. At the start of the study, participants were provided with a description of the study on ProA with a hyperlink that connects them to SoSci Survey. Once the participants completed the survey, they were each rewarded £2.30 for their time. A sample size of $N = 250$ participants

was gathered whereby 62% were female and 38% were male. Their minimum and maximum ages were 20 to 68 years old respectively with an overall mean age of 39.17 (*SD* = 11.12). Participant ethnicities were of White/Caucasian (93.3%), South Asian (2.0%), Black/African/Caribbean (1.2%) and East Asian (0.8%) descent whereas the remaining were of any other ethnic groups (2.8%). On average, the participants have organisational tenures of 6.81 years (*SD* = 6.73), tenure with their supervisors at 3.46 years (*SD* = 4.36) and have a mean frequency of contact with supervisors at 12.32 hours per month (*SD* = 23.93) with frequency of interactions that either occurs several times a day (31.6%), everyday (20.4%), several times a week (29.2%), once a week (12%) or once a month (6.8%).

5.3 MEASURES

Employees reported the level of LDI enacted by their supervisor in the workplace as well as their own level of perceived instrumental and altruistic intent, psychological withdrawal and task performance (see Appendix C).

Leadership Downward Ingratiation. Employees were asked to self-report their perceived frequency of their supervisor's downward ingratiation through the four-item scale developed by Bolino and Turnley (1999). Responses were made on a Likert scale ranging from 1 = rarely or never to 5 = very frequently, if not always and a sample item includes "my supervisor compliments me so I will see her/him as likeable".

Perceived Intent. Employee perceived intent was measured with the twelve-item scale developed by Allen and Rush (1998) where participants were asked to self-report the motives behind their supervisor's behaviours based on whether it could be attributed to altruistic (six items) or to instrumental reasons (six items). The example items include "personal values of right and wrong" for perceived altruistic intent and "desire to build up favours for later

exchange" for perceived instrumental intent with a Likert scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree.

Psychological Withdrawal. To assess the participants' level of psychological withdrawal when at work, an eight-item scale developed by Lehman and Simpson (1992) was used where participants were asked to self-report on a Likert scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly disagree. A sample item reflecting psychological withdrawal is "I put less effort into my work than I should have"**.**

Task Performance. Task performance was measured using the three-item scale developed by Griffin, Neal and Parker (2007) where participants were required to self-report their level of in-role task proficiency by rating on a Likert scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. An example item includes "I complete my core tasks well using the standard procedure".

Transformational Leadership. Transformational leadership was measured as a control variable. Although the main focus of the present research is perceived LDI, the inclusion of transformational leadership was to rule out alternative explanations as leadership ingratiation has overlapping features with transformational leadership since individualised consideration and idealised influence (otherwise known as "charisma") are considered key components of this leadership style (e.g., Avolio, Waldman & Einstein, 1998; Deluga, 1988; Gardner & Cleavenger, 1998; Howell & Avolio, 1993; Seltzer & Bass, 1990) where it involves enacting impression management in order to inspire and motivate followers to pursue a certain goal or objective (Gardner & Cleavenger, 1998). Thus, transformational leadership was gauged by employing the seven-itemed scale developed by Carless, Wearing and Mann (2000) in which participants rated their supervisor on a Likert scale from 1 = rarely or never to 5 = very frequently, if not always. An example item gauging transformational leadership includes "gives encouragement and recognition to me".

The demographics variables, that is, gender, age, organisational tenure, tenure with supervisor as well as frequency of contact and interaction with supervisor were also included as control variables since they have been suggested to affect follower relationships with their supervisors in some way. For instance, gender differences has been demonstrated to affect the attributional processes (e.g., Song, Sheinin & Yoon, 2017), increases in age and organisational tenure indicates greater experience within an individual's social and work environment which would affect their perceptions and behaviours in the workplace and also acquiring more time to develop a relationship with their supervisors (Morsch, van Dijk & Kodden, 2020) while communicative patterns and tenure with supervisor has been found to greatly influence relational and follower outcomes (Abu Bakar, Dilbeck & McCroskey, 2010; Bhal, Ansari & Aafaqi, 2007).

As data collection was conducted through ProA as part of a larger project, it is worth mentioning that overlaps between the studies of the project are minimal as the research questions and hypotheses addressed by Study 2 are entirely distinct from the second investigation which focused on attachment dynamics in the context of leader-follower relationships. A data transparency table is produced for Study 2 which outlines all the variables measured during the data collection process (see Table 4).

Table 4 – Data transparency table outlying all variables measured during data collection and those included in Study 2

	Variables	Included in Study 2
1.	Leadership downward ingratiation	✓
2.	Transformational leadership	✓
3.	Leader incivility	
4.	Relationship-specific anxious attachment	
5.	Relationship-specific avoidant attachment	
6.	General secure attachment	
7.	Trait non-attachment	
8.	Positive affect	
9.	Negative affect	
10.	Perceived altruistic intent	✓
11.	Perceived instrumental intent	✓
12.	Psychological withdrawal	✓
13.	Proactive behaviour	
14.	Proactive problem prevention	
15.	Task performance	✓

5.4 ANALYTICAL APPROACH

The objective of Study 1 is to test Hypotheses 1a, 1b, 2a and 2b by analysing the gathered data using the PROCESS macro Model 9 (Hayes, 2018) via the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) which allows for the simultaneous testing of the hypothesised moderated mediation relations in one model. The hypotheses were tested using bootstrapping procedures in line with scholarly recommendations (Hayes, 2015; Preacher & Hayes, 2008; Preacher, Rucker & Hayes, 2007). Bootstrapping is a nonparametric procedure that involves generating a "bootstrap" sample via with-replacement sampling drawn from the original dataset, a process that is repeated k times (i.e., k = 5,000 iterations for Study 1). In turn, the regression coefficients estimated from each of these resamples are used to compute the products which are rank ordered to locate the 95% bootstrap confidence interval, that is, the 2.5th and 97.5th percentiles of the distribution. Each opposite ends points of the confidence interval constitutes the two values for the index of moderated mediation. If the confidence interval does not contain zero, a moderated mediation can be inferred (Edwards & Lambert, 2007; Hayes, 2015; Preacher & Hayes, 2008). In the context of Study 1, the inference from

this index pertains to a quantified understanding as to whether a positive effect of LDI on follower task performance through psychological withdrawal as mediator is observed when the moderators comprising of perceived instrumental and altruistic intent are high rather than low. In accordance to the recommendations set out by Aiken and West (1991), an interaction plot was produced to graphically illustrate the direction of interaction. Furthermore, based on scholarly recommendations (Aiken & West, 1991; Cronbach, 1987; Jaccard, Turrisi & Wan, 1990), all variables of interest were mean centred except follower task performance prior to analyses, that is, the mean of each relevant variables were subtracted from all observations of the variable such that the new mean becomes zero (Iacobucci et al., 2016). This is done to minimise concerns of multicollinearity that may lead to biased results.

5.5 RESULTS

5.5.1 Descriptive statistics

Table 5 presents the descriptive statistics, scale reliabilities, and correlations amongst all the studied variables for Study 2.

Table 5 – Means, Standard Deviations, Internal Consistencies (Cronbach's Alpha), and Intercorrelations (Study 2)

Variable		**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**9**	**10**	**11**
1.	LDI	(.86)										
2.	Perceived altruistic intent	**.41**	(.91)									
3.	Perceived instrumental intent	.05	.033	(.91)								
4.	Psychological withdrawal	-.01	**-.21**	**.13**	(.83)							
5.	Task Performance	.06	**.17**	-.10	**-.36**	(.80)						
6.	Transformational leadership	**.64**	**.59**	**-.21**	**-.26**	**.26**	(.95)					
7.	Age	-.14	-.00	.64	-.03	-.03	-.08	—				
8.	Gender[a]	-.10	-.06	.04	.07	.07	-.06	-.07	—			
9.	Organisational tenure	-.10	-.08	.05	-.04	-.01	-.11	**.44**	.03	—		
10.	Tenure with supervisor	**-.14**	-.07	.02	-.05	.04	-.11	**.30**	.03	**.61**	—	
11.	Frequency of contact	.11	-.01	**-.16**	-.034	.09	.11	**-.12**	.08	-.05	.06	—
12.	Frequency of interaction[c]	**.19**	.16*	.10	-.08	.06	**.22**	-.07	-.07	-.04	.06	**.33**
	M	2.98	3.49	2.69	3.51	4.38	3.47	39.17	1.62	6.81	3.46	3.58
	SD	0.95	0.93	0.98	1.17	0.57	1.02	11.12	0.49	6.73	4.36	1.24

Note. *Cronbach's α between parentheses on the diagonal. Correlations in bold are statistically significant ($p < .05$).*

[a]Gender (1 = male, 2 = female, 3 = any other gender), [b]Frequency of interaction (1 = Once a month, 2 = Once a week, 3 = Several times a week, 4 = Everyday, 5 = Several times a day)

5.5.2 Hypotheses testing

In Hypothesis 1a, it was predicted that a positive effect of LDI on psychological withdrawal is observed when perceived instrumental intent is low and a null effect is observed when high. The significant interaction effect between LDI and perceived instrumental intent on psychological withdrawal ($\beta = -.16$, $p = .02$) offers support for the hypothesis. As shown in Figure 2, the interaction effect was illustrated by plotting a simple slope (Aiken & West, 1991) and the effects were in line with the hypothesised predictions, that is, for individuals with low perceived instrumental intent, a positive relationship between LDI and psychological withdrawal was observed whereas for individuals with high perceived instrumental intent, a null effect was found.

In Hypothesis 1b, it was predicted that a positive effect of LDI on psychological withdrawal is observed when perceived altruistic intent is low and a null effect is observed when high. A significant interaction effect was found ($\beta = -.17$, $p = .03$) and it was plotted on a simple slope to illustrate the effects. As shown in Figure 3, the slopes were aligned with the hypothesised predictions, that is, at low levels of perceived altruistic intent, a positive relationship between LDI and psychological withdrawal was observed while the relationship becomes neutral at high levels of perceived altruistic intent.

