

Running head: Leadership & Well-Being

Leadership's Effects on Employee Well-Being:
Comparing Quantitative and Qualitative Methodologies
Elliot Ince

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the Bachelor of Arts degree

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Elliot Ince

Thesis Title:

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Examination Committee

Vickie Johnston, MEd
Lecturer, Psychology

Thesis Supervisor & Committee Chair

Stacey L. MacKinnon, PhD
Associate Professor, Psychology

Blake Jelley, PhD
Associate Professor, Business

Is accepted in partial fulfillment of the undergraduate BA Honours degree
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Abstract

Research related to leadership and well-being has been gaining momentum in this past decade (Donaldson-Feilder, Munir, & Lewis, 2013; Kuoppala et al., 2008). However, upon examining the vast majority of the literature, we notice that it is lacking in a particular area: qualitative research. Are we certain then that the bulk of current research, being quantitative in nature, is providing us with a complete picture of leadership and its effect on employee well-being? With this question in mind, it is the aim of this study to bring together current qualitative literature relating to leadership and organizational well-being. By bringing together the concepts, themes, and findings of the qualitative literature we can broaden our understandings of leadership and well-being in general, while also becoming informed on the approaches of this qualitative research.

With the average age of retirement in Canada cresting sixty-seven, it is safe to say that most people spend a massive portion of their lives at work. The average Canadian, for example, spends thirty hours a week at work, which accounts for over a quarter of weekly waking life (Statistics Canada, 2015). It seems obvious then that the well-being of those at their jobs--of all of us at our jobs--is of critical importance. As many companies and business organizations seek to better the lives of their customers with beneficial products and services, so should they also turn inward to focus on the health and betterment of their employees. A defining aspect of most organizations is the presence of leadership, and as we might assume, leaders can have considerable impact on the well-being of their employees (Gilbreath & Benson, 2004; Kuoppala, Lamminpää, Liira, & Vainio, 2008; Skakon, Nielsen, Borg, & Guzman, 2010). Thus we can turn to leadership as a major influencer within the complex web of organizational factors that influence employee well-being.

The purpose of this study is to examine the qualitative research on leadership and well-being, to compare it to quantitative findings, and to determine where it confirms, intersects with and contradicts traditional approaches to research in this area. We begin with an overview of the existing quantitative research into leadership and well-being.

The Quantitative Perspective on Leadership and Well-Being

Research related to leadership and well-being has been gaining momentum in this past decade, as psychologists and social scientists develop theories and models, as well as our general understanding of the potential impact of leaders on employee well-being (e.g., Donaldson-Feilder, Munir, & Lewis, 2013; Kuoppala et al., 2008). But just what exactly is well-being?

Defining Well-Being.

If researchers in this area were to agree on a single fact, it would be that well-being is not a discrete, easily-defined, concept. To date, conceptualizations of well-being at work include burnout, organizational commitment, and quality of working (Kara, Uysal, Sirgy, & Lee, 2013); occupational stress (Dobrevva-Martinova, Villeneuve, Strickland, & Matheson, 2002); positive feelings one has towards oneself in a work environment (Van Dierendonck, Haynes, Borrill, & Stride, 2004); lack of depression and anxiety, and positive mood (Shier & Graham, 2011). Systematic reviews of the quantitative research on this topic have synthesized some of these findings into broader concepts of well-being that include job satisfaction, emotional exhaustion, and job balance (Kuoppala et al., 2008; Skakon et al., 2010).

While these conceptualizations, and their associated findings, give us more information about well-being within organizations, they seem unable to pin-point a firm definition or understanding. This is not a fault of the research however, nor is it even necessarily an obstacle. Well-being, similar to many other psychological constructs, seems to be validly investigatable from many angles, and thus its nature changes on a case-to-case basis. The malleability of the concept of well-being lends itself to various methodological approaches, and in this, likely says something about the very nature of well-being, or at least our relationship to it. As humans, it is us who experience well-being, and, as humans, it is us who investigate well-being. The various conceptions and operational definitions of well-being themselves, then, inform us about the nature of well-being and the various findings from the methodological approaches weaved from these conceptions elaborate on distinct starting points. From these elaborations we are then able to construct a broader, more encompassing understanding of organizational well-being. By

allowing the definition of well-being this kind of breadth, researchers have focused on the factors which increase the positivity of the work environment for employees and leaders alike.

Defining Leadership: Philosophies and their Corresponding Behaviours

Within our current understanding--being developed primarily from quantitative research--we are able to see the real impact that different components of leader behaviour can have on employee well-being. At the most basic level, one of the most significant behavioural influencers of employee well-being that we see in the quantitative research literature is leader support and consideration (Kuoppala et al., 2008; Skakon et al., 2010). Leader support, or *Supportive Leadership*, involves a leader showing care towards employees concerning their feelings, concerns, performance, and other personal factors of the employee's life. Employees given support from their leaders often feel more comfortable and committed at their work, and have generally higher well-being overall (Dobrevva-Martinova et al., 2002; Hakanen, Bakker, & Schaufeli, 2006; Moyle, 1998; Rhoades & Heisenberg, 2002). In contrast to this, and not surprisingly, leaders who behave in negative and abusive ways towards employees often hinder the well-being of those employees (Harris, & Kacmar, 2005; Tepper, 2000; Yukhymenko-Lescroart, Brown, & Paskus, 2014). For example, these negative interactions have been found to result in employees' decreased organizational commitment, job satisfaction, life satisfaction, and psychological distress as well as being linked to depression (Tepper, 2000).

The impact of these specific types of actions may in part be explained by John Bowlby's (1969) *theory of attachment*. In its traditional context, attachment depends on the person's ability to develop basic trust in their caregivers and self. For example, in infants, attachment as a motivational and behavioural system directs the child to seek proximity with a familiar caregiver when they are alarmed, with the expectation that they will receive protection and emotional

support. Extrapolating from Bowlby's theory, leaders who are able to form secure attachments with others may positively influence employee well-being by providing a secure base of support (Hudson, 2013). Hackman and Wageman (2007) note that secure leaders are better able to achieve organizational goals and focus on employees, as they are not preoccupied with their own insecurity. Hudson (2013) notes how these leaders provide employees with support and a secure base, while working to develop employees' self-esteem and confidence. Healthy leader-follower relationships resulting from secure leaders were noted to bring meaning and value to employees' work, allow employees to feel comfortable being creative, and lessen employee stress (Hudson, 2013). This suggests that by showing interest in the lives and well-being of their employees and being present and willing to work with employees to resolve issues, leaders who exhibit these empathic behaviours may indeed develop strong, secure attachments with their staff, resulting in greater well-being overall. In contrast, unhealthy relationships formed by insecure leaders have been shown to lead to symptoms of stress and stress related illnesses (Cooper & Payne, 1991), as well as directly contribute to low levels of follower satisfaction, motivation and involvement (Hudson, 2013).

