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Contextualizing leadership

An examination of Leader-Member Exchange relationships in the challenging contexts of a new leader, negative events and globalized work

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Julkaisun nimike
Johtajuuden kontekstuaalisuus: Esimies-alaissuhteiden tarkastelu uuden esimiehen, negatiivisten tapahtumien ja globaalin työn haastavissa konteksteissa

Tiivistelmä
Väitöskirjatutkimus käsittelee esimies-alaissuhteita haastavissa tilanteissa, ja keskiössä on johtajuuden kontekstuaalisuus. Kontekstit, joiden kautta suhteita tarkastellaan, ovat; uuden esimiehen, negatiivisten tapahtumien, sekä kansainvälisen työn kontekstit. Esimies-alaissuhteita tarkastellaan Leader-member exchange (LMX) -teorian kautta.

Tulosten valossa voidaan sanoa, että esimies-alaissuhteet ovat vahvasti kontekstisidonnaisia. Uuden esimiehen saapuminen organisaatioon voidaan nähdä moniulotteisena haasteena, jossa esimiehen odotetaan samanaikaisesti oppivan organisaation toimintatavat, muuttavan niitä ja kehittävän suhteita tärkeiden toimijoiden kanssa. Tämän lisäksi esimies-alaissuhteissa saattaa esiintyä negatiivisia tapahtumia, joiden voidaan nähdä nivoutuvan laajempaan sosiaaliseen kontekstiin esimiehen organisatorisen roolin ja tiimin sisäisen sosiaalisen vertailun kautta. Esimies-alaissuhteita tarkasteltiin myös kansainvälisen työn kontekstissa, ja hyvälaatuinen LMX suhde oli yhteydessä parempaan hyvinvointiin. Kuitenkin tilanteessa, jossa tarkasteltiin LMX:n ja fyysisen etäisyyden yhteisvaikutusta, havaittiin, että esimiehen ja alaisen välisen suhteen ollessa laadultaan huono, fyysisen etäisyys yllättäen jopa suojaa alaista erityisesti kansainväliseen työhön liittyviltä negatiivisilta hyvinvointivaikutuksilta.

Tämä väitöstutkimus tarjoaa lisänäkökulmia nykyiseen tutkimukseen esimies-alaissuhteista. Lisäksi tutkimus tuo teoriaan lisää ymmärrystä esimies-alaissuhteiden kontekstuaalisuudesta. Metodologisesti lisäarvoa tuo esimies-alaissuhteiden tarkastelu erilaisten aineistojen ja tutkimusmenetelmien kautta. Väitöskirja tarjoaa uutta myös käytännön toimintaan tuomalla työkaluja esimiehille, alaisille ja HR-toimijoille esimies-alaissuhteiden ymmärtämiseen nykypäivän haastavissa toimintaympäristöissä.

Asiasanat
Esimies-alaissuhde, LMX, johtajuus, uusi esimies, negatiiviset tapahtumat, ekspatriaatit, kansainväliset liikematkustajat

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Contextualizing leadership: An examination of Leader-Member Exchange relationships in the challenging contexts of a new leader, negative events and globalized work

Abstract

This dissertation examines leader-follower relationships in challenging situations, dissected through the contextuality of leadership. These different contexts are defined as follows: the context of a new leader entering an organization; the context of negative events between the leader and a subordinate; and the context of international work often causing a physical distance between the parties involved. These relationships are studied through the concept of leader-member exchange (LMX) relationships.

The findings of this research show that leader-follower relationships are highly contextual. The context of a new leader can be seen as a multidimensional challenge, as the leader has to learn ways of working, implicate change, and develop interpersonal links within the new organization. Moreover, there might be negative events within the leader-follower relationship, linked to a wider organizational context through the organizational role of the leader, and social comparison among team members. LMX relationships were further examined in the context of globalized work, and high-quality LMX was positively related to the wellbeing of international employees. However, when LMX was studied together with physical distance (as a moderation), subordinates with low-quality LMX experienced less negative international work-related wellbeing outcomes.

The contribution of this dissertation is threefold, and offers unique viewpoints to the existing literature on LMX. First, the theoretical contribution of the study adds to the understanding of the contextuality of leadership through examining LMX relationships within different challenging contexts. Secondly, the study contributes methodologically, as different methods and sources of data have been used to investigate LMX relationships, for example longitudinally. Third, the practical contribution of the study is to offer tools for leaders, followers and HR practitioners to identify and understand the challenging leadership contexts that exist in this setting.

Keywords

Leader-member exchange, LMX, Leadership, new leader, negative events, expatriates, international business travellers.

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> *"Working hard is important. But there's something that matters even more. Believing in yourself."*
>
> *— J.K. Rowling, Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*

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Abbreviations

LMX	Leader-member exchange theory
SET	Social exchange theory
IBT	International business traveller
COR	Conservation of resources theory
JD-R	Job Demands-Resources model

Publications

This dissertation is based on four appended articles/essay:

[1] Kangas, H.M. (2013). The development of the LMX relationships after a newly appointed leader enters an organization. *Human Resource Development International,* 16: 5, 575-589 (https://doi.org/10.1080/13678868.2013.825438). Copyright 2013 Talor & Francis. Reprinted with permission.