In Hypothesis 2a, it was predicted that a negative effect of LDI on task performance via psychological withdrawal is observed when perceived instrumental intent is low and a null effect is observed when high. The results support the proposed moderated mediation model as the index of moderated mediation = .026 (95% CI [.002, .050]) did not include zero, indicating statistical significance. Furthermore, as shown in Table 6, the hypothesised direction of effects were supported by the data whereby significant negative indirect effects was found at low (95% CI [–.121, –.032]) and mean levels (95% CI [–.087, –.014]) of

perceived instrumental intent whereas no significance was found at high levels (95% CI [–.064, 024]) as the 95% CIs included zero.

For Hypothesis 2b, it was predicted that a negative effect of LDI on task performance via work engagement is observed when perceived altruistic intent is low and a null effect is observed when high. Likewise, the results demonstrated support for a moderated mediation model as the index of moderated mediation = .027 (95% CI [.002, .057]) did not include zero, indicating statistical significance. Additionally, as shown in Table 6, the results supported the predictions as significant negative indirect effects were found at low (95% CI [–.121, –.026]) and mean levels (95% CI [–.086, –.014]) of altruistic intent but no significance at high levels (95% CI [–.060, .021]) as the 95% CIs did include zero.

Table 6 – The moderated mediation results of the interaction LDI x perceived instrumental intent as well as LDI x previous-day perceived altruistic intent on task performance through work engagement.

<table>
<tr><th></th><th>Psychological withdrawal</th><th colspan="2">Task performance</th></tr>
<tr><td></td><td>β(SE)</td><td colspan="2">β(SE)</td></tr>
<tr><td>Predictor</td><td></td><td colspan="2"></td></tr>
<tr><td>LDI</td><td>0.2853(0.101)**</td><td colspan="2">–0.051(0.48)</td></tr>
<tr><td>Psychological withdrawal</td><td></td><td colspan="2">–0.149(0.030)**</td></tr>
<tr><td>Perceived instrumental intent</td><td>0.052(0.078)</td><td colspan="2"></td></tr>
<tr><td>Perceived altruistic intent</td><td>–0.139(0.095)</td><td colspan="2"></td></tr>
<tr><td>LDI x perceived instrumental intent</td><td>–0.160(0.070)*</td><td colspan="2"></td></tr>
<tr><td>LDI x perceived altruistic intent</td><td>–0.174(0.081)*</td><td colspan="2"></td></tr>
<tr><td>Residual variance</td><td>0.173**</td><td colspan="2">0.176**</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">Conditional effects at different levels of moderators (M ± 1 SD)</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">Moderator:</td><td rowspan="2">Outcome:
Task performance</td><td colspan="2">95% CI indirect effects</td></tr>
<tr><td>LLCI</td><td>ULCI</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="3">Perceived instrumental intent</td><td>Low (–SD)</td><td>–0.121</td><td>–0.032</td></tr>
<tr><td>Medium (M)</td><td>–0.087</td><td>–0.014</td></tr>
<tr><td>High (+SD)</td><td>–0.064</td><td>0.024</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="3">Perceived altruistic intent</td><td>Low (–SD)</td><td>–0.121</td><td>–0.027</td></tr>
<tr><td>Medium (M)</td><td>–0.086</td><td>–0.014</td></tr>
<tr><td>High (+SD)</td><td>–0.060</td><td>–0.021</td></tr>
</table>

Note. *$p < .05$; **$p < .01$. Confidence intervals that do not include zero are in bold.*

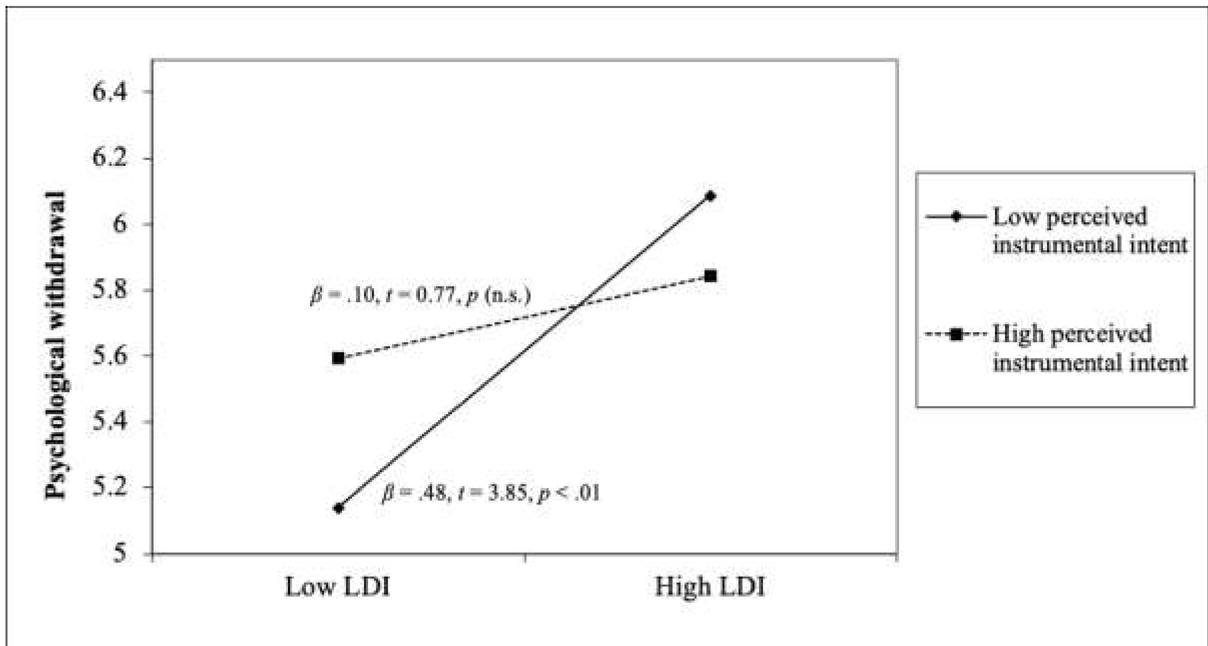

Figure 2 – Interaction effect of LDI and perceived instrumental intent on psychological withdrawal.

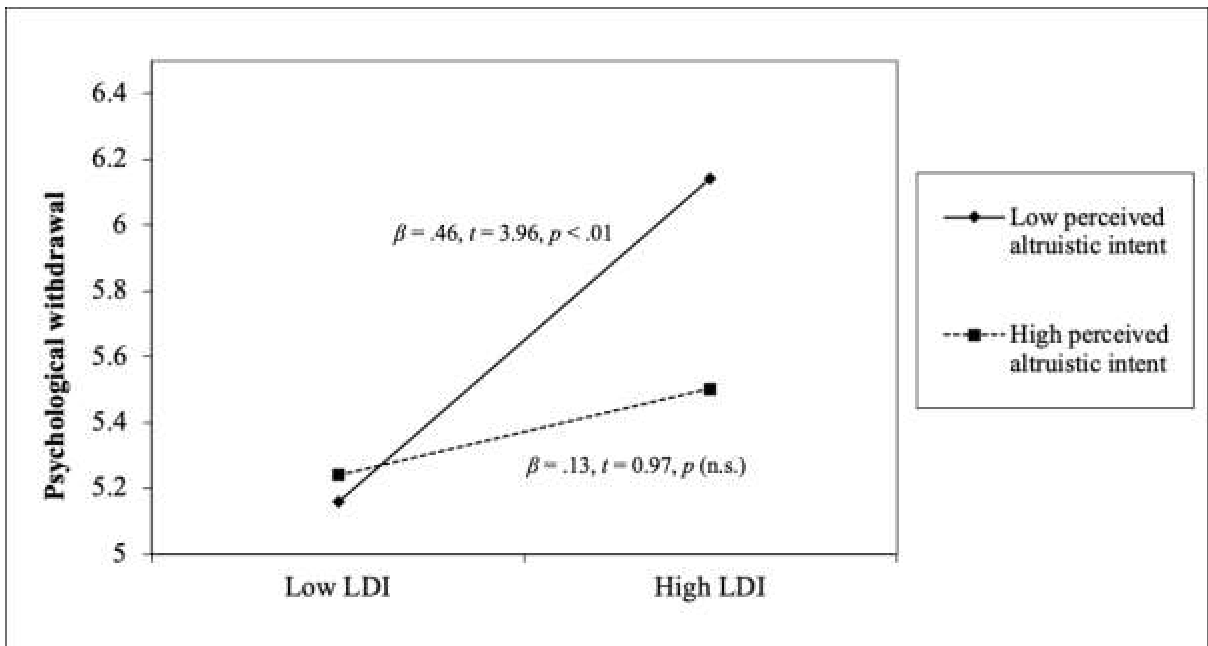

Figure 3 – Interaction effect of LDI and perceived altruistic intent on psychological withdrawal.

5.6 DISCUSSION

The findings drawn from Study 1 provided support for the notion that followers who are unable to discern an intent behind their supervisor's ingratiatory behaviours, regardless of the intent being instrumental or altruistic, experienced higher levels of psychological withdrawal while for those who rated low in perceived intent, the relationship between LDI and psychological withdrawal becomes neutral. Furthermore, the negative indirect effects of LDI on task performance through psychological withdrawal was observed at low to mean levels of perceived instrumental and altruistic intent whereas no statistically significant indirect effects were found at high levels of perceived intents.

