Followers' Independent Critical Thinking and Active Engagement for Collocated vs. Virtual Work Teams

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Roundtable: Followership

There is a gap in the research on followership in the virtual space. As such, this study explored the levels of active engagement (AE) and independent critical thinking (ICT) between collocated followers who work in a traditional office setting alongside coworkers and followers who work entirely virtual and rely on technology to connect, make decisions, and accomplish tasks. Current research has indicated that there are both strengths and limitations to virtual teams. However, it is often found to be more challenging to be as engaged and display ICT as a member of a virtual team. This study employed Kelley's (1992) Followership Scale to determine the difference between followers' AE and ICT to determine how most followers are classified in these different contexts and explored whether there are differences by gender. Followers who work in either virtual or collocated teams were recruited through online social media platforms. The survey results indicated no significant difference between collocated and virtual followers for AE or ICT; both types indicated they were exemplary followers. There was also no significant difference for gender, although that was expected for ICT, even though COVID-19 and childcare responsibilities have impacted more women. This study can contribute to this body of research, or lack thereof, by helping people better understand exemplary followership within different types of work arrangements to find out where the differences are and offer tools for organizations to develop followers who work in these spaces (Finlayson, 2021).

Keywords: followership, independent critical thinking, active engagement, collocated teams, virtual teams

"Virtual teams are here, and they are here to stay" (B. S. Bell & Kozlowski, 2002, p. 45). With advancing technology, globalization, and the ongoing global COVID-19 pandemic, many organizations are moving towards more virtual teams (VT), which rely heavily on technology to communicate and accomplish tasks (Malhotra et al., 2007). As a result, scholars have been examining leadership in VTs, or *e-leadership*, for the last few

decades because effective leadership has been found to play a crucial role in the success of these teams (B. S. Bell & Kozlowski, 2002; Morgeson et al., 2010), but no scholarship has focused exclusively on the followers in VTs or *e-followers*. Moreover, people typically serve in the followership role 80% of the time and as leader only 20% of the time (Kelley, 1988, 1992).

The current study helps to fill this gap by exploring levels of active engagement (AE) and independent critical thinking (ICT) between collocated followers who work in a traditional office setting alongside coworkers and followers who work entirely virtual and rely on technology to connect, make decisions, and accomplish tasks. Specifically, this study employed Kelley's (1992) Followership Scale to determine the difference between followers' AE and ICT as well as determine how most followers are classified in these different contexts. In addition, gender differences were explored between these variables. Followers who met the criteria were recruited through online social media platforms. The findings and implications are also addressed.

Collocated Work Teams

Collocated work teams have been around since the beginning of organized labor. Collocated team members are situated together, can communicate face to face, and have opportunities for chance encounters, such as water cooler talk, that is impossible for VTs (Powell et al., 2006). Because employees experience socialization and communication face to face, they often display a stronger commitment to the organization and their work team (Powell et al., 2006). While much of the research has focused exclusively on traditional work settings, with the continued growth in technology, the changing organizational landscape, and the shutdowns associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, VTs are now getting more attention.

Virtual Work Teams

VTs can be defined as "work arrangements where team members are geographically dispersed, have limited face-to-face contact, and work interdependently through the use of electronic communication media to achieve common goals" (Dulebohn & Hoch, 2017, p. 569). Organizations have experienced "explosive growth" of VTs over the last few decades that leadership research has struggled to keep pace with (Dulebohn & Hoch, 2017, p. 569). The growth of VTs has been attributable to factors such as "globalization, distributed expertise, organizations' need for rapid product development and innovation, and improved networking and collaboration technologies that support e-collaboration" (Dulebohn & Hoch, 2017, p. 569). In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic forced millions of people worldwide into being remote workers (Kniffin et al., 2021). Therefore, VTs can either be a temporary arrangement, such as those forced to work remotely because of COVID-19, or have ongoing responsibilities (Yukl, 2013). Most scholars have agreed that VTs can use face-to-face communication on rare occasions if most of the time they use technology to communicate (Mihhailova et al.,

2011). Therefore, virtual work teams rely heavily on computer-mediated communication such as email, video conferencing, groupware, and phones to carry out their work responsibilities (Yukl, 2013).