[2] Kangas, H. (2020). Spanning leader–subordinate relationships through negative interactions: An examination of leader–member exchange breaches. *Leadership,* Advance online publication (https://doi.org/10.1177/1742715020952676). CC-BY.

[3] Mäkelä, L., Kangas, H. & Suutari, V. (2019). Satisfaction with an expatriate job: The role of physical and functional distance between expatriate and supervisor. *Journal of Global Mobility*, 7:3, 255-268 (https://doi. org/10.1108/JGM-04-2019-0025). Copyright 2019 Emerald Publishing Limited. Reprinted with permission.

[4] Mäkelä, L., Tanskanen, J., Kangas, H. & Heikkilä, M.. Effects of short-haul and long-haul business travel on international business travelers' job exhaustion - does Leader-Member Exchange relationship quality have a role in that relationship? Paper under review. An earlier version of the paper was presented in the EURAM 2019 conference, Lisbon, Portugal.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Organizational life is in constant change, and the business environment can be characterized as complex, uncertain and highly turbulent, being affected by a variety of internal and external forces. For example, globalization is having a major impact on almost every organization. In addition to substantial changes in the business environment and organizations, intra-organizational changes are sparked as people strive for constant learning and identity building through sequential positions and changing roles within and between organizations. Evolving landscapes include both leaders and members leaving, and also joining new workgroups (Erdogan & Bauer 2014). These elements also pose a challenge for individual leaders and leadership as a whole. For example, more and more leaders are starting in new positions within and between organizations (Lam, Lee, Taylor & Zhao 2018; Manderscheid & Harrower 2016), leading to new leader-follower relationships being developed. Moreover, the complexity of leaders' work has also increased due to changes and turbulence on dyadic and group levels, as organizations are forced to react to ever-increasing change, sometimes creating tension and a context of conflict among people, and also between a leader and their subordinates (Korsgaard, Brodt & Whitener 2002; Volmer 2015; Xin & Pelled 2003). Furthermore, globalization has changed the face of leadership, as people are physically more dispersed, working remotely and also internationally (Nurmi 2010; 2011). All of these contexts can be seen as modifying how leadership should be comprehended, both theoretically and practically.

It has been said that leadership, often defined as "*a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal*" (Northouse 2013: 2), is one of the most complex socio-psychological phenomena, and there have been many theoretical avenues pursued in an attempt to unravel the leadership puzzle (Liden & Antonakis 2009). Leadership has been said to be the most studied, yet least known phenomenon in organizational research. The first theoretical notions about leadership were highly leader-centric, and it was thought that leadership was an inheritable quality, which meant that either leaders were born with some form of leader qualities and characteristics, or they were not. Theories such as the 'great man theory' and trait approaches supported this notion. In the trait approaches, attempts were made to recognize the qualities and characteristics that an effective and successful leader would possess (Zaccaro, LaPort & José 2013). However, these trait theories were criticized, among other things, for not taking into account the situational factors that were involved. Partly as an answer to this, the situational aspects of leadership began to attract the interest of researchers, and were studied with e.g. contingency theories (Fiedler 1978; Fiedler & Garcia 1987). These theories viewed leadership as highly dependent on situational demands (Gordon 2011: 196), with limiting or facilitating conditions that alter the effectiveness of the leadership (Yukl 2011: 287). Moreover, it was thought that great leaders would emerge because of certain situations, for example war or crisis. Later, through the concept of path-goal theory, 'followers' were integrated to the leadership process, with a premise that leaders were destined to help followers strive to reach their goals (House & Mitchell 1975). However, all of these theoretical approaches were highly concentrated on the leader, and their characteristics and behaviour in certain situations (Graen & Uhl-Bien 1995).

The first steps away from leader-centric theories were described as transformational theories (Bass 1985; Burns 1978). Transformational leadership is often portrayed as a counterpart of the concept of transactional leadership, where the first includes e.g. intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration, and the latter draws on passive management-by-exception and contingent reward behaviours. Within the theories of transformational and e.g. charismatic leadership, the emphasis is placed on values and emotions, through which leaders can influence followers through symbolic and meaningful elements (Yukl 1999). However, transformational leadership has been criticized for not being applicable in every cultural context (Diaz-Saenz 2011: 303), and also for being too centralized to the leader and their behaviour and ignoring the effects of processual or situational factors. Thus, leadership may be seen as a shared process, and it has been argued that elements of mutual influence and interaction should be more strongly considered (e.g. Graen & Uhl-Bien 1995; Yukl 1999).