Accordingly, these results are consistent with the theoretical arguments proposed by the current research, that is, while previous research had often discussed upward ingratiation and its effects based on valence of intent (i.e., selfish versus selfless) (e.g., Allen & Rush, 1998; Eastman, 1994; Johnson et al., 2002), this is not applicable to LDI. Rather, the findings from Study 1 lend support for the view that LDI with an unclear and indiscernible intent activates their defensive mode as indicated by the increased level of psychological withdrawal. This was theorised through the integration of URT and CoR to be the result of followers depleting their cognitive resources on the uncertainty-reduction process (Parks & Adelman, 1983). On the other hand, LDI with a clear and discernible intent protects followers from expending cognitive resources into the uncertainty-reduction process, thereby allowing them to continue reinvest them into their work tasks (Astakhova, 2015; Halbesleben, Harvey & Bolino, 2009; Halbesleben & Wheeler, 2008; Wheeler, Halbesleben & Shanine, 2013; Zivnuska et al., 2016)

Study 2, however, is not without its limitations. In addition to the lack of internal validity due to its cross-sectional nature (Aguinis & Edwards, 2014; Bryman, 2011; Friedrich, Byrne & Mumford, 2009), this design also discounts another important factor

involved in the leadership phenomenon, that is, time. As Shamir (2011) suggested, many of the dominant leadership theories often conduct research from an *atemporal* point of view which means that they focus on leadership inputs (e.g., characteristics, traits, behaviours) and its outcomes elicited on followers without considering that certain leadership inputs may have different durations for the process to unfold. For example, transformational leadership and its positive effects at the team- and organisational-level has been found to take 1 and 5 years to unfold, respectively (Keller, 2006) while abusive supervision have been linked with supervisor-directed deviance enacted by followers in the next day (Liao et al., 2021). Likewise, the notion of time has also been applied to the impression management literature. For instance, Bolino, Klotz and Daniels (2014) conducted a study that investigated the efficacy of impression management tactics across time and found that while defensive tactics such as giving justifications or apologies lose their effectiveness over time, assertive tactics on the other hand such as ingratiation and self-promotion, continued to positively impact supervisor liking and performance evaluation even when measured two months apart.

Accordingly, an ESM study was designed for Study 3 which will investigate whether the differential effects of clearly or unclearly attributed LDI unfolds in a short time frame. To this end, Study 3 will examine the hypothesised relationships at the within-person level on a daily basis. Accordingly, an interval-contingent ESM design was employed for Study 3 where participants self-reported ratings at two measurement points in a day for a period of 16 work days. Further details and results of Study 3 will be discussed in the following chapter.

CHAPTER SIX: STUDY 3

6.1 RATIONALE

ESM research designs, or otherwise known as the *daily diary method* (Fisher & To, 2012), offers researchers with a number of advantages. The first is that it can provide richer quality data since it involves participants having to self-report events or experiences that occur on a daily basis (Bolger, Davis & Rafaeli, 2003; Ohly et al., 2010). Another advantage is the reduction of retrospective bias (Reis & Gable, 2000) because participants will only need to report the most recent event or experience that occurred. Finally, ESM designs allow for research questions that are otherwise too complex to be dealt with by cross-sectional designs (Ohly et al., 2010). In the context of Study 3, the aim is to investigate the unfolding process of the hypothesised relationships, that is, whether it manifests in a short time frame. As mentioned previously, the hypotheses that will be tested in Study 3 are as follows:

Hypothesis 1a: A negative effect of Leadership Downward Ingratiation on Work Engagement is observed when Perceived Instrumental Intent is low and a null effect is observed when high.

Hypothesis 1b: A negative effect of Leadership Downward Ingratiation on Work Engagement is observed when Perceived Altruistic Intent is low and a null effect is observed when high.

Hypothesis 2a: A negative effect of Leadership Downward Ingratiation on Task Performance via Work Engagement is observed when Perceived Instrumental Intent is low and a null effect is observed when high.

Hypothesis 2b: A negative effect of Leadership Downward Ingratiation on Task Performance via Work Engagement is observed when Perceived Altruistic Intent is low and a null effect is observed when high.

With that being said, an additional endeavour in Study 3 is to probe the moderators further. More specifically, a potential lagged effect will be investigated as previous research have implied that instrumental and altruistic attribution of behaviours are developed under specific contexts, are guided by different norms of reciprocity and, more relevantly to Study 3, their outcomes unfold at different durations (e.g., Ballinger & Rockmann, 2010; Clark & Mills, 1993; Eastman, 1994; Halbesleben et al., 2010). Since altruism has been described as a form of *nonreciprocal* relationship (Ballinger & Rockman, 2010), this could arguably slow the rate in which followers respond to altruistic LDI as they would exhibit a greater tendency for long-term reciprocity (Eva et al., 2019) compared to instrumental LDI. For this reason, a potential lagged moderation effect will be examined for previous-day perceived altruistic intent in Study 3.

6.2 PARTICIPANTS AND PROCEDURE

The participant recruitment was conducted through ProA where the inclusion criteria were based exclusively on employees possessing a full-time employment with regular contact with their supervisors. The study begins with a pre-survey which asks a series of initial questions about themselves followed by a request for participants indicate their estimated start-of-work times over a period of 16 consecutive workdays. Once completed, this activates the ESM portion of the study starting from the following Monday. Subsequently, participants receive their daily surveys at 4- and 8 hours after their indicated start-of-work on Mondays to

Fridays. A reminder email was sent if there were no responses from a participant within one hour and, after another hour of non-response, the daily survey will be deactivated.

A sample size of *N* = 74 out of an initial 100 participants had successfully completed the pre-survey whereas a total of 1486 daily surveys at 4- and 8 hour points were completed over the 16 workdays which means the response rate at the person- and daily level were at 74% and 63% respectively. While the response rate at the person-level was in line with previous studies (Fisher & To, 2012), the response rate at the daily-level was somewhat below average levels. With that being said, a response rate of 63% can still be deemed adequate as the average lower end of a typical ESM response rate is at 70%.

In line with scholarly recommendations (Gabriel et al., 2019), particpants were rewarded 50p for each completion of either a pre-survey or a daily survey. However, in order to boost participation rate, participants were informed of a £5.00 bonus for completing all relevant surveys including the pre-survey on 12 out of 16 workdays, that is, a 75% completion of the diary study. After concluding the data collection process, the demographic characteristics of the current sample was found to be 63.5% male and 36.5% female. The minimum and maximum ages of the sample ranged from 20 to 58 years old (*M* = 33.59, *SD* = 8.03) with organisational tenures between 1 year to 20 years (*M* = 5.99, *SD* = 4.98) and workhours per week between 32 to 50 hours (*M* = 38.68, *SD* = 3.25). The participants come from a myriad of sectors with arts and entertainment (17.6%), finance and insurance (9.5%), restaurant and hotel (9.5%), craftsmanship (9.5%), traffic (9.5%), construction (8.1%) as well as production and industry (8.1%) occuping significant portions of the current sample, with the exception of sectors labelled as “others” (9.5%).

6.3 MEASURES

The identical scales from Study 2 were reemployed to measure LDI, perceived intent and task performance. The scale for work engagement from Study 1 was reused in this study, though modifications were made to reflect a field study (see Appendix D). Furthermore, the demographics variables consisting of gender, age, organisational tenure were included as control variables with the addition of industry sectors to account for inter-industrial differences in work experiences (e.g., Van Hoorn, 2017).

6.4 ANALYTICAL APPROACH

Since the hypothesised relationships of the current research occurs at within and across different levels of analysis, a multilevel modelling (MLM) analytical technique was employed for the purpose of Study 3. MLM is an appropriate statistical method since most data are organised in a hierarchical manner, resulting in what is called a *nested data structure* (Heck & Thomas, 2015; Ohly et al., 2010). This means that the units of analysis at one level are grouped within a higher-order unit of analysis (Nezlek, 2008), for instance, the fact that individual leaders or followers are nested within dyadic relationships (Gooty & Yammarino, 2011). For this reason, the data structure of Study 3 lends itself well to MLM as it enables the analysis of one level while taking into account of variance at another level (Heck & Thomas, 2015; Sherry & MacKinnon, 2013). More specifically, the within-level data (Level 1: LDI, perceived altruistic intent, perceived instrumental intent, work engagement) were nested within the between-level data (Level 2: task performance). Accordingly, the current study employs the use of Mplus (Muthén & Muthén, 2019) which is a statistical software package that enables researchers – among many other functions – to compute, estimate and interpret MLMs.

Since bootstrap procedures are not applicable to MLMs, the Monte Carlo procedure was utilised to estimate the confidence intervals for moderated mediation model (Preacher & Selig, 2012). An indirect effect is observed if there is an absence of zero in the 95% confidence intervals (Preacher, Rucker & Hayes, 2007). Based on the suggestions of Hayes and Preacher (2012), the conditional indirect effects were computed at lower (– *SD*) and higher (+1 *SD*) levels of the moderators, that is, perceived instrumental and altruistic intent. Furthermore, in following scholarly recommendations (Hofmann & Gavin, 1998; Ohly et al., 2010), all Level 1 variables were person-mean centred whereas the Level 2 variable was grand-mean centred.

6.5 RESULTS

6.5.1 Descriptive statistics

Table 7 presents the descriptive statistics, internal consistencies, and correlations amongst all the studied variables for Study 3.

Table 7 – Means, Standard Deviations, Internal Consistencies (Cronbach's Alpha), and Intercorrelations (Study 3)

	Variable	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**9**	**10**
1.	Work engagement	(.95)	**.42**	**.34**	**.37**	**.36**	**.23**				
3.	Task performance	**.50**	(.91)	**.08**	**.27**	**.24**	.06				
4.	LDI	**.63**	.41	(.93)	**.64**	**.46**	**.48**				
5.	Current-day perceived altruistic intent	**.55**	**.59**	**.55**	(.94)	**.68**	**.28**				
6.	Previous-day perceived altruistic intent	**.34**	**.25**	**.46**	**.68**	(.94)	**.20**				
7.	Perceived instrumental intent	.50	.50	-.41	**.52**	**.20**	(.94)				
8.	Age	.10	.41	.27	-.01	-.12	-.39	—			
9.	Gender[a]	.12	.40	.03	.04	.00	-.12	.11	—		
10.	Organisational tenure	.04	.48	.20	.20	-.08	-.00	**.63**	.10	—	
11.	Sector[b]	.12	-.15	.04	-.17	**.14**	-.26	.04	-.03	-.06	—
	M	4.6	4.02	2.69	3.32	3.30	2.41	33.59	1.64	5.99	9.54
	SD	1.26	.077	1.15	1.11	1.13	1.12	8.03	0.49	4.98	5.37

Note. *Between-person correlations are below the diagonal whereas within-persons correlations are above the diagonal. Within-person variables were averaged across days to form the between-person variables. Cronbach's α between parentheses on the diagonal. Correlations in bold are statistically significant (p < .05).*

[a]Gender = (1 = female, 2 = male, 3 = any other gender identity), [e]Sector (1 = Finance and Insurance, 2 = Construction, 3 = Retail and Wholesale, 4 = Energy and Water Supply, 5 = Teaching and Education, 6 = Restaurant and Hotel, 7 = Health, 8 = Craftsmanship, 9 = IT and Communications, 10 = Art and Entertainment, 11 = Agriculture and Forestry, 12 = Public Administration, 13 = Production and Industry, 14 = Traffic, 15 = Science, 16 = Hospitality, 17 = Non-profit, 18 = Other).