Virtual work teams also have unique advantages and challenges because of the lack of physical presence (Dulebohn & Hoch, 2017; Purvanova & Bono, 2009). Some of the advantages of VTs include the following:

> the ability to assemble teams that maximize functional expertise by including professional who are geographically dispersed, enabling continuous 24/7 productivity by using different time zones to their advantage, lowering costs by reducing travel, relocation and overhead, and sharing knowledge across geographic boundaries and organizational units and sites. (Dulebohn & Hoch, 2017, p. 569)

In addition, membership in a VT can be more fluid, where people can participate in different ways only when needed (Yukl, 2013). On the other hand, there are several challenges VTs can present.

Some of these challenges of VTs include "establishing and maintaining trust through technology, understanding, appreciating and leveraging the diversity of the members, managing meetings, projects and progress through technology, having external visibility, and making sure all members participate and benefit from the group" (Malhotra et al., 2007, p. 62). In general, factors such as coordinating within teams, forming shared mental models, and managing conflict among team members often require more time and effort in a virtual context than in a traditional team setting (Liao, 2017).

Additionally, Powell et al. (2006) claimed that since VTs must rely on technology to communicate, they have a more difficult time establishing a personal link with other team members, which can impact organizational loyalty and commitment and create an overall climate of "out of sight, out of mind" (p. 313). A recent study also found that remote workers cited home interferences, ineffective communication, procrastination, and loneliness as additional challenges they faced (Wang et al., 2021). It may also be challenging to gain commitment from dispersed and diverse team members who have other responsibilities outside the team, such as family (Yukl, 2013).

A crucial element to all teams is leadership. The concept of e-leadership is essential to examine to bring clarity to the ambiguous set of responsibilities that challenge leaders of VTs (Walvoord et al., 2008). Avolio et al. (2000) are credited for coining the term *e-leadership* in the early 2000s when they sought to explain how communication technologies influence leaders and followers to create "new team structures and cultures" (Purvanova & Bono, 2009, p. 343). According to Avolio et al., "e-leadership is defined as a social influence process mediated by advanced information technology to

produce a change in attitudes, feelings, thinking, behavior, and performance with individuals, groups, and/or organizations" (p. 617). Avolio et al. believed that VTs could adapt technology to meet their needs and leaders are essential in the process. Moreover, "e-Leaders must coordinate and maintain knowledge, trust and accountability, while upholding influence and communicating vision to e-Followers" (Walvoord et al., 2008, p. 1886). While it is important to acknowledge the importance of leadership in VTs, it is also essential to extend our understanding of VTs to include followers to better understand how followers differ in these two modalities.

Followership

While research has focused primarily on leaders in both collocated and remote teams, followers also play a key role. Kelley (1988), is credited with first developing a theory of followership, identifying the crucial role followers play in organizations and society. Adair (2008) defined followership as someone who "shares in an influential relationship among leaders and other followers with the intent to support leaders who reflect their mutual purpose" (p. 139). Additionally, Kelley (1992) argued that "since most of us spend the majority of our time in the followership role, it stands to reason that how we perform as followers determines, for the most part, how satisfied we are with our day-to-day work existence" (p. 88). With followers playing such a dominant role in organizations, it is important to understand how followership is influenced by the environment, especially with the rapid growth of VTs.

Successful and effective followers are often described as possessing certain characteristics such as "belief in the organization's mission, vision, or purpose, willingness to subjugate personal interest for the greater good, loyalty, and unity of focus" (Schindler, 2014, p. 12). Moreover, effective followers have also been categorized as enthusiastic, intelligent, and self-reliant in the pursuit of organizational goals (Kelley, 1988). They should also be given freedom in their actions, given pertinent information, and be trusted to act to achieve a particular objective or goal (Schindler, 2014). To better distinguish what makes a follower effective or ineffective, Kelley (1992) conducted several studies exploring the various ways followers are categorized. Kelley identified five dimensions of followers: passive, pragmatists, conformist, alienated, and exemplary. The two dimensions of followership Kelley identified as crucial to determining which type of follower someone is and areas for improvement are (a) AE and (b) ICT.