This possibility is also supported by Robert Greenleaf's theory of Servant Leadership (Lanctot and Irving, 2007). This leadership philosophy focuses on ethics, virtue, and morality, and is often considered to be entirely focused on employee welfare and well-being. Spears (1998) outlines the main qualities that constitute a servant leader. These include abilities such as listening, empathy, interpersonal and self-awareness, stewardship, and commitment to growth of people. It has thus been argued that the very essence of servant leadership is directly focused on subordinate welfare, or well-being (Jaramillo, Grisaffe, Chonko, & Roberts, 2009). Various empirical studies provide evidence for this argument. In addition, Chung, Jung, Kyle, & Petrick,

(2010) outlined two foundational factors of servant leadership as trust in leader and leader support. The supportive leadership behaviours listed above then can be seen as indicative of a servant leadership perspective with research demonstrating that for reasons similar to secure attachment, servant leadership enhances fair treatment, team effectiveness, and trust (Parris & Peachey, 2013).

Continuing with the theme of theory-driven perspectives on leadership approaches, Bass's *Full Range Model* may also be used to help us understand the relationship between leadership attitudes and employee well-being (Bass, 1990; Bass, & Riggio, 2006). This model is comprised of three main leadership styles or approaches. The first approach, *transformational leadership*, focuses on the leader inspiring and motivating employees with a strong vision while providing intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration. This style of leadership consistently shows positive effects for employee well-being and related factors. For example, Arnold and Connelly (2013) found transformational leadership to improve employee feelings of involvement, cohesiveness, commitment, performance, and engagement. What's more, an in depth investigation of this leadership style on employee burnout concluded the two to be consistently negatively correlated, meaning employees tend to experience less burnout when transformational leadership is used (Corrigan et al., 2002; Densten, 2005; Gill et al., 2006; Leithwood et al., 1996; Seltzer et al., 2005; Sosik & Godshalk, 2000).

The second style, *transactional leadership*, focuses on the leader providing contingent rewards based on employee performance, and taking action if norms are deviated from (Bass, 1990; Bass, & Riggio, 2006). While transactional leadership does not inherently negatively affect employee well-being, it is consistently shown to be less effective than transformational approaches (Skakon et al., 2010). Transactional elements can however have positive impact on

employee well-being when incorporated into an overall transformational leadership philosophy (Bass, 1999).

The final leadership style in this model is *laissez-faire, or passive leadership*. When examining the transformational – transactional - laissez-faire model of leadership, laissez-faire leadership has achieved the most negative and detrimental results. Bass (1998) notes that laissez-faire leadership is significantly less effective than transformational or transactional leadership in virtually all organizations. In their meta-analysis, Judge and Piccolo (2004) found laissez-faire leadership to significantly negatively affect the same factors that were positively affected by transformational leadership; mainly job satisfaction, satisfaction with leader, and perceived leader effectiveness. Skogstad, Einarsen, Torsheim, Aasland, and Hetland (2007) argue that laissez-faire leadership is in fact a type of destructive leadership. Though it may seem that a leader's lack of action and refusal to take responsibility would result in a static or neutral workplace, the lack of action and initiative has been shown to negatively affect employees' psychological well-being. What's more, laissez-faire leadership was also linked with higher amounts of employee bullying as well as role conflict, role ambiguity, and employee conflict (Skorgstad et al., 2007).

Bass's full range model, in particular transformational leadership, is utilized by many researchers (see Arnold, & Connelly, 2013) however, there are still other specific styles and models frequently used to broaden our understanding of leadership's effect on well-being.

Leader-member exchange theory (LMX) adopts the notion that leaders vary in their treatment of certain employee groups. Members of an "in-group" develop high quality relationships with the leader, based on trust and respect; while members of an "out-group" form distant and contractual relationships with the leader (Liden, Erdogan, Wayne, & Sparrowe, 2006). The effects of high

quality LMX typically show positive results relating to employee well-being. Zhang, Tsingan, and Zhang (2013) found that high quality LMX was able to lessen the effects of stressors which lead to more positive attitudes regarding job satisfaction and turnover intention. Epitropaki and Martin (2005) found that high quality LMX relationships between leaders and employees are related to job satisfaction, well-being, and organizational commitment. Graves and Luciano (2013) added that the quality of these relationships is positively related to various workplace needs such as competency, autonomy, and relatedness. They also noted that the satisfaction of these needs leads to high levels of self-determination and motivation.

There is also evidence within the literature, however, of the negative effects that LMX can have for certain employees and organizations. Employees with high negative affect, for example, have been shown to not benefit from high quality LMX, and instead experience high levels of work tension (Brouer & Harris, 2007). Furthermore, the inherent variability in employees' experience of LMX was shown to be negatively related to job satisfaction and well-being. This means that the larger the perceived difference between a leader's favoured and non-favoured group, the lower overall employee satisfaction and well-being. This finding is supported in more detail by Brouer and Harris (2007) who found that employees with positive affect, high levels of interaction with leader, and high levels of LMX within their organization showed very low work tension. Based on these criteria, this group is likely the "in-group" and, consequently, benefited the most from LMX. The group that would fit the "out-group" criteria showed high levels of work tension. From this it is clear that LMX benefits only one group of employees, while disadvantaging another.

Leader Affect and Personality Characteristics

The behaviours and style of a leader have the potential to significantly affect employee

well-being, as we have seen. Recent research, however, is beginning to illuminate the importance of a leaders' personal affect and characteristics within this relationship. A leader's personality, positive work attitudes and feelings, and emotional intelligence, for example, have all been identified as important prerequisites of effective transformational leadership (Walter & Bruch, 2009). Upon conducting a systematic review examining these leader characteristics, Walter and Bruch (2009), created a model that outlines the importance of positive leader affect for transformational leadership. A leader's emotional intelligence was found to play an important and complex role in this model. In essence, high levels of emotional intelligence can act as a buffer when leaders are experiencing negative affect. A leader who has high emotional intelligence and is experiencing negative affect can "ignore" a certain amount of the negative affect in order to still produce transformational leadership.

The personal affect of leaders is also likely linked to employee well-being in an even more direct way than previously discussed. The effects of emotional contagion have been found to play a role in leader-follower relationships. Experiments examining this phenomenon concluded that positive emotions displayed by a leader did in fact increase positive moods of followers (Bono & Ilies, 2006). These findings have been further substantiated by consistent themes in the literature on leadership and well-being. A leader's high level of stress or poor well-being is associated with employees' high levels of stress and poor well-being (Skakon et al., 2010). A leader's ability to avoid high stress and poor well-being is likely linked to support they receive from their own leader, as argued by Hackman and Wageman (2007). This likely indicates the need for a continual chain of leader support that progresses upward in an organizational hierarchy, in order to facilitate well-being throughout the organization.

The integrity of a leader has also proven to be an important element in organizational well-being. When examining survey data from nearly three thousand participants, Prottas (2008) found leader integrity to be positively related to employee job satisfaction and well-being. This likely indicates that it is not only leadership behaviour directed at an employee that affects this employee, but also those behaviours not directed at this employee that can influence well-being. These leader behaviours, directed at another employee or organization member, likely inform an employee on the characteristics of their leader in general. This understanding may then be used during this employee's own interactions with their leader, influencing respect or trust and thus colouring their relationship. A leaders' security with their work and their own abilities also has an effect on their relationship with employees, and has been shown to directly influence employee satisfaction, motivation, and involvement (Hudson, 2013).