6.5.2 Hypotheses testing

In Hypothesis 1a, it was predicted that a negative effect of LDI on work engagement is observed when perceived instrumental intent is low and a null effect is observed when high. The findings showed that the interaction effect was statistically significant ($\gamma = .11$, $p = .028$). To further explore the interaction at the within-person level, the relationship between LDI and work engagement was plotted at low (–1 *SD)* and high (+1 *SD*) values of perceived instrumental intent (see Figure 4). As demonstrated by the slopes, it does not align with the predictions of the hypothesis. As opposed to observing a null effect, a positive effect of LDI on work engagement was observed at high levels of perceived instrumental intent. Furthermore, rather than a negative effect at low levels of perceived instrumental intent, a positive effect, albeit weaker, was observed. For this reason, Hypothesis 1a was not supported.

In Hypothesis 1b, it was predicted that a negative effect of LDI on work engagement is observed when perceived altruistic intent is low and a null effect is observed when high. The results demonstrated no evidence for this prediction since it was found to be statistically non-significant ($\gamma = .04$, $p = .21$). For this reason, the data offered no support for H1b. However, a lagged moderation effect was subsequently examined for previous-day perceived altruistic intent on the relationship between LDI and work engagement and, as expected, the result yielded a statistically significant finding ($\gamma = .07$, $p < .01$). To facilitate the interpretation of results, a simple slope was plotted to gauge the direction of effects (see Figure 5). Once again, however, the slopes were not in line with the predictions whereby instead of a null effect, the slopes revealed that a positive effect of LDI on work engagement was observed at high levels of perceived altruistic intent. Not only that, rather than observing

a negative effect at low levels of perceived altruistic intent, a null effect was observed instead.

In Hypothesis 2a, it was predicted that a negative effect of LDI on task performance via work engagement is observed when perceived instrumental intent is low and a null effect is observed when high. As shown in Table 8, the data did not yield support for the hypothesised predictions as the positive indirect effect of LDI on task performance via work engagement were observed at high levels of perceived instrumental intent (95% CI [.029, .200]) and at medium levels (95% CI [.012, .216]) as the 95% CIs did not include zero, while no statistical significance was found at low levels of perceived instrumental intent (95% CI [-.020, .248]) since the 95% CIs included a zero.

In Hypothesis 2b, it was predicted that a negative effect of LDI on task performance via work engagement is observed when perceived altruistic intent is low and a null effect is observed when high. Likewise shown in Table 8, the data did not lend support for the hypothesised predictions as the 95% CIs did include zero, thus a moderated mediation model could not be inferred from the data. Similarly, a lagged moderation effect was examined for previous-day altruistic intent and indeed a statistically significant result was found whereby a positive indirect effect of LDI on task performance via work engagement was observed at all levels, that is, at low (95% CI [.003, .139]), medium (95% CI [.019, .123]) and high (95% CI [.027, .114]) levels of the moderator.

Table 8 – The multilevel modelling results of the interaction LDI x perceived instrumental intent, LDI x perceived altruistic intent as well as LDI x previous-day perceived altruistic intent on task performance through work engagement.

	Work engagement	**Task performance**
	γ(SE)	γ(SE)
Predictor		
LDI	0.231(0.059)**	0.018(0.020)
Work engagement		0.132(0.038)**
Perceived instrumental intent	–0.024(0.061)	
Perceived altruistic intent	0.078(0.073)	

Previous-day perceived altruistic intent	0.414(0.048)**	
LDI x perceived instrumental intent	0.114(0.052)*	
LDI x perceived altruistic intent	0.044(0.035)	
LDI x previous-day perceived altruistic intent	0.071(0.027)**	
Residual variance	0.602**	0.251**

Conditional effects at different levels of moderators (*M* ± 1 *SD*)

Mediator: Work engagement	Outcome: Task performance	95% CI	
		LLCI	ULCI
Perceived instrumental intent	Low (**–*SD***)	-0.020	0.248
	Medium (***M***)	**0.012**	**0.216**
	High (**+*SD***)	**0.029**	**0.200**
Perceived altruistic intent	Low (**–*SD***)	-0.046	0.135
	Medium (***M***)	-0.025	0.113
	High (**+*SD***)	-0.014	0.102
Previous-day perceived altruistic intent	Low (**–*SD***)	**0.003**	**0.139**
	Medium (***M***)	**0.019**	**0.123**
	High (**+*SD***)	**0.027**	**0.114**

*Note. *p < .05; **p < .01. Confidence intervals that do not include zero are in bold.*

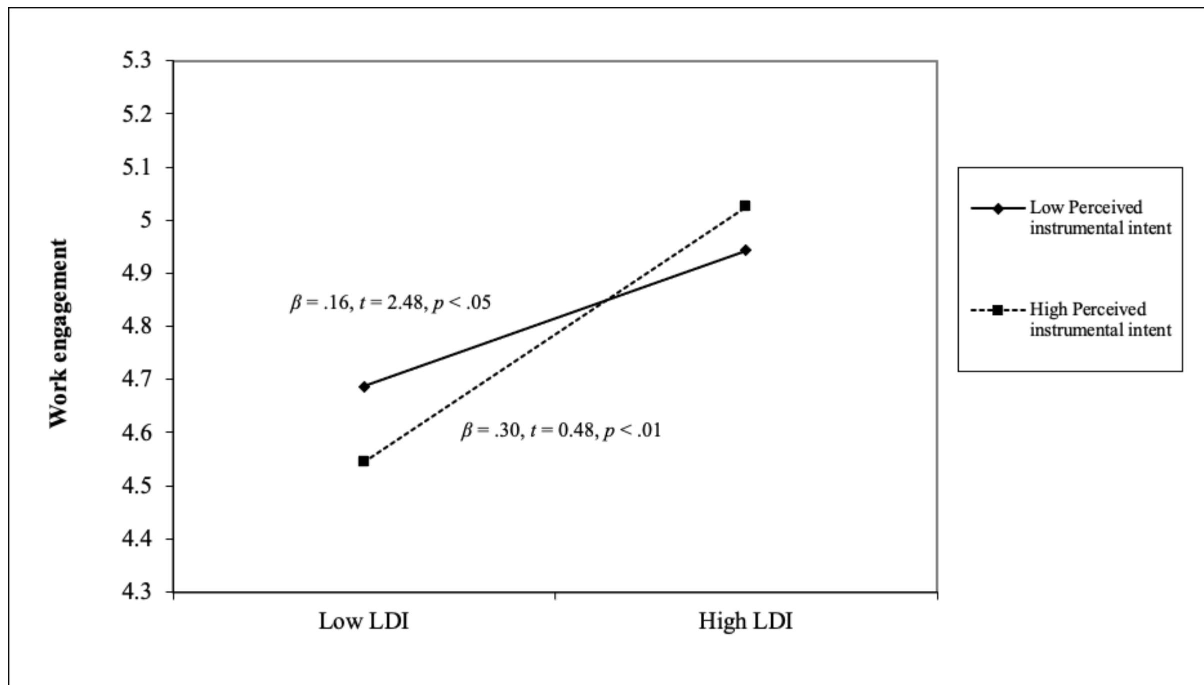

Figure 4 – Interaction effect of LDI and perceived instrumental intent on work engagement.

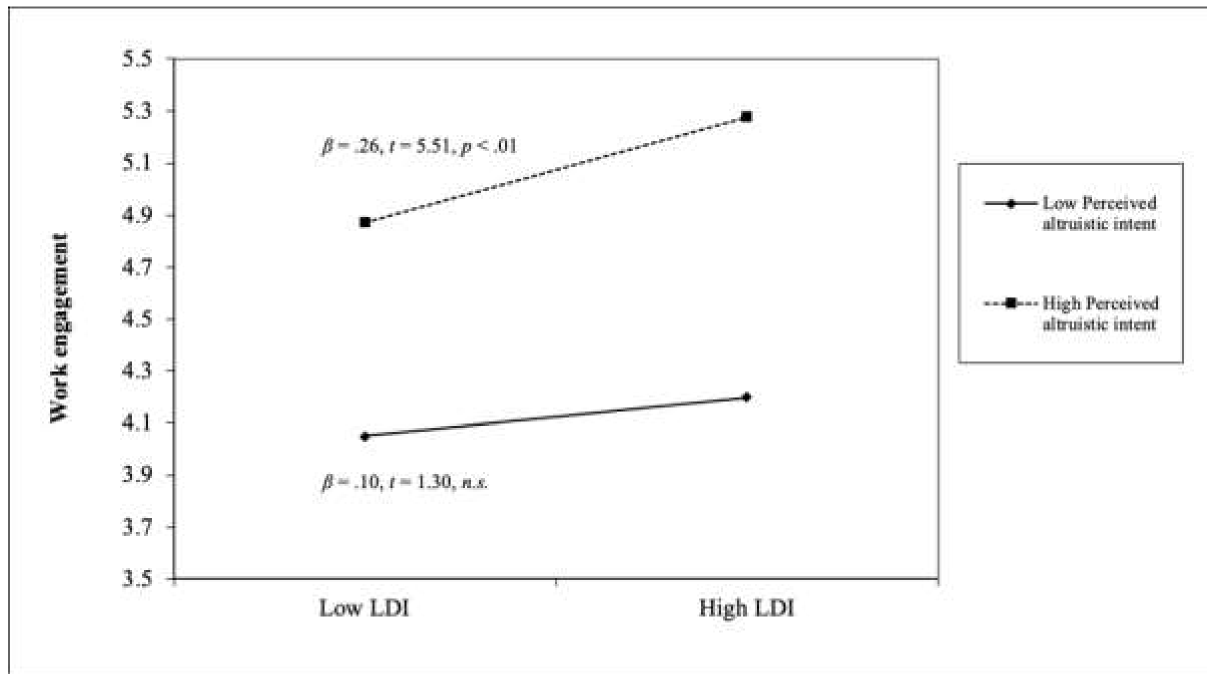

Figure 5 – Interaction effect of LDI and previous-day perceived altruistic intent on work engagement.