In light of these perspectives, in this dissertation leadership is perceived as a co-created and interdependent phenomenon, viewed with the theoretical underpinnings of the Leader-Member Exchange (hereafter termed LMX) theory (Bauer & Green 1996; Graen & Uhl-Bien 1995; Maslyn & Uhl-Bien 2001; Scandura & Lankau 1996). The LMX theory perceives leadership as being constructed through dyadic relationships that are varying in quality and rate of exchange, and playing an important role in organizational behaviour and attitudes (Dulebohn, Bommer, Liden, Brouer & Ferris 2012; Gertner & Day 1997). Those relationships that are of high quality reflect a lot of social exchange, mutual liking, obligation, and their affect between parties. Low quality relationships, on the other hand, are mostly based on transactions and resource exchanges agreed in formal contracts. It is focal to note that the relationships are influenced by numerous internal and external elements, such as endogenous events or surrounding situational and contextual factors (e.g. Liden, Anand & Vidyarthi 2016; Regts, Molleman, & van de Brake 2018). The important role of the context surrounding intra-organizational relationships has gained interest, and calls have been made to conduct empirical studies of leadership in different contexts (Antonakis, Avolio, & Sivasubramaniam 2003; Johns 2006; Liden & Antonakis 2009; Oc 2018; Porter & McLaughlin 2006; Tyssen, Wald & Heidenreich 2014). The importance of context in the development process of LMX has also been called into question (e.g. Avolio, Walumbwa & Weber 2009). Therefore, since leadership can be seen to be constructed within dyadic exchange and interaction, it is especially important to review the contextuality of leadership through leader-follower relationships.

Traditionally, the development process of LMX relationships has been comprehended as being rather quick, where the relationships reach their final stage early on (Bauer & Green 1996; Liden, Wayne & Stilwell 1993). However, studies on the development process of LMX relationships are mostly concentrated on a situation of the subordinate as a newcomer (e.g. Chen & Eldridge 2011; Jokisaari 2013; Zheng, Wu, Eisenberger, Shore, Tetrick & Buffardi 2016). Against this limitation, what must be noted is the increasing amount of leaders making transitions and entering new positions and organizations (Manderscheid & Harrower 2016). However, there is a dearth of leadership studies on situations where the new leader is taking over a team (Sauer 2011). Leader transitions are demanding, and have unfortunately often been noted as being unsuccessful (Denis, Langley & Pineault 2000; Watkins 2003). One of the most detrimental things in determining a leader's success is their ability to develop interpersonal relationships within their first year in their new position (Gabarro 2007), and therefore the process should be viewed in terms of the development of LMX relationships. The context of a newly appointed leader poses a challenge from the viewpoint of the LMX development process, as the leader is simultaneously developing multiple new relationships within the work group. Therefore, the first viewpoint of this article-based dissertation focuses on the context of the newly appointed leader, and the development process of LMX relationships in this specific context is examined in Article 1.

Moving forward, the maintenance of these relationships should also be acknowledged. The quality of the LMX relationship has been seen to remain rather stable regarding the stage they develop into (e.g. Bauer & Green 1996). However, there has been growing interest on the dynamic side of the LMX, concerning fluctuations in the relationship and exchange quality (Cropanzano, Dasborough, & Weiss 2017), for example seen through exchange events of strong instrumental or emotional value (Ballinger & Rockmann 2010) or interpersonal conflicts (Volmer 2015; Xin & Pelled 2003). However, the characteristics and mechanisms of such negative events constituting the elements of vertical conflict, warrants more extensive study (Ballinger & Rockmann 2010; Erdogan & Bauer 2014; Liden et al. 2016). Moreover, the trust loss originating from the interactions between the leader and the subordinate should be considered more thoroughly (Savolainen & Häkkinen 2011; Savolainen, Lopez-Fresno & Ikonen 2014). One important viewpoint of this topic is the resource exchange that takes place between the leader and their subordinates, since the division of different resources is often linked to feelings of equity and justice (Henderson, Wayne, Shore & Bommer 2008). Specifically, the leader is seen as being in possession of multiple tangible, as well as intangible resources (e.g. career opportunities, mentorship or social support), but the availability of those resources is constrained, and therefore the leader is able to provide extensive exchanges of different kinds with only a limited group of subordinates. The perception of the subordinates could be that the division of the resources is unequal, and subsequently, there might be exchange events that breach the expected interactions or influence the conduct of the leader. Therefore, the social context of LMX relationships should be considered. In previous literature, contexts have also been defined as events (e.g. Oc 2018), and the managerial behaviour in the context of negative events has previously been examined (Korsgaard et al. 2002). Therefore, the second perspective of this dissertation challenges the traditional view of LMX stability by investigating the context of negative events occurring between the leader and their subordinates, and the characteristics of such events, addressed in Article 2.