It is with all this in mind that we must examine the limitations of quantitative research in this area and consider the potential impact of using qualitative research methods to investigate in further depth the links between leadership and employee well-being.

Qualitative Research in Leadership and Well-Being

As you can see, our understanding of leadership's effect on employee well-being has grown substantially from quantitative research and theorizing. Upon examining the vast majority of this literature however, we notice that it is lacking in a particular area: in-depth qualitative research. There is no doubt that the current research provides us with various approaches, conceptualizations, and findings of leadership's effect on well-being, but is the whole picture truly being painted by this research? As we are both the researchers and experiencers of well-being and leadership, it is difficult--or likely impossible-- to approach these concepts from a completely objective and contextless position. The strictly scientific and quantitative research

into this area illuminates this issue. While a goal in many of these studies is objectivity, and a certain level of objectivity is surely achieved, the findings are coloured by the very theoretical models and methodological approaches used. What's more, the sheer variability in understandings and findings related to leadership and well-being speaks to the interpretive nature of these constructs.

Comparing Quantitative and Qualitative Research Approaches

The basic methodological differences between quantitative and qualitative research are fairly obvious. Quantitative work generally focuses on using existing theoretical models to statistically and numerically measure the variables within those models. These variables are meant to reflect the feelings, attitudes, beliefs, etc. of the people participating in the research. For qualitative work, the *people* aspect of the research takes a more fundamental position.

Qualitative research generally forgoes the statistical structure offered by quantitative work, in order to focus on human responses, intimately embedded in all their contexts, expressed in the natural and proprietary language of the person. Qualitative work does not aim to measure various psychological constructs, but works to let participants express the subjective meanings of these psychological constructs in their own language. Where quantitative research works to establish verifiable and generalizable rules of human experience, qualitative research aims to provide contextual and narrative understandings of these experiences.

The interpretive nature of these constructs, however, does not devalue them, nor does it render them impervious to investigation. Our relationship with these constructs simply presents an opportunity to explore them in personal and experiential ways, and celebrate their subjective nature. The wealth of almost exclusively quantitative research in this area works to inform us about current understandings of leadership and well-being, yet it often omits the personal and

interpretive nature of these concepts. While the quantitative research shows us various ways that leaders can affect employee well-being, we still have little insight into the lived experiences of employees from descriptions in their own words. Should we not investigate the topic from different starting points in order to gain a broader understanding?

These methodological approaches are clearly quite different, yet they often are used to examine similar, or even identical, psychological topics. However, do differing methodological approaches to similar topics simply result in different kinds of knowledge about these topics? Do they supply us different results within the same field of knowledge, perhaps? Or do they inform the very understandings of the concepts being examined? These questions are not easily answered. Their answers are not the same in every situation; yet, from examining the research, it is clear that the methodological approach used to examine a concept informs more than just how data are collected.

Qualitative research is becoming more accepted and prominent in psychological research, including in the areas focusing on organizations and leadership (Gephart, 2004; Pratt, 2008). However, the amount of qualitative work in this area is significantly overshadowed by the quantitative work. Skakon et al. (2010) recognize this issue in their respected and comprehensive systematic review of leadership actions and well-being, and specifically call for more qualitative research.

With these factors in mind, it is the aim of this study to bring together current qualitative literature relating to leadership and organizational well-being. By bringing together the concepts, themes, and findings of the qualitative literature we can broaden our understandings of leadership and well-being in general, while also becoming informed on the approaches of this qualitative research specifically. This study also aims to compare and contrast the findings and

approaches of this qualitative literature with current quantitative literature in order to determine commonalities, divergences, contextual factors, and new understandings of concepts within this research area.

Method

Due to the large amount of, and general focus on, quantitative research, several comprehensive systematic reviews of the quantitative literature exist (Donaldson-Feilder et al., 2013; Kuoppala et al., 2008; Skakon et al., 2010; Walter, & Bruch, 2009). A review of the existing literature uncovered no systematic reviews exist that include, let alone deal exclusively with qualitative literature related to leader's effects on employee well-being.

For the purposes of this study, therefore, measures were taken to focus exclusively on qualitative research. This crucial criterion quickly limited the scope of the study more seriously than originally expected. Due to this focus on purely qualitative research, and considering the scope and novel nature of the project, PsycINFO was used as a main database, with nearly all reviewed studies being drawn from it. Other databases including, PsycARTICLES, ERIC, and Business Source Complete were reviewed less extensively as no methodological filters are present in these databases. These databases garnered no meaningful results, and are not considered for the remainder of the study.

Selection Criteria

The overall process of this systematic review, as well as the creation of selection criteria, was informed by Craig, Sainsbury, and Tong (2007), and Meline (2006). The seven-step process for conducting a systematic review outlined by Meline was followed. Meline (2006), and Craig et al.'s (2007) suggestions for determining the relevance and quality of studies were followed, as well as guiding the creation of the specific selection criteria.

Only scholarly articles published in the period of 2005-2015 were sought out. These publish date constraints were put in place in order to explicitly focus on recent research. Qualitative research is gaining more prevalence, and thus a greater bulk of studies exists within this time recent time period. What's more, current qualitative studies often situate themselves within a context of current quantitative-informed paradigms of leadership; and thus, often comment on, or are critical of, these modern paradigms. This fact lends itself to an aim of this study, being to contrast the approaches and philosophies of qualitative and quantitative research in this area.

It was also required that reviewed studies focus explicitly on leader actions and their effect on employee well-being, or concepts related to well-being. Thus, restrictions were placed on the substantive criteria of studies, and not their methodological approach—given, of course, the methods used were qualitative in nature. It was further required that the studies must report, at least to a minor extent, employee responses and attitudes. Studies that only focused and reported on leader perspectives were omitted. The overall quality of studies was also considered using the thirty-two item checklist for reporting qualitative studies outlined by Craig et al. (2007). As a final requirement, due to limitations in the author's knowledge, only studies written in, or translated to, the English language were used; though no restrictions were placed on the culture of study participants.

In order to find qualitative research related to leaders' effects on employee well-being, various keywords were used. The main keyword categories of Leader, Employee, and Well-Being were used. Keywords used in the Leader category included, "leader", "leadership", "manager" and "supervisor". Keywords used in the Employee category included, "employee", "subordinate", and "follower". Keywords used in the Well-Being category included, "well-

being”, “job satisfaction”, “organizational health”, “organizational wellness”, and “organizational support”. From these keywords 267 studies were retrieved. After title, abstract, and methodology screening, the total of relevant studies was reduced to 25. After full text screening of these 25 studies, the amount of relevant studies was reduced to 9.

In addition to these 267 studies found from PsycINFO, 1 study was obtained from a request sent to the Academy of Management OB Listserv. This request specifically asked for qualitative studies, published or unpublished, that examine leader actions and employee well-being or work attitudes. The obtained study was also screened by title and abstract, as well as full text. It was then accepted as a relevant study, bringing the total amount of relevant studies to be used in the review to 10 (see Table 1).

