

An exploratory quantitative research examining gender influences upon transactional, transformational and relationship based leadership, in the context of B-to-B companies

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Introduction

Leadership is long ago seen as an evolving relationship based approach (Fairhurst and Bien, 2012). For example, the Leader -Member Exchange (LMX) theory concentrates on the perceived quality of the dyadic relationship between a subordinate and his or her immediate supervisor (Graen and Scandura, 1986). Although that leadership research thrives, there are contingent factors that need further examination, i.e., organizational culture, the leader's gender and ethnicity, diversity of ethnicity, race and gender among their followers, the contextual factor of the market, i.e. retail, or industrial. etc. (Bass 2010). Thus, research examining the demographic differences among leaders, seems to be more seldom. With this research we address this issue. Specifically, we focus on the role of gender, as a contingency factor of leader-member relationships. First, we test the models of transformational, transactional and relationship based leadership and their relationships with leadership outcomes, as depicted by marketing and management literature review, in order to support robustness of our research quantitative instrument and data quality. Next, we examine the role of the leaders and their followers' gender, as a differentiating factor, for both the leadership and the outcomes variables, in the context of industrial markets and specifically, in industrial sales. The link of the IMP approach with the Transformational Leadership and the LMX theories are also discussed.

Theoretical Background and Research Hypotheses

Transformational and Transactional Leadership

There have been almost four decades since Burns (1978) posit the concepts of transactional and transformational leadership, based on the work of precedent researchers, e.g. on Brymans' (1992) 'New Leadership Approach', on Sashkin's (1988) and House's (1977) 'visionary' and 'charismatic' leadership, as well as on the 'transformational models of leadership' as cited by Bass (1985), and Tichy and Devanna (1986). First, Burns (1978) introduced the two distinct leadership models to interpret politicians' exercise of power, while, later on, Bass (1998) adopt these models to the organizational environment and style of governance. Whereas transformational leader uplift the moral, motivation, and morals of their followers, transactional leaders cater to their followers' immediate self-interests.

Transactional leadership may take the form of contingent reward (reward consideration-the term used in this study) in which the leader clarifies for the follower through direction, or participation, what the follower need to be rewarded for the effort. It may take the form of active management-by-exception, in which the leader monitors the follower's performance and takes corrective action, if the follower fails to meet standards. Or, it may make the form of passive managing-by-exception, in which the leader just waits for problems to arise before taking corrective action, or is laissez-faire and avoids taking action. On the other hand, Transformational leadership refers to the leader moving the follower beyond immediate self-interests through idealized influence (charisma), inspiration, intellectual stimulation, or individualized consideration. This type of leadership is considered to elevate the follower's level of maturity and ideals as well as concerns of achievement, self-actualization, and the well-being of others, the organization and society. Furthermore, Handy (1994) builds upon Burns (1978) work, and sustains that Maslow's (1954) hierarchy of needs thesis is quite self-centered and should expand to a stage beyond self-actualization, the stage of idealization, the pursuit of an ideal, or a cause that is more than oneself. Williams (1994) showed that transformational leaders display more citizenship, courtesy, and civic virtue as well as imbue their subordinates with these same values. Thus, these researchers supported Burns' (1978) arguments that transforming leaders not only move followers up on Maslow's hierarchy, but they also move them to transcend their own self-interests, presumably including their own self-realization. Bass (1999) suggests that changes in the marketplace have resulted in the need for leaders to become more transformational and less transactional if they were to remain effective.