In addition to examining LMX relationships in the context of a newly appointed leader, and the context of negative exchange events and also the context of physical distance should be taken into account (e.g. Antonakis & Atwater 2002). As working life becomes more and more global, the international mobility of the workforce has grown. People increasingly undertake business-related travel, and in addition, expatriation (i.e. people residing outside their home country because of their work (see Brewster et al. 2014)) has increased. This creates a situation where the leader and subordinate might spend an extensive amount of time physically apart from one another. It could be stated that due to the context of physical distance caused by internationally mobile work, the subordinate might be distanced from important resources and information that would be provided by the leader (Nurmi 2010; 2011). In previous studies, the resources that an individual (both personal and organizational) has have been linked to multiple health and wellbeing-related outcomes (Bakker, Demerouti & Sanz-Vergel 2014; Hobfoll 1989). The possession of valuable resources has been linked to wellbeing (Hobfoll 2001), whereas the loss of these resources has been linked to burnout and exhaustion (Maslach, Schaufeli & Leiter 2001). The relationship the individual has with the leader (i.e. a high-quality LMX relationship) can be viewed as an important source of resources

(Erdogan & Liden 2002), and low-quality LMX relationships are often linked to a restricted distribution of resources (e.g. Gertner & Day 1997). People in high-quality LMX relationships have been seen to have access to important information (Sias 2005), and able to gain instrumental help, as well as emotional support (Hsu, Chen, Wang & Lin 2010). Moreover, wellbeing outcomes of high-quality LMX relationships are well-documented, and those relationships have been linked to, for example, higher job satisfaction (Epitropaki & Martin 2005; Erdogan & Enders 2007). However, those subordinates in low-quality LMX relationships are seen to be at risk of burnout, with exhaustion being the core-component (Huang, Chan, Lam & Nan 2010; Thomas & Lankau 2009). Nevertheless, LMX relationships have rarely been studied in the context of international work that causes a physical distance between the parties, and possibly influences on their wellbeing. When considering the focal role of the leader in ones' working life, the context of globalized work and its challenges must be taken into account within the field of LMX study, and this presents the third perspective of this dissertation, investigated in Article 3 and Essay 4.

Therefore, this dissertation examines leadership by way of LMX theory, and in the light of the contextual elements that have an impact on LMX relationships; the development, maintenance and outcomes of said relationships. The dissertation contributes to the field of leadership by examining LMX relationships as being contextual, and by increasing the understanding about the influence that the context has on leadership both theoretically and practically. The contribution of this dissertation is therefore, threefold: firstly, the dissertation sheds light on the development process of the LMX relationship in the context of a new leader, which has been rarely studied within the field of LMX research. Secondly, the dissertation contributes to the literature on the dynamics of the LMX relationship by investigating the negative events within the LMX relationships through a novel theoretical concept of 'LMX breach'. Thirdly, the study contributes to the field of the international context of LMX by investigating LMX relationships in the context of globalized work, causing physically dispersed environments.

1.2 The aim of the study and research questions

The aim of this study is to investigate how the context of the LMX relationship occurs in, and influences the process and outcomes of the LMX relationship. The three different leadership contexts are defined as follows: First, the context of a newly appointed leader; second, the context of negative events between the leader and the subordinate; and third, the context of globalized work within the leader-subordinate relationship.

The research questions of this dissertation are:

> RQ1: How does the context of a newly appointed leader influence the development process of LMX relationships?
>
> RQ2: What are the characteristics of negative events within the LMX relationship?
>
> RQ3: How is the international context (causing e.g. a physical distance) of the LMX relationship related to well-being outcomes? Specifically:
>
>> RQ3a) How is physical distance (working in the same country vs. a different country) from the leader) and the quality of the LMX relationship linked to satisfaction with the expatriate job?
>>
>> RQ3b) How is short- and long-haul business travel (causing physical distance between the leader and the subordinate), and the quality of the LMX relationship related to general and international business travel related job exhaustion?

The three viewpoints of the dissertation are examined through four individual articles and an essay, summarized in Table 1. Article 1 addresses research question 1. Article 2 provides the answer for research question 2. Article 3 and Essay 4 are aimed at addressing research question 3 (3a & 3b respectively). The theoretical framework, data, analysis approach, and the research questions each article addresses are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Summary of the individual articles and essay

	Viewpoint	**Research question**	**Data**	**Analysis method**	**Theoretical framework**	**Status**
Article 1	The development process of LMX relationships when a new leader enters an organization	1	40 semi-structured interviews (qualitative)	Thematic analysis	Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) theory (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995).	Published in *Human Resource Development International* 16: 5, 575-589.
Article 2	The characteristics of negative events within the LMX relationship	2	336 open-ended answers (qualitative)	Qualitative content analysis	LMX theory (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). Social exchange theory (SET) (Cropanzano and Mitchell 2005).	Published in *Leadership,* Advance Online Publication.
Article 3	Examination of the relationship between physical distance caused by expatriation and LMX (i.e. functional distance) on satisfaction with the expatriate job	3a	N= 290 (quantitative)	Moderated hierarchical regression analysis	LMX theory (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory (Hobfoll 1989).	Published in *Journal of Global Mobility*, 7:3, 255-268
Essay 4	Examination of the relationship between the physical distance caused by international business travel and LMX on general and travel-specific exhaustion	3b	N=569 (quantitative)	Curvilinear and linear regression analysis	LMX theory (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model (Demerouti et al. 2001).	Submitted to the review process of the *Journal of Global Mobility*.