Table 1

Qualitative Studies Chosen for Analysis

Study:	Focus of Study	Participants	Data Collection Method	Analysis Method
Carter & Baghurst, (2014)	Employee perspective on servant leadership	11 employees from a servant leadership led restaurant	Focus groups, documented data, observation	Van Kam method of data analysis
Cunliffe & Eriksen, (2011)	relational leadership theory	6 Federal Security Directors, 4 Screeners at 6 US airports	Ethnography: Semi-structured interviews	Abduction: Seeking “surprises” in the data
Dhar, (2012)	employee perceptions of organizational support	36 project managers, team leaders, executives of an Indian IT company	Semi-structured interviews	Hermeneutic phenomenological analysis
Hulpia & Devos, (2010)	distributed leadership and teachers’ organizational commitment	59 principals, assistant-principals, teachers	Semi-structured open ended interviews, focus group	Comparative analysis

Karakas & Sarigollu, (2013)	benevolent leadership & creating virtuous & compassionate organizations	32 managers, employees and other stakeholders of an Anatolian Tiger company	Semi-structured interviews	Interpretive phenomenological analysis: Narrative inquiry
MacDermid, Geldart, Williams, Westmorland, Lin, & Shannon, (2008)	Workers' views of workplace health	40 male and female workers from both traditional and emergent employment	4 semi-structured interviews, 7 focus groups	Thematic analysis
Parry & Kempster, (2014)	follower narratives experiencing charismatic leadership	Executives and MBA students in executive development programmes	Focus groups	Aesthetic narrative positivism
Wallis, Yammarino, & Feyerherm, (2011)	individualized leadership dyadic relationships	Leader-subordinate pairs of senior executive	One-on-one semi-structured interviews	Thematic analysis
Wallo, Ellström, & Kock, (2013)	managers' and co-workers' understanding of leadership in an industrial organization	4 managers, 14 first-line managers, 17 operators	Case Study: semi-structured interviews	Thematic analysis
Shier, & Graham, (2011)	factors that impact social workers subjective well-being	13 social workers who had the highest scores on a subjective well-being measure	Ethnography: semi-structured interviews	Analytic induction

Analysis Strategy

The ten research articles deemed relevant for this study were thoroughly read through, and from this, various common themes were discovered. Much like the qualitative studies

themselves, the results and themes within this study are interpretive in nature. With no statistically significant findings to compile and analyze, themes have been developed by synthesizing employee and leader reports into broad themes. These themes were then applied across all ten studies and further adjusted and refined. The authors of specific studies explicitly outlined some of these themes, while others have been organically generated from study findings and author interpretations. Given the contextual and interpretive nature of leadership and well-being, our understanding of their relationship can never be truly complete. It is the thus aim of this thematization to expand our current understandings, and ideally provoke further inquiry and considerations in this area of research.

Results

Due to the relative scarcity of qualitative research in the field of Psychology, and in this area of research specifically, qualitative studies that explicitly focus on leader's effects on employee well-being are virtually non-existent. However, various qualitative studies do focus on related concepts, such as specific leadership practices, perceived organizational support, leader-follower relationships, organizational trust and respect, and others. From these themes we can develop a general understanding of leadership's effect on employee well-being from a qualitative perspective.

Leader Support, Commitment, and Loyalty

In terms of leaders' effects on employee well-being, the most commonly reported theme was leader support, with frequent connections to commitment and loyalty. Nine out of the ten studies mentioned the importance of leader support, or commitment/loyalty to employees in some way. Followers with effective charismatic leaders, for example, used metaphors of support when describing their feelings towards their leader. A "flotation device in a sea of doubts", and

an “oasis in the desert” were used to describe the support employees felt from their leader in the workplace (Parry & Kempster, 2014). Employees receiving support from leaders, through guidance and supervision, reported positive feelings towards their supervisor, feelings of belongingness and commitment to their organization, as well as increased morale (Dhar, 2012).

The importance of leaders’ supporting employee self-worth was commonly mentioned throughout the studies. Leaders’ practicing individualized leadership were able to show support for employee self-worth by trusting their employees, as well as believing in their abilities, integrity, and personal motivation (Wallis, Yammarino, & Feyerherm, 2011). An employee from the Wallis et al. study discusses the significant positive impact that his leader supporting his self-worth has:

Even just yesterday, she came down here and we had just terminated one of our physician groups...and I guess I appeared somewhat frazzled, so last night she called me at home to say, ‘Are you okay? You’re my barometer, so when you’re frazzled then I know...it’s affecting others.’ It’s just her sensitivity and taking the time to call me to see what was doing... It’s like the best possible situation. Somebody who I feel extremely comfortable with, sharing my feelings, I don’t have to worry about any kind of political games or issues, I tell her what’s on my mind, and she accepts me! (p. 193)

Leader-follower relationships that prioritized these elements have strong impacts on employee well-being, with employees reporting feelings of validation (Wallis et al., 2011), honour in belonging (Shier & Graham, 2011), safety (Parry, & Kempster, 2014), and team cohesion and respect (Hulpia & Devos, 2010). Employee feelings of self-worth support were also reported when leaders respected and valued employee opinions, and allowed employees to have a voice (Shier & Graham, 2011). In contrast to this, leaders perceived as needlessly

authoritative and power hungry, as opposed to leading by example and with a desire to truly lead, facilitated unhealthy work environments and poor well-being (Shier & Graham, 2011; Carter & Baghurst, 2014) .

Commitment and loyalty to employees from their leader was often mentioned in tandem with overall leader support. Employees sometimes mentioned notions of loyalty and commitment in a familial sense: referring to their leaders as similar to a family member (Karakas & Sarigollu, 2013; Parry & Kempster, 2014). Feeling of brotherly love and parent-like support were reported as positive influences at work for employees:

[My leader] has been as close to me as my own brother. He even helped me organize my wedding. He is my mentor. I rely on him as my spiritual guide and I seek advice from him. His time, energy, and patience have no limits. He is an extremely sincere and modest person. I feel very lucky to know him. (Karakas & Sarigollu, 2013, p. 670).

Interestingly, these notions were sometimes accompanied by reports of “tough-love” or familial anger towards the leader; this illustrates the complex nature of these relationships (Parry & Kempster, 2014). Middle-management, being visible as both leaders and followers, also spoke to the importance of commitment, particularly their commitment to their own subordinates (Wallo, Ellstrom, & Kock, 2013). Their commitment to their employees facilitated their position as a role-model, as well as employee participation, commitment, and positive relationships. Employees also reported notions of positive well-being when managers’ showed commitment to employee health and safety (MacDermid, Geldart, Williams, Westmorland, Lin, & Shannon, 2008). A lack of tangible managerial commitment to health and safety was met with employee dissatisfaction.

The leadership philosophy of servant leadership has an explicit focus on employee support and well-being, and is often considered to prioritize employees over any other organizational concern (Carter & Baghurst, 2014; Jaramillo, Grisaffe, Chonko, & Roberts, 2009). One reviewed study focused exclusively on an organization practicing servant leadership, and found generally positive reports from employees (Carter & Baghurst, 2014). Servant leaders actively worked to provide support for their employees' success. This total commitment to employees was also seen in benevolent leadership (Karakas & Sarigollu, 2013). Leaders in this benevolent leadership organization focus on establishing environments that facilitate total support for employees, from material, to emotional, to educational, and to an extent familial. From this, employees reported feeling compassion and care from their leaders and coworkers. Thus, prioritizing employee support over such things like administrative duties, or profits seems to have general positive effects for employee well-being.