Active Engagement

Kelley (1992) described the best followers as those who take the initiative and actively participate, while the worst ones are passive and lazy. In general, followers who are actively engaged in their workplace are better equipped to handle the imbalance between resources and work demands (Hakanen & Roodt, 2010). In addition, the resources that have been shown to positively contribute to workplace engagement for

collocated teams and organizations include job autonomy, feedback, job control, and social support (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; Bakker et al., 2004; Fairlie, 2011; Salanova & Schaufeli, 2008). Engagement is also higher for followers who perceive their work as meaningful (Steger et al., 2012; Tummers & Knies, 2013). Furthermore, meaningful work makes it easier for followers to be cognitively present and available, keeps them involved and helps them experience efficacy; they are also often more dedicated and absorbed (Kahn, 1990; Olivier & Rothmann, 2007; Schaufeli et al., 2002). Fairlie (2011) also observed that engaged followers experience less disengagement, exhaustion, and turnover.

Only a few studies have explored whether working remotely can provide the same level of engagement as working in person for followers. For instance, Panteli et al. (2019) explored which factors foster work engagement in VT projects. They found that leaders must promote follower engagement through resources and effective practices. In another study, Shaik et al. (2021) employed an ethnographic inquiry to understand the nature of the relationship between cultural intelligence and employee engagement in global VTs. They found a relationship between cultural intelligence and employee engagement that was mediated by trust among team members in global VTs. However, they acknowledged that more research needs to be done in this area. Overall, Shaik and Makhecha (2019) argued that recent consulting research has also found levels of employee engagement to be considerably less in VTs compared to collocated teams. Therefore, the following hypothesis is posed:

> H_1:   Followers who work in collocated teams will report higher levels of AE than those who work in VTs.

Independent Critical Thinking

Critical thinking is also a desirable characteristic of employees. Kelley (1992) presented research from the perspective of leaders that described the best followers are those who think for themselves and provide constructive feedback. Additionally, these followers are their own person, innovative, and creative (Banutu-Gomez, 2004). On the other hand, the worst followers must be told what to do and need constant direction (Kelley, 1992). There are also many positive outcomes of critical thinking, such as improving employees' health in stressful situations (Dowd & Bolus, 1998) and improving performance through continuous learning (Yeo, 2007). While there have been mixed results related to followers' ICT on organizational outcomes (Blanchard et al., 2009; Gatti et al., 2014), Gatti et al. (2017) put forward that ICT should be viewed as a proactive behavior like organizational citizenship behaviors or voice that the relationship with the leader can greatly influence.

ICT may be especially important for VTs. Dundis and Benson (2003) wanted to better understand problem-solving and decision-making groups in the online space. After a review of the literature, the authors created a task typology with six key areas that

impact the critical thinking of virtual groups: (a) degree of interdependence, (b) goal complexity, (c) data gathering/distribution demands, (d) information-processing demands, (e) evaluation demands, and (f) situational demands. In addition, Kurubacak (2007) examined how project-based learning promoted critical thinking skills through reusable learning objects such as applets, graphics, templates, backgrounds, texts, animations, streaming videos, and other such data and elements from global online resources. The author found that learners' critical thinking patterns were related to their concerns about their learning styles and needs and that communication also played an important role. In general, Morley et al. (2015) acknowledged that critical thinking and decision making may be more challenging in VTs due to the disparity in culture, systems, and processes and incidents of misinterpretation, isolation, and dissatisfaction that are more common than face-to-face teams.

While these studies provide a starting point, it is evident that there is still much to learn about followers' ICT within VTs to see if they can overcome the additional challenges. Therefore, the following hypothesis is posed:

> H_2:   Followers who work collocated will report higher levels of ICT than those who work remotely.

Exemplary Followers

According to Kelley (1992), followers who score highly for both AE and ICT are considered to be exemplary followers. Moreover, "exemplary followers possess a repertoire of skills and values that are both learnable and doable" (Kelley, 1992, p. 129). These skills include focusing on the goal; working well on activities that contribute to the goal; increasing their value in the organization by taking initiative; and adding value by being who they are and sharing their experiences, ideals, and dreams (Kelley, 1992).