1.3 Structure of the dissertation

This dissertation comprises of two parts. The first part introduces the theoretical framework of the study, the methodological and philosophical choices made, the results of the appended articles and essay, and the discussion and conclusion of the dissertation. The first part begins with an Introduction (Section 1) where the background of the study is explained, followed by the aim of the dissertation and the research questions are presented. The theoretical framework of the study is discussed in Section 2 which presents the theory of LMX and offers a discussion on the contextual elements of leadership. After this, the methodological choices of the study are discussed in more detail in Section 3. The results of the articles and essay are summarized in Section 4. Theoretical and practical contributions, limitations of the study, and guidelines for future research avenues are considered in Section 5.

The second part of the dissertation comprises the four individual articles and essay that form the empirical foundation of the dissertation. Article 1 and Article 2 are single authored publications. Article 3 is co-authored with Liisa Mäkelä and Vesa Suutari. The original idea of the study (the physical distance between leader and subordinate, e.g. through global career) was proposed by Kangas (the Candidate), and the manuscript was further developed with Kangas, Suutari, and Mäkelä who was the first author of the paper and had the main responsibility of writing and conducting the statistical analysis of the study. Essay 4 is co-authored with Liisa Mäkelä, Jussi Tanskanen, and Milla Heikkilä. The original idea of the paper was established by Kangas (distance within the LMX relationships), and the manuscript was further developed with Mäkelä, Tanskanen, Kangas and Heikkilä. Mäkelä and Tanskanen were the first and second authors of the paper and mainly responsible for writing the paper and conducting the statistical analyses. In Article 3, Kangas had a major role as a second author, and in Essay 4, she was the third author.

2 LEADER-MEMBER EXCHANGE WITHIN CHALLENGING CONTEXTS

This section will concentrate on the theoretical aspect of examining leadership through leader-subordinate dyads within different leadership contexts. First, the contextual elements of leadership are discussed. After that, the relational viewpoint of leadership is examined more thoroughly by way of leader-member exchange (LMX) theory. The three viewpoints of LMX in different contexts (new leader, negative events, and globalized work) are then discussed in more detail.

2.1 Contextual view on leadership

It has been stated that leadership is not produced in a vacuum, but rather influenced by outside actors, situational factors, and the context the leadership process occurs in (e.g. Johns 2006; Liden & Antonakis 2009; Oc 2018). Leadership should be understood as a co-created, incremental process that is constructed in and from the surrounding context (Osborn, Hunt & Jauch 2002). The influence of context on leadership is not a novel stream of research, and the earliest notions of situational context and leadership were dissected through the development of contingency theories. However, the main emphasis of those theories was on finding the perfect fit or congruence between leader traits, behaviours, and certain situations (Fiedler 1978; Fiedler & Garcia 1987). More recently, the interest of scholars has turned towards understanding leadership as being embedded in its context, and to explaining the leadership process through contextual elements (e.g. Johns 2006; Oc 2018; Osborn et al. 2002). Therefore, contextual elements may have an effect on what kind of leadership is influential in a given context (Liden & Antonakis 2009), and can be seen as either explaining or influencing the leadership process and the relationships between variables (Liden et al. 2016; Oc 2018). Context has also been used to explain the varying outcomes of leadership (Johns 2006), although the influence context has on leadership is seen as an understudied area (Porter & McLaughlin 2006). Moreover, there is no uniformed consensus on what actually constitutes the leadership context (Ayman & Lauritsen 2017; Oc 2018).

In previous literature, the leadership context has been described as "*situational opportunities and constraints that affect the occurrence and meaning of organizational behaviour as well as functional relationships between variables. Context can serve as a main effect or interact with personal variables such as disposition to affect organizational behaviour*" (Johns 2006: 386). Moreover, context has been synonymized with the terms of situation and contingency (Ayman

& Lauritsen 2017). Therefore, the context can be seen as being a situation of some sort, but the importance of individual actors that construct the social reality (context included) should be more thoroughly studied (Grint 2005). On an abstract level, the context might constitute the national culture, legislative decisions, or the business environment of the organization. On an organizational level, the context may compose of physical structures of the organization, or the organizational culture and climate (Oc 2018; Johns 2006). However, it has also been proposed that one facet of context is the occurrence of particular events (Johns 2006: 401), for example an organizational crisis or a new CEO taking charge (Johns 2006). However, investigating this aspect of context is challenging since studies are seldom timely enough to capture such events.