Leader-Follower Relationships

Almost as prevalent as employee support and commitment, was the theme of leader-follower relationships; with seven out of the ten studies mentioning this theme. In most studies employees reported the benefits of having positive relationships with their direct leader or supervisor. The benefits of a healthy leader-follower relationship, established with trust and openness, are clearly outlined by a satisfied employee:

I couldn't be successful in my job without the relationship I had with Mary because she runs with that senior group, and so she was able to do lots of context setting for me and also to be a thought-partner on difficult issues, and because we had amazing trust in our relationship, I could feel free to talk with her about all the confidential stuff I was hearing and knew was going on, and she could feel free to do the same. And in that

context we could figure out, okay, what's best for the organization, what's best for the client, and how can we work together to resolve that (Wallis, Yammarino, & Feyerherm, 2011, p. 192).

Employees with leaders practicing individualized leadership, for example, noted the benefits of being viewed as independently able, yet emphasized the importance of a positive interdependent relationship between themselves and their leader (Wallis, et al., 2011). Overall, leader-follower relationships were seen as important by both leaders and followers, and were commonly recognized as being a crucial facet of effective organizations (Cunliffe, & Eriksen, 2011; Shier & Graham, 2011; Wallo et al., 2013).

Benefits for well-being were reported by employees whose leaders focused on establishing healthy relationships. An organization shifting its leadership philosophy from task, process, and authoritative oriented to team-management and relationship oriented saw benefits for employees. They reported that leaders were more sensitive to their needs and provided them more autonomy (Wallo et al., 2013). The importance of the leader-follower relationship has also been noted as more important than effective leadership practices (Shier & Graham, 2011); with an employee's relationship with their direct supervisor being their most salient work relationship and having the greatest potential to positively or negatively impact their well-being (MacDermid et al., 2008). Leader-follower relationships have also been conceptualized as the very foundation of charismatic leadership (Parry & Kempster, 2014). Effective relationships, then, facilitate effective charismatic leadership, which led to employee reports of warmth, affection, and support.

Not only has the leader-follower relationship been considered the foundation of charismatic leadership, but it has also been considered the foundation of leadership itself. It has

been noted that leaders, by very necessity, are in relation with others. And in their realization of this, along with their commitment to foster good relationships, employee well-being is enhanced (Cunliffe, & Eriksen, 2011). Through this, leaders are also able to value employees as humans with which relationships can be had, as opposed to manipulatable objects within a system. This leadership view focuses on the human value of both members of a relationship, and facilitates individualized treatment as well as notions of growth and development (Parry & Kempster, 2014; Wallis et al., 2011).

As a noteworthy aside to this theme, the relationships that employees have with their co-workers were also occasionally mentioned as important. These relationships were reported as being the most important work relationships for employees in a servant leadership organization:

You've got great people to work with, you've got an ownership group that is trying as best they can to be creative and do some different things... We've had lots of really good quality people come and go and the restaurant keeps going and we keep prospering and that is true, but it is the fact that we're here... (Carter & Baghurst, 2011, p. 459)

Interestingly, at this organization it was part of the leadership philosophy to create an environment that facilitated meaningful relationships between employees. As a result of these relationships, employees reported commitment to the organization and overall enjoyment of their work days (Carter & Baghurst, 2011). Leader-follower relationships are clearly important for employees' well-being, yet, from this we see that leaders should also attempt to develop environments that facilitate healthy co-worker relationships.

Dialogue and Communication

The interpersonal nature of leadership demands a great deal of communication from leaders, and often times the quality of this communication can have real effects for employee

well-being. This importance was represented with six of the ten reviewed studies mentioning communication. Employees report the importance of open communication with their direct supervisor, and require that their leaders work to be available for communication (MacDermid et al., 2008). Without this, employees have reported feelings of bitterness and lack of respect for their supervisor. Quality communication between leaders and followers is also shown to build cohesion and trust. Employees in an educational environment felt this communication to be far more important than rules, procedures, or task-specialization in influencing their well-being (Hulpia & Devos, 2010). An employee from the Wallo et al. (2013) study outlines the general importance of communication:

No, but some people ask why you're doing this and that and then you say, "Do you have another suggestion?" Then there can be a discussion to try to reach another solution. The best is if someone comes with a problem and asks, "What should we do in this case? What do you think?" Then there is a dialogue right away, and a solution is found [y] new ideas, new, fresh ideas, you just have to keep at it. It feels good. (p.230)

Leader-follower communication also appears to have implications for employees' feelings of worth at work, and how valued they feel by their leaders. Employees reported the importance of their ideas being heard and valued by their leaders for their self-worth (MacDermid et al., 2008; Shier & Graham 2011). In order to achieve this, both leaders and employees reported the necessity of social competence of leaders (Wallo et al., 2013). A key aspect of this social competence involves the leader being actively available and visible for communication with employees (Hulpia & Devos, 2010). Employees reported substantially lower organizational commitment when leaders avoided communication, or did not make themselves visible. Communication within employee teams, involving leaders or not, is also

important to employees (Wallo et al., 2013). As we have seen, leaders should develop environments that facilitate strong employee-to-employee relationships. In line with this, the reviewed studies show leaders should also work to develop environments that facilitate communication between employees (Wallo et al., 2013; Hulpia & Devos, 2010).

Environments that facilitate healthy communication are certainly important for employees but they are also likely crucial for the execution of effective leadership. Several studies point to the dialogical nature of leadership, and how interpersonal communication is its very foundation (Cunliffe & Eriksen, 2011; Parry & Kempster, 2014; Wallis et al., 2011). Leaders providing employees with individualized treatment--shown to be highly positive for employee well-being--emphasize the dialogical nature of their leadership (Wallis et al., 2011). It is within this dialogue that shared meanings are created, as well as beneficial employee contributions and participation. In this light, communication, and thus leadership, is conceptualized as an active process by which leaders engage in dialogue--as opposed to leader-centric monologue--in order to discover meaning and facilitate employee well-being (Cunliffe & Eriksen, 2011). Effective leaders use these dialogues to question, provoke, answer, agree, and object with employees, as opposed to dictating and ordering employees.

Employee Empowerment

In five of the ten reviewed studies, employee empowerment was mentioned as positively impacting well-being, or seen as a facet of leadership able to influence well-being. The studies examining servant and benevolent leadership philosophies outline employee empowerment as an integral leadership practice (Carter & Baghurst, 2014; Karakas & Sarigollu, 2013). These leadership styles prioritize their employees over other organizational concerns, and thus work to empower and support them. Employee empowerment is not limited to these leadership styles,

however, as employees seem to respond to empowerment in various organizational environments.

In leader-follower dyads characterized by individualized leadership, followers often felt empowered by their leaders as a result of trust and respect being shown by the leader (Wallis et al., 2011). Leaders empowered their followers by providing them with increased responsibility and autonomy, in conjunction with support and trust in their abilities. As a result of this, employees reported feeling motivated and inspired to do their best. Leaders rewarded employee performance with further responsibilities. Interestingly, it was these intangible rewards of increased challenge and responsibility that were emphasized as most meaningful by employees (Wallis et al., 2001).