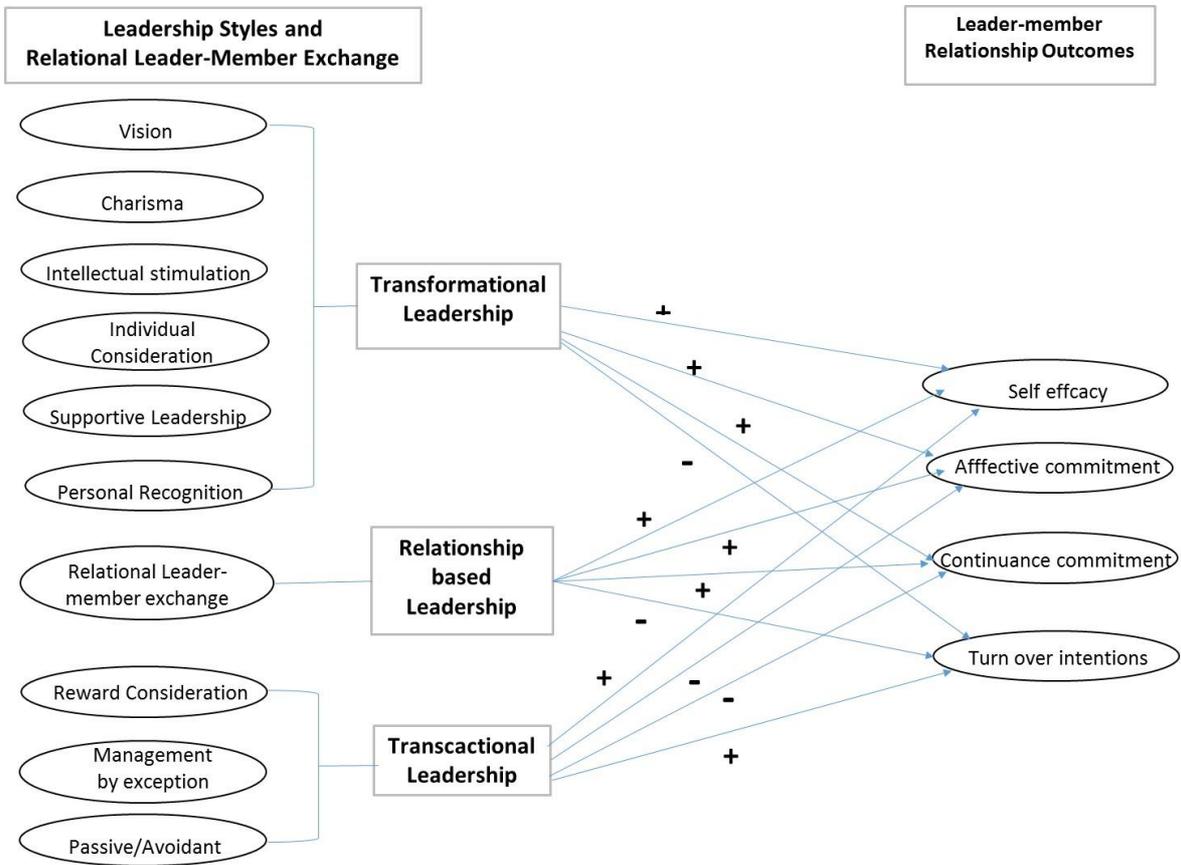
Relationship based Leadership

Initially, the Leader-Member exchange (LMX) theory was dealt with, as a transactional leadership, because of its reliance on exchange of rewards (Yuki, 1989). Notwithstanding, subsequent research showed that leader-member relationships are both transactional and transformational and evolve across the relationship lifetime (Graen and Bien, 1991). Bass's (1990) transactional leadership refers primarily to material exchange-for-example, material compensation that is exchanged for fulfillment of the employment contract. However, exchanges are not limited to material transactions, but they may also involve social exchanges of psychological benefits, or favors (i.e., approval, trust, esteem, support and consideration). Furthermore, Graen and Bien (1995) sustain that the dyadic exchange between leaders and members evolve from the "stranger" stage, to the "acquaintance" stage, followed by the "maturity" stage, with progressively higher degrees of mutual trust, respect and obligation within the relationship, which are regarded as the three basic dimensions of the LMX theory. Specifically, the same researchers sustain that an offer on behalf of the leader may not be made and accepted without: a) mutual respect for the capabilities of the other, 2) the anticipation of deepening reciprocal trust with the other, and 3) the

expectation that interacting obligation will grow over time as career-oriented social exchanges blossom into the partnership.

In this spirit, transactional leadership rather fits to the initial stage of the principal-subordinate exchange, whereas, transformational leadership, seems to be more suited to the higher stages of the leader-member exchange and involves social exchanges of psychological benefits. The same researchers argue that material exchange is different from social exchange, in that when the first is the basis for the relationship, the process is not really leadership, but rather, what they call as ‘managership’, or ‘supervision’. For instance, in such situations, the employment contract is the basis for behaviors by both the leader and the follower. The contract is fulfilled at the most basic level by testing various contingencies of behavior and reciprocal compensation. This would involve no leadership at all and minimal amounts of managership. On the contrary, in more advanced dyads, characterized by transformational leadership, managers perform very effectively in terms of their formal roles, using all the contingencies in the system with subordinated, thereby creating a long-term commitment from followers to the organization. Scheme 1 provides a visualization of the leadership styles and outcomes model, based on the aforementioned literature review. In this study, we build upon the Transformational and LMX theories, in order to examine the role of the leader’s gender on using either leadership styles for command.