The context of leadership can be studied on different analytical levels, for example national, organizational, team-level or individual. However, as leadership is often seen to be produced on a dyadic level, the context of leadership should be viewed from the viewpoints of the respective dyads (Liden et al. 2016). The leader-follower relationships can be seen as highly relational, and thus should be examined in their social contexts (e.g. Wech 2002). For example, successful socialization is often linked to relationship development within the social context (e.g. Jokisaari 2013). The development process of dyadic relationships has also been seen as being influenced by contextual elements (e.g. the behavioural differences of actors) stemming from the social context (Nahrgang, Morgeson & Ilies 2009). In addition to behavioural differences shaping the social context of the relationships, elements such as group cohesion or demographic characteristics of the members are seen as elements of the social context. Therefore, social contexts and the leader-follower relationships they are embedded in are important, and previous studies have considered the role of, for example, the parallel dyadic relationships the parties have (Vidyarthi, Erdogan, Anand & Liden 2014), and the consideration of one's own standing through social comparison among the work group (Hu & Liden 2013) in predicting different outcomes. However, the influence of the social context the leader-follower relationships are embedded in (Regts et al. 2018), as well as the complex contexts surrounding the leader-follower relationship should be further studied (Liden et al. 2016). In addition, the role of the dyadic relationships in different contexts (e.g. the quality of the LMX relationship neutralizing or strengthening the influence of some conditions) should be studied more closely (Day & Miscenko 2015).

In the research of leadership contexts, one dimension that has been recognized is the context of change. This might constitute major changes at an organizational level or in the business environment of the organization, but also constitutes inter-organizational changes such as CEO or leader succession (i.e. new leaders taking charge) (Johns 2006). However, on a dyadic level, the change context created by middle and lower managers' transitions might be more significant, and these elements should be given more research attention (Lam et al. 2018), especially given that these situational contexts have been seen as uncertain, complex, and challenging (Lam et al. 2018).

One context that has been seen as challenging for leadership is the context of crisis (Johns 2006). This might be explained as an organizational level crisis, but it should be noted that the crisis might also take place within the dyad, for example, in form of shocks or disputes. This context can be seen as being constructed through interactions, and, for example, negative events (e.g. Endrissat & von Arx 2013; Korsgaard et al. 2002). In previous literature, a context of negative events has been identified, and the leader's attributes (e.g. open communication and showing concern) has been seen as influencing on how trust towards the leader was perceived within those contexts (Korsgaard et al. 2002). Moreover, in the face of negative events, the social context should be considered as it might influence the perceived severity of the incidents (Ballinger & Rockmann 2010). For example, in contexts of negative events, the individuals are often reflecting their perception about the events within the social context, and through a social comparison of the fairness of the leader's actions. Furthermore, the perception of the just or disrespectful conduct of the leader can be seen as shaping the justice climate of the social context (Liden et al. 2016).

The physical context within which the leadership occurs can be seen as important. The elements of the physical context can be, for example, elements related to the physical environment the work is conducted in (e.g. décor, lighting), or the actual physical distance between parties (Oc 2018). The influence of physical distance on leadership has been seen to influence the leadership process to a great extent, even creating a situation in which effectively leading people is demanding. For example, it has been shown that a physical distance between leaders and followers might neutralize the positive influence of leader behaviour (e.g. Howell & Hall-Merenda 1999).

In previous literature, the presence of different leadership contexts has been recognized. For example, leadership in extreme contexts that constitute one or more extreme events, contexts involving extensive or intolerable magnitudes of consequence (Hannah, Uhl-Bien, Avolio & Cavarretta 2009: 898), or a context of war (Grint 2005) have been studied. However, not all challenging situations and contexts are extreme. Leaders and subordinates might face situations and contexts that challenge their usual way of working and the effectiveness of leadership. Following the logic of Grint (2005), there is often some sort of problem to be solved in the process of leadership. However, while the problem might be simple to solve, in some cases, the context provides a challenging element through its uncertainty or complexity. For example, contemporary organizational life often presents challenges for the leadership process due to changing roles and tasks, complex social networks, and new forms of leading people that are emerging due to virtualization and globalization (e.g. Liden et al. 2016). In the next section, the dyadic process of leadership is examined through the lens of leader-member exchange theory.

2.2 Relational view on leadership: The Leader-Member Exchange theory

It has been stated that the relationship between the leader and their follower is one of the most crucial in an organization, and the positive outcomes of a high quality leader-follower relationship have been well documented in leadership literature (e.g. van Breukelen, Schyns, & Le Blanc 2006; Graen & Uhl-Bien 1995; Yukl, O'Donnell, & Taber 2009). One of the most cited theories that addresses the relational view of leadership is the Leader-Member Exchange (later LMX) theory (e.g. Graen & Uhl-Bien 1995; Liden & Graen 1980; Sparrowe & Liden 1997). Originating from VDL (vertical dyad linkage) theory, the LMX theory is founded on the dyadic interaction and exchange between the leader and each of their subordinates. The LMX theory is firmly based on social exchange theory (SET), and the role making model of leadership (Graen & Uhl-Bien 1995). LMX relationships between the leader and each of their subordinates are seen as unique, and varying in quality and rate of exchange. The expectations within an LMX relationship about the conduct of the other party or rate of exchanges have been linked to the development process of the LMX (Liden et al. 1993; Wayne, Shore, and Liden 1997). Moreover, expectations that predict the quality of mature relationships (Wayne, et al. 1997), as being unmet are linked to lower quality exchange relationships (Maslyn & Uhl-Bien 2001).