Intangible benefits resulting from empowerment seem to be consistently valued by employees. Leaders emphasising employee empowerment by allowing participative decision making were part of environments with higher employee organizational commitment and satisfaction (Hulpia & Devos; 2010). A principle within such an organization discusses the importance of employee empowerment in this respect: *"The school is carried by the whole school team, not a middle layer selected by the principal. I want to run the school with the whole team. If teachers are not empowered, it fails"* (p 571).

Employees also reported finding the intangible--in this case, the social, cultural, and mental--as more meaningful and impactful on their overall well-being than the tangible--physical and safety hazards (MacDermid et al., 2008). Thus, employee empowerment, participative decision making in particular, was identified as a solution to increase employee well-being.

Personal Growth and Development

For both leaders and employees, several studies mentioned the importance of personal growth and development in relation to employee well-being. Four of the ten studies reviewed had leaders or employees report on personal growth. The ability for employees to develop themselves within their work environment is often linked with notions of well-being (Carter & Baghurst, 2014; Hulpia & Devos, 2010; Karakas & Sarigollu, 2013). Similarly, leaders focusing on their own personal development are seen to positively influence employee well-being as well. Leaders able to develop work environments that focus on personal growth and development in general, then, are able to facilitate enhanced well-being.

The studies examining servant and benevolent leadership outline an explicit focus on employee growth within their leadership philosophies (Carter & Baghurst, 2014; Karakas & Sarigollu, 2013). For benevolent leadership, in particular, the leader established an organization that works to enrich the lives of people spiritually and emotionally, over materialistically.

Employees are inspired and motivated to grow and strive for betterment:

I am in a continuous battle with myself. I am in search for a better self—more compassionate, kind, and considerate. If you ever want to progress and transcend yourself, you need to engage in constant reflection and struggle with yourself. You have to keep questioning yourself each and every minute. You have to go beyond comfort and convenience, and always force yourself to pursue challenges. It is not easy, but this constant striving and self-awareness is the key to progress and positive change (Karakas & Sarigollu, 2013, p. 671).

Employee development through learning has also shown positive effects for employee well-being (Wallo et al., 2013). Linked with empowerment, personal development through

learning develops employee confidence and motivation in their work. Organizations that emphasize personal and professional development have been shown to see higher commitment and satisfaction from employees (Hulpia & Devos, 2010). While organizations with a lack of concern and direction for personal growth are linked with low employee commitment and satisfaction. These issues are discussed by a teacher from Hulpia and Devos' (2010) study who outlines her leader's lack of support for the development of the staff: *"We have to solve our own problems. The principal loses himself in details. The important things, like supporting and encouraging teachers, that doesn't happen"* (p. 569). A principal within the same organization recognizes these issues within the organization: *"A self-evaluation revealed that in our school there is a lack of communication and a lack of appreciation from the leaders towards the teachers. And it's true, teachers do need more support, but I don't know how"* (p. 569).

While not as prominent as employee growth and development, leader focus on personal development is also shown to have benefits for employees (Karakas & Sarigollu, 2013; Wallo et al., 2013). Leaders focusing on the importance of employee learning mentioned the importance of developing their own selves, and through this, coming to know oneself as a manager. Leaders felt this made them better able to lead and facilitate the development of their employees (Wallo et al., 2013). Leaders also mentioned the necessity of self-questioning and monitoring in order to avoid self-centeredness. These processes allow the leader to stay committed to the best interests of their employees, as opposed to their own interests (Karakas & Sarigollu, 2013).

Discussion

Having examined in detail the contents of the qualitative studies available related to the topic of leadership and employee well-being, it is clear that there is support for many of the theories which undergird past quantitative research and theorizing. For example, much of the

qualitative research references concepts similar to those from Bass' concept of transformational leadership and specific leadership behaviours which map on to those found to be significant predictors of employee well-being (Kuoppala et al., 2008; Skakon et al., 2010). In addition, there appears to be consistency in the language used to describe the experiences of employees under these types of leadership approaches for example, "supportive leadership". While the results of the qualitative studies appear to confirm much of what has been found previously using quantitative methods (e.g., what good leaders do), the language and understanding of the concepts of leadership and its impact on well-being diverges in the challenges to who decides what "good" leadership is, the inclusion of employee buy-in as a necessary component to leadership success, the desirability of a universal theory of leadership, the necessity of a "lone hero" leader, and ultimately the idea of leadership as a socially constructed identity.

Top-down or Bottom up? Who Decides What "Good" Leadership is? While qualitative research does involve different methods of data collection from quantitative research, a key theme throughout the qualitative studies examined here was their challenging of current paradigms used by the quantitative literature. For example, the current models of leadership, informed by quantitative research, are often leader-centric. They tend to focus on top-down determinations of important leader characteristics, traits, and actions that are deemed to be foundational to a leadership style and can be adopted by others (Perry & Kempster, 2014). These conceptions of leadership are referred to as essentialist and often view followers as quasi-sterile items within organizational systems that are manipulated by leaders. Certain qualitative approaches to leadership challenge this concept of leadership by placing more emphasis on the follower (e.g. Auvinen, Aaltio, Blomqvist, 2013; Hulpia & Devos, 2010; Perry & Kempster, 2014;). Perry and Kempster (2014), for example, challenge the notion that charismatic leadership

involves a particular set of traits, and argue that it is instead defined from the bottom-up by perceptions of the followers. Rather than being objective characteristics, these follower perceptions are informed by the relationship that the follower has with their leader. They argue that the follower in a charismatic leadership relationship, in fact, has more influence in the relationship than the leader does because it is the follower that judges the extent to which the leadership is charismatic and whether or not that is a positive in the workplace. While the leader's objective level of charisma may not change, the follower's perception of that charisma may be easily impacted by situational factors and environmental considerations both within and outside the control of the leader.

You Can Lead a Horse to Water: The Importance of Employee Buy In. Wallis et al. (2011), similarly argue that the follower has a great deal of influence in deciding whether or not, or to what extent to respond to effective leadership practices. Factors often conceptualized within an effective leadership relationship such as trust, respect, and acceptance are argued to require a significant amount of input from the follower as well as the leader. Even the best leadership characteristics will not result in employee well-being if the employees themselves are not believers in the process.

One Universal Theory: Reality or Fantasy? Moving past the concerns regarding how leadership theory is derived, we must also turn our attention to the question of whether or not it is meaningful or practical to attempt to create one umbrella theory to apply to all leadership circumstances. This notion of the possibility and practicality of a totally comprehensive and all-encompassing leadership theory is often challenged within the qualitative literature. Wallo et al. (2013) argue that no single leadership theory can be appropriate for all scenarios. When examining leadership, these researchers looked to understand the practical, ground-level,

activities that leaders do, and thus turned away from the traditional search for grand scale leadership theories. From this, they came to conceptualize leadership as “a chain of improvisational steps in significantly fragmented work practices” (Wallo et al., 2013, p. 229). Cunliffe and Eriksen (2011) also rejected the notion of a single relevant leadership theory in their examination. Much like Wallo et al., they came to an understanding of leadership focused on practical wisdom. They emphasized the importance of adaptability, and how the notion of a “right answer” is often not applicable to leadership.