Kelley (2008) later relabeled this category *star follower*. According to Kelley, a star follower is positive, thinks for themselves, and "does not accept the leader's decision without their own independent evaluation of its soundness" (p. 8). Star followers are often known as the "leader in disguise" because they share several of the same qualities as those they follow (Kelley, 2008, p. 8). Most importantly, exemplary follower traits and behaviors are correlated to higher job performance (Ntiamoah, 2018). Therefore, if the first two hypotheses prove true, then the following hypothesis will also be true:

> H_3:   Collocated team members will be classified as exemplary followers.

Other Follower Classifications

While exemplary or star followers are obviously the ideal, Kelley (1992) also classified followers as alienated, conformist, pragmatist, and passive. Alienated followers are

capable but cynical, often hold back effort, and display high levels of ICT but low levels of AE. Conformist followers are eager to take orders, defer to the leader, and do not question their place or role. As such, conformists score low on ICT and high on AE. Pragmatist followers score in the middle for ICT and AE since they want to do a good job but do not like taking risks or failing. Sometimes the followers take on a pragmatist style to cope with an unstable situation within the organization or external environment. Lastly, passive followers are the opposite of exemplary followers as they score low on both ICT and AE. They lack initiative, enthusiasm for their work, and look to the leader for all decisions. Based on the current research, the following hypothesis is posed:

H4:   VT members will be classified as pragmatist followers.

Gender

Research on leadership and followership is often biased related to gender. Braun et al. (2017) argued that the attributes desired of women and the requirements of leadership are often perceived as incongruent. Moreover, "when describing the typical woman, people use communal traits, such as being affectionate, helpful, or gentle. In contrast, individuals use agentic characteristics to describe the average leader" (Braun, 2017, p. 378). Therefore, Braun et al. found that women experience a push effect that keeps them away from leadership positions and a pull toward the follower role. This research showed an incongruence bias, and the backlash effect women may face that taken together can also explain why women occupy fewer leadership roles and receive more negative evaluations when they are leaders (Rudman et al., 2012).

In addition to the aforementioned issues, the COVID-19 pandemic created a disproportionate burden for many women who took on the majority of caregiving responsibilities for their families. While the pandemic has been referenced as a "shecession" and a disaster for women (Lewis, 2020), men have not been affected as negatively. On the contrary, men have actually seen some benefits such as being more likely to stay in their jobs and three times more likely to receive promotions during this time (Fox, 2020). In addition, a recent study found that the stress of balancing work and family among dual-earning couples with adolescent children found lower perceived stress for fathers and greater conflict and less satisfaction in balancing work and family among mothers (Afifi et al., 2020). These additional challenges will likely impact women's ability to actively engage at work at the same level as their male counterparts.

Only a few studies have examined the influence of a follower's gender on their levels of follower AE and ICT. Johnson (2003) found no difference between genders concerning levels of AE and ICT. However, Petersen and Beekley (1997) reported a significant difference between genders related to AE but no significant difference related to ICT. Regardless, it is evident that COVID-19 may have created more challenges for women

to stay actively engaged in their VTs than their male counterparts. Therefore, the following hypotheses are posed:

H_5:   Male followers who work in remote teams will report higher levels of AE than female followers who work remotely.

H_6:   Males and females in collocated teams will not show a significant difference in ICT.

H_7:   Males and females in VTs will not show a significant difference in ICT.

Method

Population and Sample

To address the hypotheses, an online survey was distributed to willing participants recruited through convenience and snowball sampling methods, specifically through social media. The requirements for participation were being 18 years of age and older and currently employed in an organization where they are a member of a virtual work group (whether temporary or ongoing) or work collocated in a traditional office setting. Moreover, it was made clear that participants must primarily be in a followership role, not a leadership role.