Scheme 1. Visualization of Transformational, Transactional, Relationship-based Leadership and Outcomes Model



Links of Transformational Leadership and LMX theories with the IMP approach

Current literature has begun to discuss the importance of network embeddedness for salespeople's success. For example, Steward et al. (2010) focus on the role of salespeople's internal working relationships (though leaning rather on the social network theory, than on the IMP approach) and uncover how these relationships may impact salespeople's coordination of expertise inside the firm directly and their overall sales performance indirectly. Likewise, Ustuner and Iacobucci (2012), examined intra-organizational network relationships (i.e., work and social networks), to find that social and network ties activated by salespeople with their intra-organizational members may be influencing various salespeople effectiveness measures, in terms of opportunities identification, solution creation and closing the deal. Notwithstanding, sales literature discussing the link of IMP theory with managerial and leadership intra-organizational issues seems to be still in its infancy, for as far as we know. The IMP approach initially and mainly is focused on the inter-organizational relationships (i.e., between buyers, sellers and other interacting market actors), as it sees the organization as the unit of analysis, rather than the inter-personal level. The level of analysis in the IMP approach is on an aggregate, organisational level and not on an inter-personal level. The focus in the build-up perspective is moving from individual relationships towards a wider structure, which can be coined 'generalised connectedness' (Haakansson & Snehota 1995). In this perspective, one interaction in a relationship is often contingent upon interaction (or lack of interaction) in another relationship (Cook & Emerson 1978). Thus, although that the IMP approach is largely neglecting the inter-personal relationships and merely focuses on the 'generalised connecteness', however we may by no means sustain that it may totally ignore interpersonal relationships.

Our argument is that we may use the IMP approach to study the relationships of our theoretical model, mainly for four reasons: first, the IMP theory is a build-up perspective, emphasizing the history of the relationships between the participating actors (for instance in terms of trust) and, by this, the dependency on previous experiences (Blois 1999, Huemer 2004); second it presumes reciprocity in interpersonal relations (Ritter and Gemunden, 2003); third, it assumes that the resources among market actors are largely interdepend (Hakansson and Snehota, 1995) and fourth, the IMP framework considers the cornerstone importance of the atmosphere surrounding the interactions among the actors in a network (Hakansson, and Johanson 1994).

First, considering the IMP build-up perspective. Indeed, affective commitment, continuance commitment, together with turnover intentions minimization, as regarded as reasonable outcomes of a transformational leadership style. These outcomes seem to fit to the build-up perspective and the actors' eagerness for relationship continuity that culminates through a series of successful exchange episodes. Along similar lines, the IMP build-up constituent seems to match to Graen and Bien's (1995) dyadic leader-members exchange culmination process from the "stranger" stage, to the "acquaintance" stage, followed by the "maturity" stage, with progressively higher degrees of mutual trust, respect and obligation within the

relationship. In this sense, transactional leadership rather fits to the initial stage of the principal-subordinate exchange, whereas, transformational leadership, seems to be more suited to the higher stages of the leader-member exchange and involves social exchanges of psychological benefits, as depicted by the mechanism of long-term relationships' building of the IMP approach.

Second, we will discuss the reciprocity postulate of IMP approach, as it aligns with the transformational and the LMX concepts. Thus, transactional leadership appears to fit rather to discrete and material exchanges, whereas, transformational leaders that base their motivation on higher order needs and values, seem to fit to the social exchanges, described by the IMP approach. Likewise, transactional leadership style communication patterns seem to be rather uni-directed, as they are based to the normative and command-and-control norm of power, suggesting one-way, formal and lean communication patterns. On the other hand, transformational leadership and the LMX leadership that are largely based to the referent and expert power exercise, assume reciprocity among leader and members, symmetrical type relationships and informal, rich and by-directional communication patterns. Thus, they seem to fit to the IMP postulate of reciprocal relationships among market actors.

The third IMP postulate of interdependence among interacting actors is well visualized on the ARA model and seems to fit well to the transformational and the LMX theories.

This model is based on the concept which regards the firm as an actor performing activities and employing resources (Demsetz 1992; Henderson and Quandt 1971). According to this view, the function of business relationships can be characterized with respect to three essential components: activities, actors and resources. Moreover, regarding the primary functions, these may also fit to the transformational and the LMX theory, as they refer to the effects of the interaction in a focal dyadic relationship which is embedded within a network (i.e. the intra-organizational network among leader and members, e.g. the salespeople). Specifically, these effects correspond to activities, resources and actors and may be the following:

- (1) efficiency, which stems through interlinking of **activities**
- (2) creative leveraging of **resource** heterogeneity, and
- (3) mutuality, which is based on self-interest of **actors**.

Essentially, actors (i.e., the leader and the salespeople, respectively) attempt to achieve their goals (i.e., in terms of achieving organizational goals, and personal sales quotas, on behalf of the leader and the salespeople, respectively) by performing activities (i.e., using motivating strategies and sales activities, on behalf of the leader and the salespeople, respectively) and controlling resources (i.e., in terms of type of rewards and sales skills, on behalf of the leader and the salespeople, respectively). It is obvious that the above effects reflect the goals of a strategic network relationship (Anderson, Hakansson, and Johanson 1994), and at the same time, they pinpoint the link between the interdependence constituent of the IMP approach and the transformational, as well as, the LMX theories. Indeed, their doctrines of reciprocity, mutuality, citizenship and transition to higher order values of the Maslow's hierarchy, e.g. expanding the

stage of self-actualization, to pursue of an ideal that is more than oneself, which in turn, will be beneficial to the network and their own self-realization, thus stressing the interdependencies among the interacting actors (i.e., the leader and the salespersons).