Lone Hero or Justice League? Part of this idea of adaptability may also refer to the possibility that a leader may not always have to work in isolation. As a result of the leader-centric, and comprehensive models of leadership often found in quantitative literature, a “hero-” or “saviour-like” conception of leaders can often emerge. These models conceptualize leaders as single discrete entities who constantly “save” their organization from harm; it is the leader who acts and the follower who responds (Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2003; Hulpia & Devos, 2010). Qualitative researchers in this area challenge these conceptions of leaders as working in solitary isolation. In contrast to the “lone hero” conception of leaders, Hulpia and Devos (2010) outlined the importance of distributed leadership, in which leadership practices are dispersed across a team. Leadership practiced in this way was shown to be very beneficial for employees, who were participating as leaders. Grand “saviour-like” actions were similarly challenged by Alvesson and Sveningsson (2003). They illustrated that leaders were in fact emphasizing the importance of mundane activities conducted with employees, such as listening, chatting, simple problem solving, and being cheerful. By giving employees an active role in leadership, these leaders are encouraging ownership of and investment in the governance and success of their workplace environment.

Leadership as a Social Identity Constructed Through Relationship. It is clear at this point that contrary to the top-down definitions inherent in quantitative research, leadership is, by necessity, a social practice. Though its social nature is not entirely neglected by the quantitative literature, the notions of how and where the “social” fits into leadership can vary substantially between quantitative and qualitative work. While not mentioned in every reviewed qualitative study, leadership was frequently conceptualized as a socially-constructed identity, or something that exists within a context of social-construction. This is in stark contrast to conceptualizations within the quantitative research, where the question is more often concerned with what leaders *do* as opposed to what leaders *are*; and both of these questions are usually answered using pre-existing comprehensive leadership models.

The concepts of social-constructionism and post-structuralism are commonly mentioned in the qualitative literature with reference to Critical Leadership Studies or CLS (e.g. Auvinen et al., 2013; Cunliffe & Eriksen, 2011). CLS is a philosophical perspective of leadership studies that aims to challenge mainstream conceptualizations, and foster unique perspectives (Collinson, 2011). It commonly considers post-structuralist perspectives, in order to draw attention to the social identities of both followers and leaders. It also emphasizes the inherent human aspect of leadership and, thus, how organizational decisions and identities are often not rational but created from complex issues of emotion and power. The apparent ambiguity within these notions is a part of CLS, and is accepted as necessary to the understanding of leadership (Collinson, 2006).

In quantitative research, the social aspect of leadership is central, yet not foundational. Understandings of leadership operating within the quantitative literature tend to conceptualize leadership as a process, or system, which is implemented in social scenarios. In qualitative

understandings of leadership, the social is commonly viewed as foundational--the social scenario is the very event that constitutes leadership. Auvinene et al. (2013) use this conceptualization of leadership: the leader is viewed as an identity that is created in the social realm, not an identity that steps into the social realm in order to influence it. They view both the leader and organization as a sharing of interpretations and meanings that allow for organized activity.

Alvesson and Sveningsson (2003) also take up a social-constructionist approach to leadership. In their study, they outline how the mundane activities of leaders are “extra-ordinarized”—simply by the fact that a leader is doing an activity gives a special power to that activity. They are thus sceptical of the actual actions of leaders, and if these actions in and of themselves have any real power. This “magical” quality of leadership perfectly illustrates that the power of leadership may simply be based in a shared understanding of an identity. Conceptualizing leadership in this way suggests that there is something akin to a “collective faith” that gives leaders their power to influence and lead.

Within these conceptualizations of leadership emphasising its social construction, we also see much discussion of leadership’s relational nature. Parry and Kempster (2014) view leadership in a social-constructionist light by conceptualizing it as created through dialogue and relationships. The organicism of these concepts is reflected in their notion of leader and follower identities as “emerging and becoming” relationships. Identities within leadership relationships are complex and continue to shift and grow; for these researchers, it is this dynamism that constitutes leadership.

Similar to this view, Wallis et al. (2011) view the foundation of leadership as constructed through relationship. Examining reports from both members of leader-follower dyads the researchers shied away from hierarchical understandings of these relationships. They noted how

nearly every dyad examined reported how the terms of leader and follower felt inappropriate in explaining their relationship. They reported feeling more like peers in their relationship, rather than a leader-subordinate hierarchy. This understanding implies that leadership exists as a relationship between people, rather than as a single person who “distributes” leadership practices.

Cunliffe and Eriksen (2011) come to a very similar understanding of leadership, but arrive at it from a different direction. As opposed to reaching this conclusion from reports from those in leadership relationships, these researchers enter their study with an overall relational ontology. This ontology is then ideologically applied to leadership scenarios in order to view leaders as constituted by their relation to others. Cunliffe and Eriksen thus conceptualize leaders as imbedded in an intersubjective, dialogical reality. In this light, organizations come to be understood as communities and conversations, rather than systems, in which leaders are a part. From this, these researchers emphasize the inherently moral nature of the relationships in which leaders are a part, and the necessity of ethical decision making.

Many of these understandings of leadership, conceptualized within post-structuralist thought, differ greatly from understandings within quantitative literature. As previously mentioned, the quantitative literature often focuses on grand leadership models such as Bass’s Full range model (Bass, 1990), or specific situational models such as leader member exchange theory (Liden, Erdogan, Wayne, & Sparrowe, 2006). When the question of “what is a leader?” is asked, the quantitative literature often points to these established models. These models are longstanding within the literature and have provided large amounts of substantive results. However, due to their established and structured nature, it may be the case that these models are limiting our potential understanding of leadership and its complexities. While the qualitative

research is not providing the same “hard data”, the exploratory nature of this research is invaluable for expanding our understandings of existent concepts, discovering new concepts, and challenging the validity of accepted perspectives.

Why Do We Need More Qualitative Research on Leadership and Well-Being?

The limited amount of qualitative research focusing on leadership and well-being is not only an issue for this research field. In nearly all areas of modern psychological research, there is a distinct lack of qualitative work. This lack of research is represented in this project by the small number of studies suitable to review. It is not readily apparent why there are so few qualitative studies to draw on within this field of research. However, it may be due to the momentum that already exists for quantitative research. There are numerous models and measures within leadership and well-being research that already exist for quantitative work. Their solidified position within the literature makes it easy for researchers to point to these models as ways to explain and examine leadership topics. These models also are attractive for researchers as the results obtained through them are easily comparable to past studies that have used the models. The idiosyncratic and personal nature of qualitative research does not offer these luxuries. While there are commonly used and systematized methods of qualitative investigation, results obtained by using them are often radically different. The results and themes from these qualitative investigations can be compared with others, but not in the direct and scientific ways of quantitative studies.