During the survey window, 101 participants (n = 101) completed the survey. Participants' ages ranged over 48 years, with the average age of participants being 39 years old. The youngest person was 21 years old, and the oldest was 69 years old. There was a balanced representation of followers who worked on VTs (46.5%) and those who worked collocated (53.5%). A large majority (n = 71, 70.3%) of participants identified as White, 15.8% selected Hispanic or Latino, 7.9% identified as Black or African American, 4% selected Asian/Pacific Islander, and the remaining 2% selected Other. A majority of the sample was female (n = 69, 68.3%), but there was a good distribution of how many years participants have worked in their current environment: less than 1 year (n = 18, 17.8%), 1-5 years (n = 46, 45.5%), 6-10 years (n = 19, 18.8%), and 11 or more years (n = 18, 17.8%). Participants also came from a variety of industries, including law enforcement, business/finance, healthcare, technology, sales, banking, engineering, legal/law, and so on. The most common industry was education (n = 28, 27.7%).

Data also showed that women (n = 54, 78%) responded that their work environment changed because of COVID-19, more so than male participants (n = 21, 65%). In addition, women disproportionately cited they took on additional caregiver responsibilities while working from home (women 47%, men 28%).

Instrumentation

To measure the variables, an established scale was used in addition to collecting demographic information related to age, industry, gender, and details about the type of work team the follower is part of.

This study used the 20-item Followership Scale developed by Kelley (1992; see Appendix). The Followership Scale measures the two factors of followership, ICT and AE, with each factor having 10 items (Kelley, 1992). The Followership Scale utilizes a 7-point Likert-type scale from 0 (*rarely*) to 6 (*almost always*). Previous researchers have used this scale on various populations, including full- and part-time employees, faculty members, leaders, secondary school teachers, nurses, and university employees (Blanchard et al., 2009; Ellie, 2017; Gatti et al., 2017; Hinic et al., 2016; Jin et al., 2016; Rolle, 2020; Spicer, 2018).

The scale has also proven to be reliable and valid in some recent studies. Hinic et al. (2016) found the scale to be reliable with a Cronbach's alpha of .83. R. M. Bell (2017) reported Cronbach's alpha scores for AE as .86 and for .76 for ICT; however, the author removed some items from each dimension to increase reliability. Lastly, Rolle (2020) found both subscales to have a high level of internal consistency with the ICT subscale having a Cronbach's alpha of .76, and the AE subscale having a Cronbach's alpha of .87. This study employed the original 20-item scale and after removing one item for ICT (Question 17), the Cronbach's alpha score was .79 for ICT and .88 for all 10 items measuring AE. Therefore, the scales were shown to be reliable.

Data Collection Procedures

After obtaining Institutional Review Board approval, an online survey hosted by Google Forms was posted on social media (Facebook and LinkedIn) with a brief introduction to the study and identifying the criteria for participation. The survey included basic demographic information such as age and gender and questions about which industry participants worked in, how long they have worked in a VT or collocated, and how many members were on the team. In addition, they were asked if their work environment changed due to COVID-19 and whether they took on additional caregiving responsibilities during the lockdown period. They responded yes or no to these questions and were given the opportunity to add more explanation to their responses.

The social media post stated the reasons for the study and included the link to the survey, which contained the informed consent waiver and the contact information of the researcher. Participants were given about 3 weeks to complete the survey and were also encouraged to share the survey link with others who met the study criteria. Once the data collection was closed, the information was downloaded directly into SPSS software for further analysis.

Results

Using SPSS, an independent-samples t test was run to "calculate the probability of whether a particular difference between sample means would be expected under the terms of the null hypothesis, that is, attributed to sampling error" (Williams & Monge, 2001, p. 79). In this case, the two populations are collocated followers who work in person in traditional settings and those who work completely virtual and gender differences for AE and ICT. The t test indicated there was not a significant difference between followers who work in collocated teams and VTs for AE, $t(99)= -.1.81$, $p = .07 > 0.05$). Thus, H_1 was not supported. Another t test indicated there was not a significant difference between followers who work in collocated teams and VTs for ICT, $t(99)= -.1.42$, $p = .16 > 0.05$). Thus, H_2 was not supported.