Finally, the balanced atmosphere surrounding the leader-member relationships, as depicted by the IMP framework, may well be suited to the transformational and the LMX theories' doctrines. Specifically, the atmosphere that permeates the interacting actors' exchanges (i.e., material, information and social exchanges) can be described in terms of the power-dependence relationship which exist between actors (Hakansson 1982). Similarly crucial with the atmosphere surrounding a relationship, is the control dimension. This stems from the power-dependence dimension in the sense that the party that is more powerful, also has the control over the other (Naude and Holland 1995). The above asymmetric type of power exercise, which reflects a fits legitimate, or coercive-reward types of power and control over the subordinates (i.e. the salespeople) seem to fit to the transactional type of leadership. On the other hand, where the atmosphere among interacting actors (i.e., the leader and the salespeople) permeates symmetrical and balanced relationships, the leader uses referent and expert power to influence his/her salespeople' behavior. In this sense, since the salespeople are inspired (and not obliged) to exercise effort, it appears that the leader has no reason to exercise greater control over his/her subordinates (though he/she may do so, since the leader has the legitimate power to hiring and firing, controlling and rewarding his/her personnel, accordingly).

In corollary, the above arguments suggest that the IMP approach (i.e., Haakansson's ARA model) may fit well to both the Transformational Leadership and the LMX theories.

The role of gender as a contingency factor

Most of the pertinent literature presumes that women leaders should be rather transformational than transactional. For example, Bass, Avolio and Atwater (1996) sustain that women may have to be that much better leaders than their male counterparts to attain the same positions of responsibility and levels of success as men. However, the same researchers pinpoint that the majority of leaders are men, and suggest that affirmative action may have pushed women faster and higher justified by their competencies.

Although that the doors have opened wide in first-level and middle management, however, a glass ceiling remains in the elevation of women to management positions, except in a few industries such as publishing and retailing. Along similar lines, Sparrow and Rigg (1993) suggest that women are more likely to construe leadership in transformational terms, while, Rosener (1990) argues that women are more likely than men to describe the style of leadership they adopt as being transformational. In the same vein, empirical findings imply that women are significantly more likely to be described by their direct reports as adopting a transformational style (irrespective of the sex of the report), with men more likely to be

described as adopting a laissez-faire, or management by exception style (Avolio and Atwater 1996, Druskat 1994, Komives 1991).

On the other hand, other researchers imply (Gottlieb, 1990) that when women are in majority, such as in nursing, the empirical findings are contrary to the hypothesized transformational orientation of female leadership. As far as the relationship based leadership is concerned, empirical evidence seems to be lagging behind in this research subject, however, because Leader-Member Exchange theory is closely linked with transformational leadership, we assume that women leaders would more likely adopt this type of leadership to a greater extent than men leaders.

The above arguments lead us to the following set of hypotheses:

Ha: Female leaders would more likely than their male counterparts adopt a transformational rather, than a transactional style of leadership.

Hb: Female leaders would more likely than their male counterparts adopt a relational based style of leadership.

Methodology

First, we delved into the marketing and management literature pertaining to transformational and transactional leadership, relationship based theory, sales-force management and business relationship theories. As a next step, we based upon the results of our preliminary research and formulated a quantitative research instrument, which was addressed to subordinate salespersons, in the context of industrial markets.

Measures

All our measures were tapped by existing scales (i.e., the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) and the Leader-Member Exchange scales).

Leadership styles

Transformational leadership was measured in terms of *vision, charisma, intellectual stimulation, individual consideration, supportive leadership* and *personal recognition* (Avolio, Bass and Jung, 1999, Rafferty and Griffin 2004, House 1998).

Transactional leadership was mirrored by the constructs *management by exception, reward consideration* and *passive/avoidant* (Avolio, Bass and Jung, 1999, Rafferty and Griffin 2004, House 1998, Podsakoff 1990).

Relationship based leadership. We adopt the 8-item leader-member exchange scale of Graen and Bryen's (1995), reflecting the three dimensions of reciprocal trust, mutual respect and interacting obligation, as necessary characteristics of working relationships among leader and his/her subordinates.

Leader-member Relationship Outcomes

These were operationalized as *affective commitment* and *continuance commitment* (Meyer, Allen and Smith, 1993), *role breadth - self efficacy* (Parker, 1998) and *turnover intentions* (Rafferty and Griffin 2004).

Sampling

Our quantitative research instrument was then addressed to a sample of 450 subordinate industrial salespersons which were asked to rate the leadership style of their manager, as well as personal attitudes and feelings about the organization, self- efficacy and continuity/turnover intentions.