LMX relationships range from low-quality relationships that constitute only transactional elements and exchange based on a work contract, to high-quality relationships that comprise a lot of voluntary social exchange, and are perceived as containing a high degree of liking, trust and obligation for each other (Graen & Uhl-Bien 1995). Meta-analytic research on LMX relationships has connected the high-quality LMX relationships to multiple, positive organizational- and individual-level outcomes (Dulebohn et al. 2012; Gertner & Day 1997). For the subordinate, high-quality LMX relationships offer positive career development, higher job satisfaction, and increased organizational commitment, as well as a reduced potential for exhaustion and burnout. Moreover, from the viewpoint of the leader, a positive relationship with subordinates has been seen to decrease the leader's stress and increase his/her job satisfaction.

One important notion of the LMX theory is the multidimensionality of the relationships, constituting social- and work-related currencies of exchange through their dimensions (Liden & Maslyn 1998; Liden, Sparrowe & Wayne 1997; Maslyn & Uhl-Bien 2001). There are four dimensions recognized in previous studies that are seen as 'currencies of exchange' within the LMX relationship. These dimensions are; affect, contribution, loyalty, and professional respect (Liden & Maslyn 1998). These dimensions are often strongly present in high-quality LMX relationships, and reflect personal (affect, loyalty, professional respect) as well as work-related (contribution) aspects of the LMX relationship (Maslyn & Uhl-Bien 2001). Moreover, some research suggests there are sub-dimensions such as liking, commitment and trust that are elements with a more intense presence in relationships of higher quality (Griffith, Connelly & Thiel 2011).

The development process of LMX relationships is conservatively viewed as being rather quick, and the relationship quality is seen as remaining stable over time (Bauer & Green 1996; Dienesch & Liden 1986; Liden & Graen 1980). However, recent studies have made a more thorough examination of the dynamism of these relationships including the possibility of a fluctuation in quality on all stages of the relationship (Cropanzano et al. 2017; Day 2014). As a further consideration, the leadership process is created in the social context of organizations, and more specifically in dyads. There are a lot of interactions within the dyads that create a context for leadership; for example, group composition, differentiation among group members, and organizational fairness from the side of the leader. As such, the social context that LMX relationships are embedded in must be studied more closely (Schyns & Day 2010). It is further important to note that LMX relationships are influenced by both situational and contextual elements. However, these elements and the effect of the situation and context on the LMX process have also been highlighted as areas for further study (Liden et al. 2016). In the following section, LMX relationships are dissected within three different contexts. First, the context of a newly appointed leader is discussed. Then, the context of negative events is dissected, followed by an examination of the context of globalized work within LMX.

2.2.1 Developing LMX relationships in the context of a new leader

One important context within organizational life is the context of a new leader starting a new position, which can be described as being uncertain, complex, challenging, as well as being very stressful (Lam et al. 2018; Levin 2010; Manderscheid & Freeman 2012). Taking charge as a leader in a position is often highly demanding for the leader, as the leader has to take charge and develop leader-subordinate relationships with all of their new subordinates (Denis et al. 2000; Gabarro 2007). Moreover, the situation of a new leader has been described as a shock for the team (Ballinger & Schoorman 2007), and it has been said that the context of a new leader creates a situation where the whole work team has to re-organize and figure out new ways of working (Sauer 2011). The situation is seen as especially demanding if the leader enters the organization from outside (e.g. Schepker, Kim, Patel, Thatcher & Campion 2017). If the new leader fails in their position, the outcomes are often disastrous for the career of the leader, as well as for the organization in terms of e.g. financial losses. Moreover, it has been stated, that in a situation of new leader taking charge, there is an elevated risk for turnover among those subordinates that had a high-quality LMX relationship with the previous leader (Ballinger, Lehman, and Schoorman 2010).

The situation of a new leader taking charge is often complex as the leader is simultaneously expected to observe and learn the prevailing organizational practices (Denis et al. 2000; Levin 2010), and also be assumed or even required to make changes to the ways of working (Lam et al. 2018). It has been said that one of the most important factors for new leaders is the ability to develop intra-organizational links through personal relationships (Gabarro 2007). It has been shown that leaders who are able to develop functional relationships within new organizations (e.g. with the subordinates) are able to take charge and adapt to their new role better, as well as being able to learn needed skills and acquire information about the organization. Furthermore, in a study conducted on subordinate newcomers, it was suggested that LMX relationships play an important role in reducing the psychological strain of organizational entry (Zheng et al. 2016). Therefore, for the new leader, the development process of LMX relationships is of high importance.