6.6 DISCUSSION

In summary, the data from Study 3 yielded a couple of unexpected findings. Based on the patterns observed on the simple slopes, the interactions were not aligned with the hypotheses and perhaps the most unexpected were the interaction effects at high levels of perceived intent. While it was predicted that a null effect of LDI on work engagement would occur when perceived intent is high, this was not the case as it shows that participants in fact responded with greater engagement at work. Not only does this deviate from the proposed direction of effects, it also does not corroborate with the findings of Study 2. More specifically, the findings so far has revealed that LDI elicits positive effects at both opposite ends of the continuum, that is, a positive effect on work engagement at high levels of perceived intent and a positive effect on psychological withdrawal at low levels of perceived intent. As a result, these findings suggests that work engagement and psychological withdrawal are not polar opposites and may in fact be independent of one another. Indeed, previous research supports this notion as work engagement and burnout, that is, a construct

related to psychological withdrawal, have been found to have their own unique predictors and outcomes (e.g., Demerouti, Mostert & Bakker, 2010; Fragoso et al., 2016; González-Romá et al., 2006; Schaufeli et al., 2002).

Additionally, another of finding of interest in Study 3 is the lagged moderation effect of previous-day perceived altruistic intent. This is consistent with earlier arguments posited by scholars who contended that interactions characterised by altruism, or in the context of Study 3, perceived to be with altruistic intentions, are governed by a different set of reciprocity norms compared to those perceived to be instrumental. More specifically, a useful framework to elucidate this phenomenon is by way of Clark and Mills' (1979) distinction between affective-communal relationships and instrumental-exchange relationships. The norms in communal relationships are characterised by the willingness to incur costs on oneself for the purpose of benefitting another whereas instrumental relationships are characterised by the norm of reciprocity (Burger et al., 2009; Goulder, 1960), that is, a benefit given with an expectation of a prompt reward in equal value. Accordingly, scholars have argued that altruism, which characterises communal relationships, form relationships that are *nonreciprocal* which means that the concern about reciprocity, that is, the balance between giving benefits and receiving rewards in the relationship, is ignored (Ballinger & Rockmann, 2010). Indeed, previous research has shown that reciprocated exchanges occur at a higher rate between acquaintances whereas it was lower between friends (Stewart-Williams, 2007).

CHAPTER SEVEN: DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 GENERAL DISCUSSION

On the surface, LDI behaviours may seem to be a straightforward process involving only two components: first an actor is motivated to convey a desired image in the eyes of others and then second is choosing the correct plan of action to achieve it (Leary & Kowalski, 1990). However, as implied by the ideas formulated in this paper, LDI is a highly intricate procedure with its outcomes dependant on "naïve psychologists" (Heider, 1958) on the part of the follower to receive, interpret and respond to these behaviours, thereby making it a tricky business to operate (Cialdini & De Nicholas, 1989; Long, 2021). Due to the unique situation where leaders ingratiate their followers from a legitimate position of power (French & Raven, 1959) which grants leaders with the greater capacity to be *uninfluenced* by others (Galinsky et al., 2008) and thus less likely to be affected by the *ingratiator's dilemma*, it may be argued that LDI differs from upward ingratiation as it is easier for leaders to ingratiate with their followers without appearing deceitful or insincere (Vonk, 2007). In addition to scholarly calls for a greater emphasis on followers due to their status as co-producers of the leadership phenomenon (Alvesson & Einola, 2019; Peck & Hogue, 2018; Shamir, 2007; Sidani & Rowe, 2018), the current research had set out to unravel the boundary conditions that determines the effects that perceived LDI has on followers. To this end, the current research drew on URT and CoR to propose that when followers encounter LDI with a clear intent, regardless if it was motivated by instrumental or altruistic motives, protects followers from expending cognitive resources into the uncertainty-reduction process. In turn, this allows them to reinvest their surplus resources into their workplace (Astakhova, 2015; Halbesleben, Harvey & Bolino, 2009; Halbesleben & Wheeler, 2008; Wheeler, Halbesleben & Shanine, 2013; Zivnuska et al., 2016) which enables to continue engaging in their work

and execute their tasks well. Conversely, when followers come across LDI without a discernible intent, this compels followers to expend cognitive resources into the uncertainty-reduction process (Park & Adelman, 1983) which depletes them and thereby activates their defensive state to protect and recuperate from resource loss (Hobfoll et al., 2018) . In other words, it is not the valence of intent (i.e., selfish versus selfless) but the clarity of unclarity of intent that determines the effects of LDI on followers. As a result, the current research hypothesised that a negative effect of LDI on follower task performance via work engagement is observed when perceived instrumental and altruistic intent are low and a null effect is observed when high.

Overall, the empirical evidence gathered for the current research showed mixed support for the hypothesised relationships. The findings drawn from the vignette experiment of Study 1 showed no support for the hypotheses as the results were non-significant. To explain this finding, it is firstly worth noting the manner in which perceived intent develops in response to encountering prosocial behaviours. The first scholar to empirically examine this phenomenon was a research conducted by Eastman (1994) who employed the *attribution cube model* (Kelley, 1967) which suggested that the process of attributing another person's behaviour are comprised primarily of three informational factors: consensus, consistency and distinctiveness information. More specifically, *consensus* refers to information regarding how consistently a behaviour is enacted at the between-person level, *consistency* pertains to this information at the within-person level and finally *distinctiveness* relates to information at the between-situations level (Martinko & Thomson, 1998). In Eastman's (1994) study, the only significant result found was that supervisors tended to attribute prosocial behaviours to ingratiation rather than citizenship when there was low consensus, that is, only one employee engaged in prosocial behaviours as opposed to many (Eastman, 1994). In expanding this finding, Halbesleben et al. (2010) employed the *general attribution model* (Weiner, 1985) to

argue that supervisors search for information along three dimensions: locus of causality, stability and controllability. In brief, *locus of causality* is concerned with the extent a behaviour was enacted due to internal or external factors, *stability* pertains to whether the cause of a behaviour changes over time and lastly *controllability* refers to the extent an individual was in control of the behaviour. According to the study conducted by Halbesleben et al. (2010), their findings revealed that a specific configuration of these dimensions led to altruistic attributions, that is, high internality, high stability and low controllability. By contrast, impression management attributions was elicited when there is low internality, low stability and high controllability. Consequently, this finding is crucial to Study 1 as these are factors that may prove difficult for a vignette experiment to establish and replicate in a realistic manner.

In Study 2 however, by testing the theoretical robustness of the proposed relationships, a preliminary support was provided by demonstrating that followers who encounter LDI without a discernible intent experienced higher levels of psychological withdrawal and in turn decreases task performance. By integrating URT and CoR, the current research theorises that this occurred due to followers being compelled to expend cognitive resources into the uncertainty-reduction process which depletes them and activates their defensive state to protect and recuperate from further resource loss (Hobfoll et al., 2018). By contrast, for followers who come across LDI with a discernible intent, the relationship between LDI and task performance through psychological withdrawal becomes neutral. The current research theorises that since LDI with a clear intent provides the relevant social information to alleviate uncertainty, this protects followers from depleting their cognitive resources on the uncertainty-reduction process, thereby enabling them to reinvest their surplus resources into the workplace and thus allowed to continue engaging in their work and execute their tasks properly (Astakhova, 2015; Halbesleben, Harvey & Bolino, 2009;

Halbesleben & Wheeler, 2008; Wheeler, Halbesleben & Shanine, 2013; Zivnuska et al., 2016).

With regards to Study 3, the results yielded some unexpected findings. In brief, it was found that a positive effect of LDI on work engagement was observed at high levels of perceived instrumental intent and previous-day perceived altruistic intent which in turn led to increases in task performance. Based on the integrated theory of the current research, these findings suggests that that not only were they protected from cognitive resource depletion, they in fact became more willing to spend cognitive resources, or from the CoR perspective, became more *unwilling* to conserve resources at work. This result is in conflict with the findings of Study 2 and further supports the notion that work engagement and psychological withdrawal are not polar opposites and instead each represents an independent state of mind (e.g., Demerouti, Mostert & Bakker, 2010; Fragoso et al., 2016; González-Romá et al., 2006; Schaufeli et al., 2002). Another unexpected result is the lagged moderation effect of previous-day perceived altruistic intent. Accordingly, there are a couple of potential explanations for this finding. First and foremost, as suggested by Ballinger and Rockmann (2010), we often assume that social exchange relationships between leaders and followers are invariably governed by rules of reciprocity where each party feel obliged to respond in kind for the way they are treated in the relationship (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2001). However, this approach ignores the existence of *nonreciprocal* relationships such as those between mentors and protégés where a caring behaviour from a mentor may go unreciprocated (Janssen, Van Vuuren & De Jong, 2013). What determines whether a relationship will enter a reciprocal or a nonreciprocal state is the *anchoring event* of a relationship, that is, a highly salient and instrumental exchange event, or series of events, that occurred during the course of a relationship which are stored as vivid autobiographical memories and exerts long-lasting influence over the relationship's development (Ballinger & Rockmann, 2010). Due to its ease