Finally, 228 responded, producing a response rate of 50.67%. Male and female genders were represented by 75% and 25%, respectively, in the sample.

Analyses and Findings

Our data were then submitted to a series of exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses, in order to assess dimensionality, reliability and validity of our sample constructs. As shown on Tables 2 and 3, reliability analysis produced acceptable levels (Cronbach alphas > 0.60), depicting that all the measures of the study were reliable.

In continuity, we proceeded to a series of correlations and regression analyses, in order to confirm that the interrelationships between the study's antecedent and outcome variables are consistent to prior research, thus placing nomological validity to the variables which would be used in order to examine the role of gender to both leadership styles and outcomes.

Table 1 shows the interrelationships among the research variables. Indicatively, we mention the positive relationship of leader-member relationship with all transformational leadership variables and only one transactional leadership variable, the reward consideration (contingent reward). At the same time, this variable is negatively related to passive/avoidant transactional leadership variable, as well as to the outcome of turnover intentions, which reinforces findings of previous research. Interestingly, this later variable is negatively related to all, but two variables, the passive/avoidant, with which is positively related, and the management-by-exception, which is unrelated (both transactional variables).

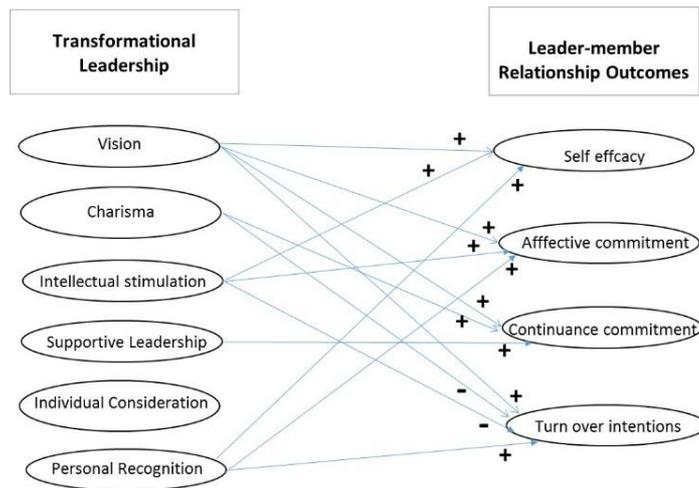
As a next step, we regressed each one of the four outcome variables to each batch of transformational and transactional leadership constructs, thus producing eight regression analyses. The significant relationships that were produced by the correlation and regression analyses are depicted on Schemes 2, 3 and 3, providing validation to our data for interpreting theoretical literature, in the context of industrial markets, enunciating their ability to be used as measures for testing our research hypotheses.

Table 1. Variables inter-correlations

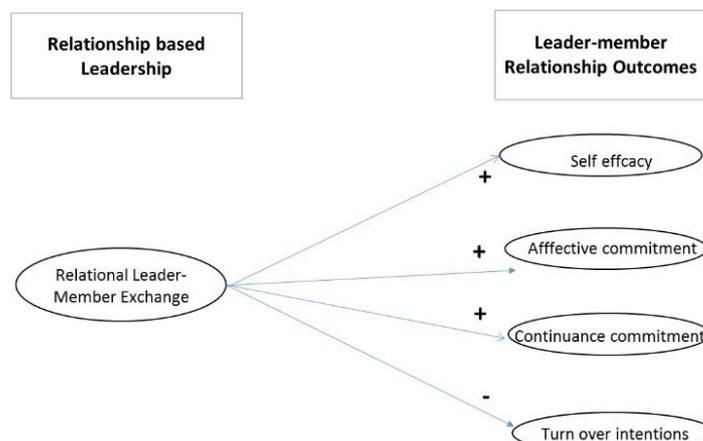
Intercorrelations among research variables														
Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
1 f8 leader_member_relationship	1													
2 f7_1 vision	.630**	1												
3 f7_2 charisma_inspirational	.830**	.776**	1											
4 f7_3 intellectual_stimulation	.690**	.639**	.799**	1										
5 f7_4 supportive_leadership	.814**	.611**	.849**	.738**	1									
6 f7_5 personal_recognition	.719**	.553**	.752**	.604**	.757**	1								
7 f7_6 individual_consideration	.782**	.623**	.835**	.776**	.892**	.737**	1							
8 f7_7 reward_consideration_contingent_reward	.682**	.639**	.792**	.738**	.762**	.719**	.769**	1						
9 f7_8 management_by_exception_active	.021	.042	.043	.207**	.081	.002	.142*	.154*	1					
10 f7_9 passive_avoidant	-.504**	-.581**	-.612**	-.442**	-.470**	-.509**	-.530**	-.499**	.058	1				
11 f9_1 affective_commitment	.375**	.418**	.455**	.358**	.342**	.312**	.356**	.358**	.041	-.260**	1			
12 f9_2 continuance_commitment	.431**	.485**	.520**	.424**	.401**	.356**	.437**	.436**	.189**	-.321**	.740**	1		
13 f9_3 self_efficacy	.394**	.337**	.408**	.368**	.346**	.325**	.362**	.338**	.078	-.216**	.536**	.720**	1	
14 f9_4 turnover_intentions	-.359**	-.461**	-.552**	-.398**	-.453**	-.416**	-.455**	-.453**	.057	.500**	-.549**	-.646**	-.365**	1