For Hypotheses 3 and 4, a t test was run to compare the average scores for collocated and VTs for both AE and ICT and plotted using Kelley's (1992) followership styles chart. Collocated teams scored an average of 43 for ICT and 47 for AE, classifying them as exemplary followers and supporting H_3. However, VTs were also classified as exemplary followers, reporting an average score of 41 for ICT and 44 for AE. To test the significance between these two variables, a chi-squared test was also run. Chi-square is often the most popular nonparametric test and can be thought of as a "discrepancy statistic" (Williams & Monge, 2001, p. 113). Moreover, chi-square can be applied to a variety of situations and can be used to identify differences among categories within a sample and differences within the samples themselves (Williams & Monge, 2001). Chi-square also identifies a "goodness of fit between distributions" with a significant value indicating a lack of fit (Williams & Monge, 2001, p. 116). Therefore, while there is support for H_3, a Pearson chi-square for AE = x^2 (30, N =101) = 35.95, $p = .21 > .05$ and ICT = x^2 (31, N = 101) = 31.28, $p = .45 > .05$, revealed there was no significant relationship between collocated and VTs and type of follower.

To test Hypotheses 5-7, a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) test was run. MANOVA is a statistical test to see what consequences there are for "manipulating two or more independent variables in a single research design" (Williams & Monge, 2001, p. 111). The MANOVA test looks for main effects and interaction effects (Williams & Monge, 2001). The test is like analysis of variance in that it looks at independent variables that have two or more levels, but instead of one dependent variable, the MANOVA includes multiple dependent variables (Green & Salkind, 2014). For this study, one MANOVA could be run to answer all three hypotheses. For the gender, the Wilks' Lambda of .99 is not significant, $F(2, 96) = .32$, $p > .05$. For collocated followers, the Wilks' Lambda of .97 is not significant, $F(2, 96) = 1.51$, $p > .05$. For the interaction, the Wilks' Lambda of 1.0 is not significant, $F(2, 96) = .14$, $p > .05$. Therefore, there is not a significant difference for both independent variables and no significant interaction between them. Thus, H_5 is not supported since there was not a significant difference for

gender on VTs for AE, but Hypotheses 6 and 7 are supported as they predicted there would not be a significant difference in ICT for collocated followers based on gender.

Discussion

This study revealed no differences between followers who worked on collocated and VTs for both AE and ICT, although it was close at .07 for AE. With a larger sample size, there may have been a significant difference between these two groups for AE. In addition, while collocated followers self-reported to be exemplary followers, VT members also reported scores that were classified as exemplary instead of pragmatists as predicted. Although there was no significant difference between these groups, collocated followers did report higher scores, and virtual followers were only a few points away from being pragmatists. One explanation for the higher scores could be that respondents self-reported their followership and may have inflated their scores as a result, which is a common bias in this type of research (Burton-Jones, 2009). Going forward, it may be beneficial to collect data from followers and their leaders to have two points of data. Regardless, with a larger sample size, there may have been more distinct and significant findings between collocated and VT members on the type of followers they are.

The next set of hypotheses examined AE and ICT with the added variable of gender. While there was no support that female followers reported lower levels of AE than male followers, most women participants did cite their workplaces changed more, and they took on more caregiving roles than male participants. Therefore, this is still an area of research that needs further investigation to see how else women are being impacted in the workplace or even how they are handling these additional challenges. Hypotheses 6 and 7 were supported, showing no significant difference between men and women in their reporting of ICT skills, which was predicted.

Conclusion

While not all the findings were significant, this study offers several contributions to an understudied area of followership. First, while extensive scholarly work on employee engagement in a collocated team has been done, there is minimal literature on understanding employee engagement in VTs (Gilson et al., 2015). Moreover, while e-leadership has been given much attention in recent years, there are no studies that look exclusively at e-followership, and those that do only mention it in relation to leadership (Walvoord et al., 2008). Since virtual work teams continue to see "explosive growth" (Dulebohn & Hoch, 2017, p. 569), especially since the COVID pandemic, it is increasingly important to better understand exemplary followership within different types of work arrangements to find out where the differences are and offer tools for organizations to better develop followers who work in these spaces (Finlayson, 2021). That being said, it is promising to see such high scores for virtual followers on AE and ICT, especially those who were forced to move online abruptly due to COVID.

Regardless, future research should continue to explore how followership research plays out in multiple contexts and work arrangements as the world continues to connect through new technologies.