These benefits of direct comparability within quantitative research are often related to the notion of generalizability, and at first glance qualitative research seems to fall short here. The statistical methods of quantitative research prioritize and glorify generalizability of results. Statistically significant findings are often considered to be “generalizable to a population”, and

thus applicable to nearly all related scenarios and individuals. These notions of generalizability, however, are antithetical to qualitative research, due to its idiosyncratic nature. The small sample sizes of qualitative work and its focus on personal responses often work against it in the eyes of the general public and more traditional psychological researchers who consider these factors to significantly limit its value. However, is the generalizability advantage of quantitative research really that much greater than qualitative? In the vast majority of quantitative work, researchers are required to use convenience samples, as opposed to truly random or representative samples taken from a full population; qualitative work explicitly seeks out a limited and refined sample specifically, acknowledging the importance of doing so for the purposes of in-depth understanding of phenomena. In both of these cases, the true “generalizability” of the obtained results is debateable, however, the transferability of these results is potentially substantive. Rather than assume through statistical analyses that results are widely applicable, qualitative researchers assert that part of the understanding process involves determining the limits on the transferability of their findings. As a result of the attempt to define the boundaries of transferability, various findings may line up, or they may be incredibly different, however our knowledge always grows, and new research questions and perspectives are always fostered. In this way, the application and transferability of qualitative investigations is similar to and less assumptive than those of the dominant quantitative research.

Psychology’s significant focus on quantitative research, however, both within and outside of this research field, brings some unfortunate consequences. As we have been able to see in this study, qualitative research provides valuable data with real potential for application. In the field of leadership and well-being, this research method is able to provide us insight into the real feelings, attitudes, and beliefs of both leaders and employees. An incredibly important aspect of

this benefit is that these feelings, attitudes, and beliefs are able to be expressed in these leaders' and employees' own language. The inherent subjectivity and personalness of human experience is something that quantitative research is not able to focus on in the same way that qualitative can. Thus, due to the overwhelming focus on quantitative research, the intimate and personal aspects of employee experiences in leadership scenarios are easily overlooked. Incorporating qualitative approaches, either independently or in concert with quantitative data collection will therefore allow us to move beyond asking "who", "what", "where", and "when" to focus on the deeper issues of "why" and "how".

Limitations of this Study

As this study focused on analysing qualitative research, the inherent limitations of this style of research are present. While qualitative research can provide us with tremendously detailed and intricate data on individual lived human experience, it can in no way attempt to apply its findings to general populations as quantitative research does. Therefore, the themes found in this study from the qualitative literature cannot be fully applied to all leadership situations. The results of this study may be considered as general themes found throughout the qualitative literature, and are applicable to direct future research, and conceptualize events within leadership scenarios. The results, however, are not applicable as overall rules, or as consistent findings within this area of research.

Another important limitation of this study is in regard to the nature of systematic reviews. The value of a systematic review may in fact be more beneficial for quantitative research. It is a model most commonly used by quantitative studies, and thus may be methodologically situated to provide more benefit to quantitative studies. Many qualitative studies challenge the current quantitative informed paradigms, and attempt to situate themselves outside of them. Conducting

a systematic review of the qualitative literature may simply be reentering these qualitative understandings into quantitative informed approaches; and thus removing some of their intended value. The narrative and contextual nature of qualitative research may simply be most valuable in its original, solitary, form. Collecting and thematizing qualitative work may in fact be removing some of the inherent value within the studies. It also could be viewed as applying the quantitatively-informed goal of “generalizability” to information that was not at all intended to be generalized.

A further limitation of this study is that a systematic review of the quantitative literature was not conducted simultaneously. This review, instead, relies upon sources from previous literature reviews. As a result, the comparisons made between the two methodologies may be somewhat incomplete. Significant comparisons may have been missed due to the fact that the review of the quantitative literature was somewhat selective and not entirely systematic. Certainly a substantial amount of quantitative literature was examined, including several systematic reviews (e.g. Donaldson-Feilder et al., 2013; Kuoppala et al., 2008; Skakon et al., 2010; Walter & Bruch, 2009), yet this research was not initially compiled for the purpose of comparing it to qualitative research, and thus important conclusions may have been missed. It is, however, a starting point for the examination and comparison of quantitative and qualitative investigations of phenomena.

A final limitation of this study to consider is the general lack of qualitative research that is available to draw upon. The aim of this study was to find qualitative research that investigates relationships between leadership and employee well-being. However, there are virtually no studies that specifically focus on this topic. This study, therefore, drew upon qualitative research that dealt with concepts related to these topics. It therefore may be the case that if more

qualitative work existed in this area, or if work existed that focused on these exact topics, the themes and overall findings of this study could be very different.

Future Research

Though qualitative research has its limitations, it is certainly not without value. As previously mentioned, the unique focuses of qualitative research and the type of understanding it creates have a great deal to offer the field. More qualitative research in the area of leadership and well-being can only benefit the field. As shown in this study, qualitative investigations offer new ways of understanding concepts and explaining data in general. Qualitative research's focus on the subjective person allows for theories to be informed, and in a way created, by the study participants themselves. This allows for practical, ground-up, people-oriented theories that relate in a direct way to their subject matter. This benefit is relatively unique to qualitative research.

Qualitative work is not only valuable in and of itself, however, it also has the ability to enhance and progress quantitative research. The types of data obtained from qualitative work, often being narrative in nature, have the ability to provoke critical thought as well as valuable questions. Researchers desiring to conduct quantitative research can look to existing qualitative studies in order to identify questions and areas that would benefit from quantitative research. These two methodologies can also work in tandem in order to build off of each other and expand single topics in multiple directions. Qualitative research can work from the ground up in order to establish themes and theories, followed by quantitative research working to scientifically test those theories and evaluate their generalizability. Additionally, the outlying participants of quantitative studies can be sought out by researchers in order to conduct qualitative interviews; thus developing a much more complete understanding of a given topic.

In terms of specific topics of future research, the concept of well-being deserves more attention from qualitative work. Within the quantitative literature there are various conceptualizations of well-being, represented by the numerous measures and operational definitions used within this research. The concept of “what a leader is” is investigated much less, and in less detail. However, within the qualitative research it is largely the reverse. The concept of “leader” is more heavily focused on, while investigations into conceptions of well-being are relatively sparse. Qualitative investigations focusing on the nature of well-being, and how it is experienced by employees within leadership scenarios would be especially enlightening.

The value of more qualitative research in the area of leadership and well-being is apparent. The themes and findings from the qualitative literature outlined in this study shed light on the experiential and contextual ways in which leadership interacts with employee well-being within organizations. What's more, we have seen how the methodology used to investigate these topics can create the very conceptualizations of the constructs being investigated. All of these complexities were identified only from the tiny amount of qualitative literature focusing on leadership and well-being that exists. What sorts of complexities, issues, and new understanding could we identify if the amount of qualitative literature in this area was even half the size of the quantitative?

Conclusion

From examining the literature we can see that while the actions of successful leaders do not appear to differ much between quantitative and qualitative studies, the broader understandings of leader, follower, and well-being are variable and dependent upon the methodology; in particular that methodology's philosophy. It is not simply the case that different methodologies supply different results, but that different methodologies can create the very

understanding of the concepts and paradigms being examined. However, a definite conclusion that can be made from examining both the quantitative and qualitative literature is that leaders can play a crucial role in affecting employee well-being. The two methodologies can take very different approaches in examining these topics, as well as have completely different understandings of fundamental constructs. Yet these different approaches need not clash. The different understandings created from the methodologies can simply work to expand our knowledge of leadership and well-being in multiple fruitful directions.

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