of access, autobiographical memories of anchoring events are often recalled to serve as evaluatory tools to assess a relationship (Smith et al., 2021). In this sense, a positive anchoring event would lead to positive relational attitudes and behaviours, and likewise for a negative anchoring event. Most significantly, Ballinger and Rockmann (2010) have proposed that altruism is a form of positive nonreciprocal relationship since the rules governing these exchanges are other-directed where the altruistic person is more concerned with maximising the gains and outcomes of others rather than their own which is a distinguishing feature of affective-communal relationships (Clark & Mills, 1979; 1993; Stewart-Williams, 2007). As followers who have attributed their leader's LDI to altruistic motives, this develops a positive nonreciprocal relationship with their supervisor which in turn leaves their ingratiatory behaviours unreciprocated. Additionally, since scholars have well-established the reciprocal nature of leader-member exchange relationships (Liden & Maslyn, 1998) and are therefore bound by the norms of reciprocity in social exchanges (Burger et al., 2009; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2001; Goulder, 1960;), it could be argued that altruistic and instrumental attributions elicits the obligation to reciprocate in different ways. While an instrumental intent typifies the characteristics of an instrumental-exchange relationship involving prompt exchange of benefits (Clark & Mills, 1979; 1993) between a leader and follower, altruistic intent on the other hand, suggests to followers that they work under an other-oriented leader (e.g., a servant leader) where they tend to emphasise on long-term goals as opposed to short-term quid pro quo exchange interactions with their followers (Eva et al., 2019). As a result, altruistic leaders are more concerned with long-term reciprocity and therefore elicits a lower sense of obligation and immediacy from followers to reciprocate (Uhl-Bien & Maslyn, 2003).

7.2 THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS

The findings of the current research offers a number of theoretical contributions to the literature. Firstly, the current research deviates from the conventional view that valence of intent serves as boundary conditions for prosocial behaviours, that is, those that are attributed to self-serving motives elicits negative outcomes whereas those that are attributed to selflessness elicits positive outcomes (e.g., Bolino et al., 2013; Eastman, 1994; Johnson et al., 2002; Podsakoff, MacKenzie & Hui, 1993; Organ, 1990). Instead, the current research proposes the clarity-unclarity dichotomy of perceived intent as boundary conditions that determines the outcomes of LDI on followers. However, it is worth pointing out that although the findings so far offered no support for the direction of effects as hypothesised, the contribution of the current research still remains, that is, it provided parsimonious support for the clarity-unclarity dichotomy serving as boundary conditions of LDI whereby clear attribution of intent led to positive outcomes whereas unclear attribution of intent led to negative outcomes. More specifically, as it was found in Study 3 that a positive effect on task performance via work engagement as mediator was observed at high levels of perceived intent rather than observing a null effect as hypothesised originally, the results revealed more optimism than first thought since it suggests that discernment of intent not only provides a protective function from cognitive resource expenditure but also expands followers' limited pool of cognitive resource to enable greater engagement in work and thereby increase task performance. This novel finding further drives home the importance of leaders to have the ability to communicate clearly (Nemanich & Keller, 2007; Vera & Crossan, 2004) in their interactions with their followers especially with regards to potentially ambiguous behaviours such as LDI. Accordingly, the current research further reinforces the idea of leaders being significant sources of both certainty (Knobloch & Solomon, 1999; Kramer, 2009; O'Driscoll

& Beehr, 1994; Tu et al., 2019) and uncertainty (Eberly et al., 2011; O'Driscoll & Beehr, 1994) in the workplace.

Secondly, while many studies have looked at the effects and outcomes of upward ingratiation, for instance, in terms of its positive outcomes including increased likeability (Gordon, 1996), developing high quality exchange relationships (e.g., Wayne & Ferris, 1990) and career success (e.g., Orpen, 1996) or in terms of its negative outcomes such as eliciting unfavourable impressions (e.g., Vonk, 1998; Turnley & Bolino, 2001) and promoting resentment and social undermining (Thacker & Wayne, 1995), the current research takes another step towards greater understanding of a relatively neglected aspect of the ingratiation literature, that is, downward ingratiation. For instance, a relatively recent review of the impression management literature (see Bolino, Long and Turnley, 2016) exclusively discusses upwards ingratiation and its relationship to work-related outcomes such as performance evaluations, job interviews and job acquisitions while offering little with regards to ingratiation enacted by individuals in comparatively higher positions of power. Accordingly, more research attention on LDI is needed since as it is a behaviour that occurs in a unique context, that is, leaders ingratiating from a position of legitimate power in the organisation where they are less likely to be affected by the *ingratiator's dilemma*. As a result, this line of research may offer some interesting insight into how ingratiation operates differently based on the direction of targets.

7.3 PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

Along with theoretical contributions, the current research also provides practical insights for managers. While ingratiation has often been derided as a negative form of prosocial behaviour (e.g., Vonk, 1998), this research provides a more nuanced understanding of when and how ingratiation enacted by managers can remain an effective means of creating

rapport with their employees while avoiding the risk of backfiring that may derail performance at work. More specifically, the current research presents evidence which suggests that managers should monitor how their intents are communicated and the impressions they leave behind with their employees prior to engaging in LDI. When a clear intent has been established, irrespective of whether an instrumental intent is expressed through an instrumental-exchange relationship or altruistic intent through an affective-communal relationship (Clark & Mills, 1979; Kark, 2012), ingratiation is a worthwhile influence strategy for the purpose of achieving positive work outcomes such as becoming more likeable (e.g., Turnley & Bolino, 2001), facilitating team cohesion (Rozell & Gundersen, 2003) or attaining career progression (e.g., Stern & Westphal, 2010; Westphal & Shani, 2016; Westphal & Stern, 2006). However, managers who have yet to establish a clear intent especially those at the nascent stage of relationship development with their employees should be cognisant as ingratiation may backfire in these situations. Considering how important the ability to offer a sense of direction, order and clarity is to leadership (Nevicka et al., 2013; Rast, 2015; Simpson, French & Harvey, 2002; Waldman et al., 2001), it would be useful for managers who are in need of establishing a clear intent to adopt a certain degree of assertiveness. Following the definition of Pearsall and Ellis (2006), assertiveness is simply the ability of an individual to communicate ideas clearly and directly without appearing disrespectful – a unique feature that distinguishes itself from aggressiveness (Polyrat, Jung & Hwang, 2012). Indeed, indirect evidence has shown that individuals who are assertive, for instance, engaging in voice behaviour (Whiting et al., 2012), are more likely to be assigned a motive (i.e., prosocial motive for voice behaviour) as opposed to less assertive individuals (Weiss & Morrison, 2019). This occurs because unassertive individuals tend to exhibit fewer behavioural cues, thereby allowing more room for ambiguity on intent attribution (Van Dyne, Ang & Botero, 2003).

7.4 FUTURE RESEARCH

With that being said, there are a number of ways in which future work can advance from the conclusions of this research. Firstly, due to its heavy emphasis on the cognitive aspect of follower experiences of LDI, that is, uncertainty reduction, intent attributions and to an extent resource conservation, a potential avenue to advance the current research would be to incorporate the literature on emotion regulation. For instance, according to emotions as social information (EASI) theory, emotions play a significant role in interpersonal interactions since affective expressions from others likewise constitutes an important source of social information which subsequently influences their own judgements and responses by triggering inferential processes and/or affective reactions (Van Kleef, 2009). This theory has been expanded by Hillebrandt & Barclay (2017) to also include the emotional target of others and formulated the notion of *integral emotions* versus *incidental emotions* exerting disparate influences on the attributions and behaviours of observers, that is, emotions targeted at the immediate situation at hand or outside of the situation, respectively. For this reason, future research could potentially examine how differences in perception of others' affective expressions can function as sources of information that can facilitate the uncertainty-reducing processes.

Finally, the results from Study 3 indicates that time plays remains a significant factor in leadership processes as suggested by the lagged effect of perceived altruistic intent. Accordingly, future research could consider investigating the *instantaneity* of this phenomenon, that is, how "instantaneous" the positive work-related outcomes associated with both perceived intents unfold and why. For example, potential research questions may investigate further how certain aspects of the leader-follower dyad may contribute to the disparate speed in unfolding the positive effects. A possible avenue to this could involve integrating social exchange theory (SET) to focus on the leader-follower exchange

relationship and how it can influence the way they conduct transactions with each other. Since exchange relationships are defined as a type of interaction that involves giving a reward to another in return for a reward within a relatively short time frame (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005), this resultingly invokes a sense of indebtedness or obligation and thus compel individuals to reciprocate in kind and restore equity in the relationship (Adams, 1965; Blau, 1964; Clark & Mills, 1979). By contrast, communal relationships would elicit a lower sense of obligation due to its *nonreciprocal* nature (Ballinger & Rockmann, 2010) whereby the norms of reciprocity are more likely to be ignored. Thus, future research could potentially investigate sense of obligation as a mediating factor in the disparaging levels of instantaneity.

7.5 LIMITATIONS

First and foremost, a general limitation associated with the current research is related to its use of self-report survey designs, and therefore affecting all studies of the present research, is the issue of *common method variance* (CMV), that is, any variance that is "attributable to the measurement method rather than the constructs the measures represent" (Podsakoff et al., 2003: 879). There are a number of potential sources of CMV, most notably stemming from the participants' *transient mood states*, *social desirability* and the *consistency effect* (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Firstly, certain events that occur throughout the course of the participants' lives (e.g. an argument with a spouse, bad day at the office, hectic work schedule) will give rise to a particular mood experience, which could act as cues that affect the way they respond to surveys and potentially induce artificial covariation across the measures (Podsakoff & Organ, 1986). Secondly, social desirability refers to the participants' desire to be perceived positively by adhering to cultural or organisational norms and values. This will produce inflated correlations between variables since participants are providing biased ratings in order to appear socially desirable at the cost of being consistent and truthful

to their actual experiences (Moorman & Podsakoff, 1992). Lastly, the consistency effect alludes to the participants' urge to maintain consistency in their responses by searching for similarities in the questions and organising their responses accordingly, resulting in distorted ratings (Podsakoff et al., 2003). With that being said, this limitation may have been mitigated as Study 3 employed the use of person-mean centring for all predictive variables.