About the Author

Kellie Playter currently teaches and serves as the internship director for the School of Business and Economics at Concordia University in Irvine, California. Kellie has worked in higher education for over 14 years and enjoys helping prepare students for their future vocations. Kellie's research interests are in challenges facing women leaders, virtual teams, communication in the workplace, and intergenerational workplaces. Kellie is a fourth-year PhD student in the Organizational Leadership program at Regent University. She lives in California with her husband and two children.

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Appendix

Followership Scale from: Kelley, R. E. (1992). The power of followership: How to create leaders people want to follow and followers who lead themselves. Doubleday.

For each statement, please use the scale below to indicate the extent to which the statement describes you. Think of a specific but typical followership situation and how you acted.

0. Never
1. Almost Never
2. Not Often
3. Occasionally
4. Often
5. Almost Always
6. Always

Followership Style Survey

1. Does your work help you fulfill some societal goal or personal dream that is important to you?
2. Are your personal work goals aligned with your organization's priority goals?
3. Are you highly committed to and energized by our work and organization, giving them your best ideas and performance?
4. Does your enthusiasm also spread to and energize your coworkers?
5. Instead of waiting for or merely accepting what your organizational leader tells you, do you personally identify which activities are most critical for achieving the organization's most important goals?
6. Do you actively develop a distinctive competence in those critical activities so that you become more valuable to your leader and your organization?
7. When starting a new task, do you promptly build a record of successes in tasks that are important to your organizational leader?
8. Can your organizational leader give you a difficult assignment without the benefit of much supervision, knowing that you will meet your deadline with highest-quality work and that you will "fill in the cracks" if need be?
9. Do you take the initiative to seek out and successfully complete assignments that go above and beyond your job?
10. When you are not the leader of a group project, do you still contribute at a high level, often doing more than your share?
11. Do you independently think up and champion new ideas that will contribute significantly to the leader's or the organization's goals?
12. Do you try to solve tough problems (technical or organizational) rather than look to the leader to do it for you?
13. Do you help out other co-workers, making them look good, even when you don't get any credit?
14. Do you help the leader or group see both the upside potential and the downside risks of ideas or plan, planning the devil's advocate if need be?
15. Do you understand the leader's needs, goals, and constraints and then work hard to help meet the leader's needs and goals and work within the leader's constraints?
16. Do you actively and honestly admit to your strengths and weaknesses rather than delay evaluation?
17. Do you make a habit of internally questioning the wisdom of the leader's decisions rather than just doing what you are told?
18. When the leader asks you to do something that runs contrary to your professional or personal preferences, do you say "no" rather than "yes"?
19. Do you act on your own ethical standards rather than the leaders or the group's standards?
20. Do you assert your views on important issues, even though it might conflict with your group or reprisals from your leader?

Items 1, 5, 11, 12, 14, 16, 17, 18, 19, and 20 reflect the respondent's level of critical thinking. Items 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 13, and 15 reflect the study participant's level of engagement.

Exemplary. The exemplary variable represents a followership style that is high in both critical thinking and active engagement dimensions.

Conformist. The conformist variable epitomizes a follower style that is low in critical thinking and high in active engagement dimensions.

Passive. The passive variable characterizes a follower style that is low in both critical thinking and active engagement dimensions.

Alienated. The alienated variable represents a follower style that is high in critical thinking and low in active engagement dimensions.

Pragmatist. The pragmatist variable characterizes a follower style that is moderate in both critical thinking and active engagement dimensions.

Demographic Information

What is your age? _____

What is your Race/Ethnicity?

- Asian / Pacific Islander
- Black or African American
- Hispanic or Latino
- Native American or American Indian
- White
- Other

What is your gender?

- Female
- Male

What industry do you work in? _____

Which environment do you work in? (must select only one)

- Virtual (team members are geographically dispersed, have limited face-to-face contact, and work interdependently through the use of electronic communication media to achieve common goals)
- Collocated (work in a traditional office environment, can meet face-to-face with colleagues)

How long have you been in your current work environment (virtual or collocated)?

- Less than 1 year
- 1-3 years
- 4-6 years
- 7-10 years
- 11 or more years

How many members are in your work group? _____

Did your work environment change because of COVID?

- Yes (please explain)
- No

Did you have to take care of children or other family members while working during the COVID lockdowns?

- Yes (please explain)
- No