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Scheme 2. Effects of Transformational Leadership towards Leader-Member Relationship Outcomes



Scheme 3. Effects of Relationship Based Leadership towards Leader-Member Relationship Outcomes



Scheme 4. Effects of Transactional Leadership towards Leader-Member Relationship Outcomes

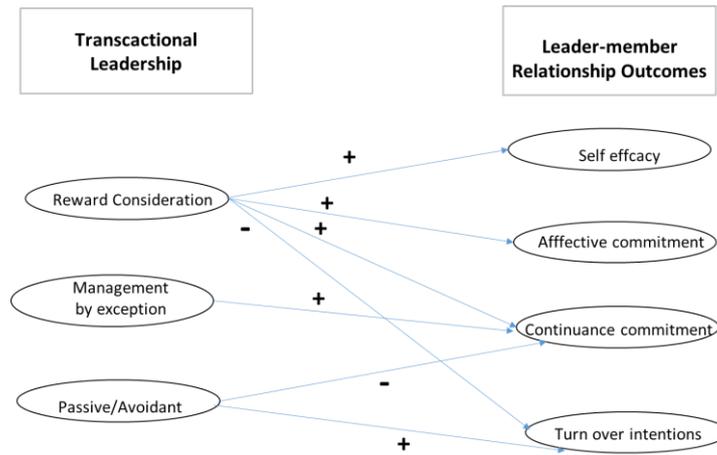


Table 2. T-test Analysis for Leadership Types Variables between Male and Female Leaders

**T-Tests Means' Comparison between Men and Women Managers
for the Leadership Types Variables**

Leadership Type	# of Items	Reliability Cronbach alpha	Means		Equality of Variances		T-Test	
			Men	Women	F	Sig.	T	Sig.
Transformational Leadership Variables								
f7_1 vision	3	0.78	12.64*	12.11*	0.469	0.49	1.700	0.088
f7_2 charisma_inspirational	17	0.97	67.63**	62.96**	1.196	0.28	2.501	0.013
f7_3 intellectual_stimulation	4	0.88	15.61**	14.47**	2.003	0.16	2.619	0.009
f7_4 supportive_leadership	9	0.96	34.61**	31.74**	7.776	0.01	2.235	0.028
f7_5 personal_recognition	3	0.93	12.34 n.g.	11.77 n.g.	6.804	0.01	1.380	0.172
f7_6 individual_consideration	6	0.90	22.69 n.g.	21.77 n.g.	1.772	0.18	1.338	0.182
Transactional Leadership Variables								
f7_7 reward_consideration	5	0.89	20.09**	18.84**	4.639	0.03	2.244	0.028
f7_8 management_by_exception_active	4	0.62	13.15 n.g.	13.49 n.g.	0.653	0.42	-0.800	0.424
f7_9 passive_avoidant	4	0.70	9.31**	10.21**	0.376	0.54	-2.088	0.038
Relationship based leadership								
f8 leader_member_relationship	7	0.90	27.40**	25.54**	6.369	0.12	2.145	0.035

** significant at .05
* significant at .1

Table 3. T-test Analysis for Leadership Outcomes Variables between Male and Female Leaders

**T-Tests Means' Comparison between Men and Women Managers
for the Relationship Outcomes Variables**

Relationship Outcome	# of Items	Reliability Cronbach alpha	Means		Equality of Variances		T-Test	
			Men	Women	F	Sig.	T	Sig.
f9_1 affective_commitment	4	0.85	16.77**	16.05**	0.16	0.689	1.998	0.047
f9_2 continuance_commitment	8	0.93	32.55**	30.04**	2.454	0.119	2.473	0.014
f9_3 self_efficacy	6	0.68	24.11**	22.93**	8.855	0.003	-2.644	0.009
f9_4 turnover_intentions	10	0.87	25.87**	28.60**	2.692	0.102	2.145	0.035