Another limitation of the current research pertains to the scales used to measure the perceived intents. Although the notion of uncertainty is featured with a significant theoretical role for the current research, however, little attempt had been made to measure followers' perceived ambiguous intent attribution of LDI. Instead, high scores on both perceived intents were used to indicate low ambiguity in perceiving the leader's intent. While a review of the current literature yields little with regards to a valid, appropriate scale to measure perceived ambiguous intent, a potential avenue would be to incorporate a modified version of the 26-item perceived ambiguity scale developed by McManus and Nussbaum (2011) that was originally used to measure young adult children's perceived ambiguity in their communication with their parents. Example items include "My parent was vague about what his/her own thoughts were" and "My parent was clear about his/her own position".

With regards to Study 1, a major limitation is its artificiality as it is often difficult to replicate real-life scenarios in vignette experiments (e.g., Cullen, 2010; Stolte, 1994; Taylor, 2006; Wallander, 2012) especially when we consider that attribution of intents require specific contexts to emerge (Eastman, 1994; Halbesleben et al., 2010). As a result, future research could potentially consider videotaped performances for vignette experiments (e.g., Johnson et al., 2002). An additional limitation to Study 1 is related to its low sample size. Due to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, there were increased difficulty in recruiting participants on a personal basis as they were sampled on a voluntary basis without monetary incentives or any other incentives. For this reason, a way to improve the response rates in the

future would be to utilise Dillman's (2000) *Tailored Design Method* which is a set of procedures to administering online questionnaires that produces both high response rates and quality data from participants. In essence, this method urges researchers to customise their survey designs based on their particular situations through the principles of social exchange (Dillman, Smyth & Christian, 2014). The practical guidelines offered here includes designing a respondent-friendly questionnaire, use the "five contact" strategy consisting of one invitation email and four reminders that are spaced out across days or weeks, a personalised correspondence with participants and lastly, a token cash or material incentive that is sent with the questionnaire invitation.

7.6 CONCLUSION

Since leaders hold legitimate power due to their positions of authority that is granted by the organisation, this provides leaders with the unique situation where they are less affected by the *ingratiator's dilemma*, that is, the paradoxical phenomenon where the less power an individual has due to their dependence on another, the greater likelihood that their ingratiatory attempts will be perceived negatively (Frankel & Morris, 1976; Gordon, 1996; Jones, 1965). As a result, LDI differs from upward ingratiation as leaders are in a better position to ingratiate with their followers without appearing insincere or manipulative (Vonk, 2007). Accordingly, this calls for more research attention to study the nature of LDI and how it may affect follower outcomes.

In the context of the current research, it attempts to address this gap by integrating URT and CoR to contend that, as opposed to the valence of intent (i.e., selfish versus selfless intent), the followers' perceived clarity or unclarity of LDI intent serves as the boundary conditions in predicting their performance at work. More specifically, it was theorised that when followers are confronted with LDI without a clear, attributable intent, this compels

followers to expend cognitive resources into the uncertainty-reduction process in seeking the relevant social information about the leader (Parks & Adelman, 1983). In turn, this depletes their cognitive resources and activates their defensive state to protect and recover from resource loss (Hobfoll et al., 2018), thereby reducing their work engagement and decreases task performance. Conversely, when followers encounter LDI with a clear, attributable intent, this allows them to reinvest their surplus cognitive resources into work-related activities (Astakhova, 2015; Halbesleben, Harvey & Bolino, 2009; Halbesleben & Wheeler, 2008; Wheeler, Halbesleben & Shanine, 2013; Zivnuska et al., 2016), thereby enabling them to continue engaging in their work and execute their tasks properly. Accordingly, the current research proposed that a negative effect of LDI on task performance through work engagement is observed when followers' perceived instrumental and altruistic intent are low and a null effect is observed when high.

All in all, the findings of the current research across three studies demonstrated mixed support for the hypothesised relationships. While the predicted direction of effects were scarcely supported by the data, the findings nevertheless showed some support for the notion that followers' perceived clarity or unclarity of ingratiatory intent served as boundary conditions in predicting the effects of LDI on follower performance, that is, high perceived intent elicits positive outcomes whereas low perceived intent elicits negative outcomes.

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APPENDIX A: STUDY 1 EXPERIMENTAL VIGNETTE

B.1 Vignette (Condition: Perceived altruistic intent)

Michael! Good to hear from you! How have you been?

... Sure, absolutely! But listen, I'm afraid I can't do it right now 'cause I've got a 1-on-1 meeting with a member of my team.

... Yes, I have to deliver a performance appraisal.

... No, no, I'll be nicer this time and go a little easier on the team.

... Well, it's because I'm their boss and to me, a big part of being a good boss is to understand that I have a moral obligation to give all the encouragement and support they can get from me. So that's why I think treating them better is the right thing to do for them.

... Yeah, you're right. After all, as an employee it's also my responsibility to show my commitment and loyalty to my company and that involves carrying out my job as properly as I can in making sure that my team is learning all they can from me and doing their best. Alright then, I've got to go now so I'll call you back later. You take care, bye!

B.2 Vignette (Condition: Perceived instrumental intent)

Michael! Good to hear from you! How have you been?

... Sure, absolutely! But listen, I'm afraid I can't do it right now 'cause I've got a 1-on-1 meeting with a member of my team.

... Yes, I have to deliver a performance appraisal.

... No, no, I'll be nicer this time and go a little easier on the team.

... Well, otherwise I'm not ever going to improve my image if I'm constantly driving them up the wall. Besides, I have my own appraisals around the corner so I'm going to need all the favours I can get and that means keeping both the team AND my boss happy if I'm ever going to get a shot at a promotion.

... Yeah you're right. After all, it doesn't hurt to show everyone how I get things done the right way. Alright then, I've got to go now so I'll call you back later. You take care, bye!

B.3 Vignette (Condition: Ambiguous intent)

Michael! Good to hear from you! How have you been?

... Sure, absolutely! But listen, I'm afraid I can't do it right now 'cause I've got a 1-on-1 meeting with a member of my team.

... Yes, I have to deliver a performance appraisal.

... No, no, I'll be nicer this time and go a little easier on the team.

... You're right. That's exactly why I'll be nicer this time. But anyways, have you been in contact with Greg lately? I haven't been able to get a hold of him since yesterday.

... That'd be great, thanks. And when you do, please remind him about the appointment next Wednesday, I completely forgot to mention it to him. Alright then, I've got to go now so I'll call you back later. You take care, bye!

B.3 Vignette (Condition: High ingratiation)

Hello there, I hope you've been safe and well. I know situations have been tough lately with the current lockdown and all, so before we begin with your appraisal, I just want to reassure you that you have absolutely nothing to be worried about. All you need to focus on is managing your day-to-day work as usual while you'll have me to keep track of your well-being and make sure that all your hard work doesn't go unappreciated.

Oh, speaking of well-being, I hope your family is also doing well lately? Tell you what, I'll leave my personal phone number with you by the end of this meeting so if you have any trouble especially regarding personal matters, I'll only be a phone call away if you need anything, alright?

So now, onto today's appraisal. Overall, it seems that your performance so far has been fairly decent. Based on feedbacks I've received about you, it appears that you're making progress in some areas of your work. Just to give you an example, your co-workers have been saying that you're starting to be a more effective team member ever since your communication skills improved.

Now, I've already completed your appraisal form and it's attached in the email I've just sent you. As you'll see on your form, I've included comments alongside each section which explains why I've given you a certain rating. So, have a read through it and please come back to me if any clarifications are needed.

And before I let you go for today, I would like to quickly mention that I think you're a really pleasant person to have around and I don't think the team knows just how lucky they are to be working with you. You should be really proud of yourself, so keep that in mind.

Anyways, I've included my personal number in the email I've just sent you, so text or call me and let me know when we can meet again to discuss my comments in detail and decide what your next performance objectives will be.

Alright? Great. It's been wonderful talking to you, we'll speak soon – bye!

B.3 Vignette (Condition: Low ingratiation)

Hello there, I hope you've been safe and well. I know situations have been tough lately with the current lockdown and all, so before we begin with your appraisal, I just want to reassure you that you have absolutely nothing to be worried about. All you need to focus on is managing your day-to-day work as usual.

So now, onto today's appraisal. Overall, it seems that your performance so far has been fairly decent. Based on feedbacks I've received about you, it appears that you're making progress in some areas of your work. Just to give you an example, your co-workers have been saying that you're starting to be a more effective team member ever since your communication skills improved.

Now, I've already completed your appraisal form and it's attached in the email I've just sent you. As you'll see on your form, I've included comments alongside each section which explains why I've given you a certain rating. So, have a read through it and please come back to me if any clarifications are needed.

And before I let you go for today, don't forget to drop me an email once you're ready and let me know when we can meet again to discuss my comments in detail and decide what your next performance objectives will be.

Alright? Great, we'll speak soon – bye.

APPENDIX B: STUDY 1 SCALES & MANIPULATION CHECK

C.1 Leader downward ingratiation (Manipulation check)

In relation to the scenario, please rate the supervisor in terms of how often he engaged in the following behaviours in general.

The supervisor …

… compliments me so I will see her/him as likeable.	Strongly disagree	① ② ③ ④ ⑤	Strongly agree
… takes an interest in my personal life to show that she/he is friendly.	Strongly disagree	① ② ③ ④ ⑤	Strongly agree
… praises me for my accomplishments so I will consider her/him a nice person.	Strongly disagree	① ② ③ ④ ⑤	Strongly agree
… does personal favours for me to show that she/he is friendly.	Strongly disagree	① ② ③ ④ ⑤	Strongly agree

C.2 Perceived intent (Manipulation check)

In relation to the scenario, please rate the extent to which each of the following statement applies to the supervisor.