** significant at .05
* significant at .1

In continuity, in order to test our hypotheses, we performed a series of T-test analyses. The findings showed that there were significant differences among the majority of our measures in respect to gender, however, to the opposite direction of our research hypotheses, to a high extent, leading to some interesting conclusions. Specifically, for all, but three, out of nine, leadership variables, for the uni-dimensional relationship based leadership variable and for all four salesperson's outcome variables the t value was significant. Contrary to most of the literature review, which sustains that women would more likely adopt a transformational style, whereas men would rather construe a transactional style (Alimo-Metcalfe 1995, Sparrow and Rigg 1993, Avolio and Atwater, 1996) our results provided evidence to the opposite. Thus, respondents (followers) scored significantly lower the women leaders for all transformational leadership variables, though, significantly higher for one transactional variable, (the passive/avoidant), reflecting that women leaders may be more transactional than men. In respect to the outcomes affective commitment, continuance commitment and self-efficacy, our research findings provided lower scores to the women leaders, than men. At the same time, women leaders had higher scores than men, for the turnover intentions (which is a negative outcome), as rated by their subordinates.

The aforementioned contradicting findings arouse second thoughts of whether the respondents' (followers) answers might be biased by their gender as well.

In order to test them, first we performed crosstabulation, in order to find out if gender was evenly distributed between our respondents (i.e., representing the followers) and their cited leaders.

Notwithstanding, crosstabs analysis revealed that there was, indeed, a significant difference between the respondents' gender and their leaders' gender in our sample, at a confidence level of 95%. Specifically, we found that the gender of leaders is evenly distributed among male respondents, as our research respondents have 79.4% possibility to have a male manager, while 20.6% percent to have a female leaders. These ratios are quite representative of the total sample, which account for 75% and 25% male and female managers, respectively. However, when it comes to female respondents (followers), 68.5% reported to have a male leader, whereas, evidently, the rest 31.5% reported to have a leader of the same gender, which is significantly higher than the ratio of female leader representation in our research sample.

This finding led us to run T-test analyses, once more, while controlling for the respondents' gender, in order to check for response bias which may be due to the respondents' gender. The findings are quite interesting. Thus, when controlling for male gender (i.e., only the female respondents' sub-sample participated), the T-test analyses provided similar results to the total sample, that is, the significant mean differences of the leadership and outcomes variables were similar to the differences of the initial total sample, as depicted above. Thus, women respondents' answers were representative of our research sample findings. Contrary to the above, when it comes to men respondents' sub-sample, we found no significant mean differences, in regard to men and women leadership and outcomes variables, for all, but three variables. Specifically, men salespersons cited higher scores only for one leadership variable, the reward

consideration, when they had a man rather, than a woman leader. Inversely, they gave a higher score to management by exception when their leader was woman, rather, than man. In the same vein, they scored higher their turnover intentions when their leader was woman, rather, than man.

Conclusions, Implications and Limitations

As our research findings showed, male subordinates do not perceive any differences between male and female leaders in neither the transformational, transactional and relationship based leadership, nor the outcomes, except for the management-by-exception transactional variable. Indeed, male subordinates find to a higher extent than their female counterparts, that a female, would more likely than a male manager, base her leading strategy to monitoring their performance and taking corrective action if they failed to meet standards (management-by-exception). Thus, male followers appear to identify female leaders rather with the normative and compliance power exercise and the material exchange which are closer to Graen and Bien's (1995) 'managership' rather, than inspired leadership style of command.

On the other hand, the same respondents (males) rated higher the male, than the female, leaders, for the reward consideration variable. The finding might seem paradox to the extent that reward consideration is a transactional variable. However, some researchers have argued that this construct may be operationalizing by both transactional and transformational processes (Goodwin, Wofford, & Whittington, 2001). Nonetheless, this finding may be attributed to the nature of the industrial markets and the salespersons' activity object which is highly competitive and inextricably linked to goals, quotas and continuous evaluation of multi-facet performance results. Thus, in the context of industrial sales, the reward consideration leadership aspect, seems to be sine qua non criterion for leadership successful outcomes, no matter the style of a leader.

On the whole, as the rest mean differences of the research variables between the two leader genders were insignificant, it appears that male subordinates, do not discriminate between male and female leaders, thus, for this population both research hypotheses are not supported. Furthermore, they imply that their leader gender may not moderate their relationship evolution with the organization, as well as, their personal efficacy and development.

On the other hand, as far as the female sub-sample in our research, the findings provided quite controversial conclusions.

First, according to our research data, female leaders appear to manage females to a greater ratio, than males. This may be interpreted either by the selling object (i.e. referring to product sales that are more suitable for women salespersons), or, less unlikely, as implied favoritism among the female population, or to other contingences which lead to further research.