The supervisor treated me this way just now because of his …

… personal values of right and wrong.	Strongly disagree	① ② ③ ④ ⑤	Strongly agree
… commitment to the organisation.	Strongly disagree	① ② ③ ④ ⑤	Strongly agree
… involvement in her/his work.	Strongly disagree	① ② ③ ④ ⑤	Strongly agree
… loyalty to the organisation.	Strongly disagree	① ② ③ ④ ⑤	Strongly agree
… sense of moral standards.	Strongly disagree	① ② ③ ④ ⑤	Strongly agree
… desire to share expertise in an effort to help her/his followers learn.	Strongly disagree	① ② ③ ④ ⑤	Strongly agree
… desire to enhance her/his own image (e.g. to make her/his followers believe she/he is a helpful individual).	Strongly disagree	① ② ③ ④ ⑤	Strongly agree
… desire to build up favours for later exchange.	Strongly disagree	① ② ③ ④ ⑤	Strongly agree
… desire to "show-off" expertise.	Strongly disagree	① ② ③ ④ ⑤	Strongly agree

… desire to impress her/his supervisor.	Strongly disagree	① ② ③ ④ ⑤	Strongly agree
… desire to seek the spotlight.	Strongly disagree	① ② ③ ④ ⑤	Strongly agree
… desire to obtain recognition or other organisational rewards.	Strongly disagree	① ② ③ ④ ⑤	Strongly agree

C.3 Work engagement

Imagine that you are working in a project team reporting directly to this supervisor in the next few months. How often do you think you would feel as described below?

I would be bursting with energy.	Strongly disagree	① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦	Strongly agree
I would feel strong and vigorous.	Strongly disagree	① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦	Strongly agree
I would feel like working.	Strongly disagree	① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦	Strongly agree
I would be enthusiastic about my work.	Strongly disagree	① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦	Strongly agree
I would feel inspired by my work.	Strongly disagree	① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦	Strongly agree
I would be proud of my work that I do.	Strongly disagree	① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦	Strongly agree
I would feel happy when working intensely.	Strongly disagree	① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦	Strongly agree
I would be immersed in my work.	Strongly disagree	① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦	Strongly agree
I would be carried away when I am working.	Strongly disagree	① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦	Strongly agree

APPENDIX C: STUDY 2 SCALES

A.1 Leader downward ingratiation

Please rate your supervisor in terms of how often she/he engages in the following behaviours at work in general.

My supervisor …

… compliments me so I will see her/him as likeable.	Rarely or never	① ② ③ ④ ⑤	Very frequently, if not always
… takes an interest in my personal life to show that she/he is friendly.	Rarely or never	① ② ③ ④ ⑤	Very frequently, if not always
… praises me for my accomplishments so I will consider her/him a nice person.	Rarely or never	① ② ③ ④ ⑤	Very frequently, if not always
… does personal favours for me to show that she/he is friendly.	Rarely or never	① ② ③ ④ ⑤	Very frequently, if not always

A.2 Perceived intent

Please rate the extent to which each of the following statement applies to your supervisor.

When my supervisor treated me well, it was because of his/her …

… personal values of right and wrong.	Strongly disagree	① ② ③ ④ ⑤	Strongly agree
… commitment to the organisation.	Strongly disagree	① ② ③ ④ ⑤	Strongly agree
… involvement in her/his work.	Strongly disagree	① ② ③ ④ ⑤	Strongly agree
… loyalty to the organisation.	Strongly disagree	① ② ③ ④ ⑤	Strongly agree
… sense of moral standards.	Strongly disagree	① ② ③ ④ ⑤	Strongly agree
… desire to share expertise in an effort to help her/his followers learn.	Strongly disagree	① ② ③ ④ ⑤	Strongly agree
… desire to enhance her/his own image (e.g. to make her/his followers believe she/he is a helpful individual).	Strongly disagree	① ② ③ ④ ⑤	Strongly agree
… desire to build up favours for later exchange.	Strongly disagree	① ② ③ ④ ⑤	Strongly agree
… desire to “show-off” expertise.	Strongly disagree	① ② ③ ④ ⑤	Strongly agree

… desire to impress her/his supervisor.	Strongly disagree	① ② ③ ④ ⑤	Strongly agree
… desire to seek the spotlight.	Strongly disagree	① ② ③ ④ ⑤	Strongly agree
… desire to obtain recognition or other organisational rewards.	Strongly disagree	① ② ③ ④ ⑤	Strongly agree

A.3 Psychological withdrawal

Please rate the extent to which you agree with each statement based on your behaviours at your current workplace in general.

I have thoughts of being absent from work.	Strongly disagree	① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦	Strongly agree
I chat with coworkers about nonwork topics.	Strongly disagree	① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦	Strongly agree
I leave my work station for unnecessary reasons.	Strongly disagree	① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦	Strongly agree
I daydream at work.	Strongly disagree	① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦	Strongly agree
I spend work time on personal matters.	Strongly disagree	① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦	Strongly agree
I put less effort into my work than I should have.	Strongly disagree	① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦	Strongly agree
I have thoughts of leaving my current job.	Strongly disagree	① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦	Strongly agree
I let others do my work.	Strongly disagree	① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦	Strongly agree

A.4 Task performance

Please rate the extent to which you agree with each statement based on your behaviours at your current workplace in general.

I carry out the core parts of my job well.	Strongly disagree	① ② ③ ④ ⑤	Strongly agree
I complete my core tasks well using the standard procedure.	Strongly disagree	① ② ③ ④ ⑤	Strongly agree
I ensure my tasks are completed properly.	Strongly disagree	① ② ③ ④ ⑤	Strongly agree

A.5 Transformational leadership (Control variable)

Please rate your supervisor in terms of how often she/he engages in the following behaviours at work in general.

My supervisor …

… communicates a clear and positive vision of the future.	Rarely or never	① ② ③ ④ ⑤	Very frequently, if not always
… treats me as an individual, supports and encourages my development.	Rarely or never	① ② ③ ④ ⑤	Very frequently, if not always
… gives encouragement and recognition to me.	Rarely or never	① ② ③ ④ ⑤	Very frequently, if not always
… fosters trust, involvement and cooperation between my colleagues and I.	Rarely or never	① ② ③ ④ ⑤	Very frequently, if not always
… encourages me to think about problems in new ways and question assumptions.	Rarely or never	① ② ③ ④ ⑤	Very frequently, if not always
… is clear about her/his values and practices what she/he preaches.	Rarely or never	① ② ③ ④ ⑤	Very frequently, if not always
… instils pride and respect and inspires me by being highly competent.	Rarely or never	① ② ③ ④ ⑤	Very frequently, if not always

APPENDIX D: STUDY 3 SCALES

D.1 Leader downward ingratiation

Please rate the following statements regarding your direct line manager.

Today, my supervisor …

… complimented me so I will see her/him as likeable.	Strongly disagree	① ② ③ ④ ⑤	Strongly agree
… took an interest in my personal life to show that she/he is friendly.	Strongly disagree	① ② ③ ④ ⑤	Strongly agree
… praised me for my accomplishments so I will consider her/him a nice person.	Strongly disagree	① ② ③ ④ ⑤	Strongly agree
… did personal favours for me to show that she/he is friendly.	Strongly disagree	① ② ③ ④ ⑤	Strongly agree

D.2 Perceived intent

Please rate the following statements regarding your supervisor.

Today, when my supervisor treated me well, it was because of her/his …

… personal values of right and wrong.	Strongly disagree	① ② ③ ④ ⑤	Strongly agree
… commitment to the organisation.	Strongly disagree	① ② ③ ④ ⑤	Strongly agree
… involvement in her/his work.	Strongly disagree	① ② ③ ④ ⑤	Strongly agree
… loyalty to the organisation.	Strongly disagree	① ② ③ ④ ⑤	Strongly agree
… sense of moral standards.	Strongly disagree	① ② ③ ④ ⑤	Strongly agree
… desire to share expertise in an effort to help her/his followers learn.	Strongly disagree	① ② ③ ④ ⑤	Strongly agree
… desire to enhance her/his own image (e.g. to make her/his followers believe she/he is a helpful individual).	Strongly disagree	① ② ③ ④ ⑤	Strongly agree
… desire to build up favours for later exchange.	Strongly disagree	① ② ③ ④ ⑤	Strongly agree
… desire to "show-off" expertise.	Strongly disagree	① ② ③ ④ ⑤	Strongly agree

… desire to impress her/his supervisor.	Strongly disagree	① ② ③ ④ ⑤	Strongly agree
… desire to seek the spotlight.	Strongly disagree	① ② ③ ④ ⑤	Strongly agree
… desire to obtain recognition or other organisational rewards.	Strongly disagree	① ② ③ ④ ⑤	Strongly agree

D.3 Work engagement

Please rate the following statements about your work.

In the last few hours …

… I felt bursting with energy at work.	Strongly disagree	① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦	Strongly agree
… I felt strong and vigorous.	Strongly disagree	① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦	Strongly agree
… I felt like working.	Strongly disagree	① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦	Strongly agree
… I was enthusiastic about my work.	Strongly disagree	① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦	Strongly agree
… my work inspired me	Strongly disagree	① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦	Strongly agree
… I was proud of the work that I did.	Strongly disagree	① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦	Strongly agree
… I felt happy when I was working intensely.	Strongly disagree	① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦	Strongly agree
… I was immersed in my work.	Strongly disagree	① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦	Strongly agree
… I got carried away when I was working.	Strongly disagree	① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦	Strongly agree

D.4 Task performance

Please indicate to what extent do you agree with the following statements.

In the last few hours at work, …

… I carried out the core parts of my job well.	Strongly disagree	① ② ③ ④ ⑤	Strongly agree
… I completed my core tasks well using the standard procedure.	Strongly disagree	① ② ③ ④ ⑤	Strongly agree
… I ensured my tasks are completed properly.	Strongly disagree	① ② ③ ④ ⑤	Strongly agree