Second, the female respondents rated the male leaders higher, than their female counterparts, for all but one transformational leadership variable (i.e., the personal recognition variable). Alike, they scored higher

the male, than the female leaders for the leader-member exchange variable. At the same time, the same follower gender cited higher levels of affective commitment, continuance commitment and self-efficacy, and even, lower levels of turn-over intentions, when they had a male rather, than a female leader. Inversely, female leaders were rated higher, for both the management by exception and the passive/avoidant variables, which coincides with the male subordinates' attitudes, depicting a rather transactional leadership style for the female leaders. One piece of reasoning, may be that women leaders (as they represent the minority across their respective companies' hierarchy ranks) are mostly leading males. Although they may have skills (i.e., product knowledge) and market experience, on the ground that they were promoted to a leader position, they may not be feeling loose, or self-confident enough, to deal with the necessary social exchanges, cultivate an atmosphere of camaraderie and friendliness that are important for inspiring their vision, intellect with followers' problems, and even associate in same terms with them. For one thing, women are, by nature, more emotional than men, and as such, they have to hide their feminine traits, less they should appear as fragile and incompetent to their opposite gender subordinates. This is further supported by the significant difference between male and female leaders in respect to the relationship-based leadership variable. In this sense, female leaders seem to prefer adherence to formal guidelines and rules, and supervising just to get the job done. If this implication stands to reason, then female aspiring leaders should receive special training in how they should handle the emotional burden of transformational leadership implementation, in the industrial market area that is dominated by men.

On the other hand, females scored lower than males in respect to the reward consideration, which implies that female leaders are less likely to adopt supervision through direction, or participation, in order to clarify what the follower need to do to be rewarded for the effort. This finding, in conjunction to our previous analysis of the importance of this leadership dimension to the industrial sales, may imply the incongruence of female leaders with this professional object. In other words, it may bitterly imply that women leaders may be less successful than men, in the industrial sales arena, in current conditions. Furthermore, female respondents with leader of the same than the opposite gender, gave significantly lower scores to self-efficacy, affective commitment and continuance commitment, and even, they scored higher the turnover intentions. It appears that women followers may be less satisfied when their leader is of the same than the opposite gender. Again, one explanation may be laid on how women deal with their personal feelings, emotions and friendly, or aloof behavior, towards their subordinates of the same gender, and vise-versa (i.e., how the subordinates accept the leader of the same gender). As mentioned above, because women are, by nature, deeply emotional, they would expect their leader to behave in a friendly and analogous manner, which infers that they would rather prefer a transformational rather, than a transactional leader. Thus, they would be neither satisfied, nor committed to the organization, when their women leaders would more likely adopt an impersonal, formal and stern leadership style, as depicted by

our research findings. On the contrary, these subordinates would expose highly percentages of turnover intentions, as depicted before. The above results depict that females may have different perceptions than men, in how they experience both the leader-member relationship, and the evolution of their relationship with the organization and their personal prosperity. It appears, for as far as the results of this research are concerned, the gender may play a catalytic role for female followers, in respect to their relationships with the manager and the organization, as well as, with their personal growth.

The implication is that, for one thing, women leaders might be more productive to lead subordinates of the different rather, than the same gender.

On the whole, it appears that the female subordinates perceive that males, compared to females, may be more transformational leaders, identified with referent power and relational based leadership that may lead to internalization of values and organizational citizenship behavior.

Again, the results stress that organizational members need to provide quality education to both male and female candidate leaders, in order to be able to handle their emotions and member-leader relationships, i.e., the types of social exchanges dimensions among male and female subordinates that would lead them to adopt transformational and relationship-based leadership styles with all the adjunct benefits for the organizational members and the leader, as well. For example, adopting Graen and Bien's (1995) leader-member exchange theory, sales managers training might focus on the elevation of leader behaviors that inspire working relationships among the manager and his/her subordinates, that may elevate: i) mutual respect for the capabilities of each other, ii) the anticipation of deepening reciprocal trust among each other, and iii) the expectation that interacting obligation will grow over time, as career-oriented social exchanges blossom into a partnership. Indeed, the above working relationships of mutual trust, respect and interacting obligation refer to individuals' assessments of each other, in terms of their professional capabilities and behaviors, thus substantially defer from personal or friendship relationship, liking-based dimensions of interpersonal attraction and bonding, as cited in the marketing literature (Graen and Bien, 1995, Liden and Maslyn, 1994). Thus, the above LMX theory may act as a candidate leaders' training navigator, for exercising effective and inspirational leadership, also controlling for gender contingent differences among leader and subordinates' behaviors.

The research findings lead to a series of potential explanations and implications, as well as directions for future research. For example, because leader-member relationships expand beyond the boundaries of the organizations, to the level of network inter-organizational relationships, there may be of critical importance to research why gender might matter, as this parameter may play a catalytic role in flourishing, or downsizing, a relationship evolution.

Also, we should note that our research was mainly run for the industrial markets, and specifically for the industrial sales contexts. We should test the above gender differences with larger samples and in multiple

business contexts, in order to provide generalizability of research results and lead to safer implications for successful business practices.

References (to be kindly provided upon request)