Although the importance of high-quality LMX relationships is undisputable, their development process has been rarely studied longitudinally (Nahrgang et al. 2009), and has mainly been viewed from the perspective of a subordinate as a newcomer (e.g. Chen & Eldridge 2011; Jokisaari 2013; Zheng et al. 2016). The development process of the LMX relationship is complex, and includes elements such as the characteristics of the parties involved, mutual liking, and communication frequency (Nahrgang et al. 2009). One predominant aspect of the LMX development is the reciprocal interactions and negotiations taking place between the leader and each of their subordinates over the course of the relationship (Dienesch & Liden 1986). Through these interactions and exchanges, the parties asses the relationship, and also the other party involved. Moreover, LMX relationships have been seen to develop through different stages, usually described as role taking, role making, and role-routinization (Bauer & Green 1996; Nahrgang et al. 2009; Sin, Nahrgang & Morgeson 2009). The process of developing LMX relationships is strongly seen as being tied to the process of trust development, and should therefore be studied in different contexts (Savolainen 2014).

The LMX process is usually seen as starting with initial interactions between the parties when they first meet each other. These initial interactions are often detrimental for the development of the relationship, and might determine the future relationship quality (Bauer & Green 1996). It has also been proposed that previous experiences and encounters could influence the relationship with the new leader (Ballinger et al. 2010; Ballinger & Schoorman 2007). Moreover, the expectations that the newcomer has about their anticipated organizational support has been seen to influence their LMX development, and subsequently for example, their turnover intentions (Zheng et al. 2016). After initial interactions, relationships between the leader and subordinate start to develop through further interactions and cycles of exchanges, usually initiated by the leader by offering a task or assignment to a subordinate. The process is built on social exchange, and includes the exchange of tangible and intangible resources (Cropanzano & Mitchell 2005). These cycles have an impact on the perception of the other party's capability and willingness to accomplish their assigned roles and tasks. In a previous study, the trustworthiness of the newcomer (especially the leader) has been called into question, and it could be that the conduct of the leader is seen as inappropriate and violating the expectations of behaviour that might undermine the possibility of trust developing between the parties (Sauer 2011).

The LMX process involves a mutual assessment of each other's abilities and performance. In addition to exchanges related to professional elements such as work tasks and information related to work, the interactions and exchanges on a personal level might increase, leading to a relationship that is more personal (Bauer & Green 1996). If the newcomer is occupying a leader position, it has been seen as focal for them to successfully manage impressions, seek feedback from subordinates, and to deal with the expectations of subordinates (Manderscheid & Ardichvili 2008). After the first two stages of developing the roles, roles become routinized, and the relationship is often seen as mature and stable. If the relationship develops to a stage of high mutual trust, liking and obligation, it could be perceived as a high-quality LMX relationship. Although the development process of LMX relationships has been seen as being rather fast, recent studies on newcomer LMX indicate that the development process might continue for a longer time (Zheng et al. 2016). Moreover, although the LMX development process has often been viewed as being rather unidimensional and stable, there have been suggestions that the process is in fact non-linear in nature (Kelley & Bisel 2014). It has further been proposed that the process might also be dynamic, and influenced by affective events or conflicts in all of stages of the relationship (Cropanzano et al. 2017). Therefore, LMX relationships are examined in the next section, viewed in the light of negative events related to interactions and exchanges between the parties.

2.2.2 The context of negative events within LMX relationships

As noted earlier, there have been calls to investigate the dynamic side of the LMX relationships, and one aspect that has been neglected in previous studies is the nature of the dyadic relationship over time. Moreover, the aspects of the deterioration of the leadership quality or the re-determination process of LMX relationships would merit from further empirical studies (Liden et al. 2016). LMX relationships have been portrayed as developing linearly and staying stable, however, things don't always go smoothly, and negative events (e.g. conflicts, disagreements and poor communication) between the leader and subordinate are possible (Korsgaard et al. 2002). These negative events might trigger a loss of trust within the dyad (Brower, Schoorman, & Tan 2000; Grover, Hasel, Manville & Serrano-Archimi 2014; Savolainen et al. 2014), and eventually cause a negative change to occur in the relationship, and also to the follower's perception of the LMX (Griffith et al. 2011).

Prior research proposes that conflicts on a relationship level can lead to a range of negative work-related outcomes (Jehn 1997; Langfred 2007), such as adverse effects on subordinate wellbeing and turnover intention, as well as giving rise to the subordinate having negative feelings about the leader (Game 2008). However, these vertical conflicts, as well as their antecedents, are only scarcely studied in the literature (Andiappan & Treviño 2010; Ismail, Richard & Taylor 2012; Xin & Pelled 2003). Such negative events might occur during everyday communications and exchanges between the leader and follower (Day 2014), and this process can be explained with the help of social exchange theory (SET), which is one of the central tenets of LMX theory, and helps to explain the behaviour that occurs within organizations (Cropanzano & Mitchell 2005; Sparrowe & Liden 1997). In a positive social exchange process, the voluntary exchanges between individuals are seen as reciprocal and interdependent actions, and through a sense of obligation, an individual responds to favourable treatment by another with positive responses or by returning favourable treatment in some manner (Cropanzano & Mitchell 2005).

An LMX relationship can be seen as developing through cycles of micro-level interaction processes between the leader and the subordinate (Hofmans, Solinger, Choi & Judge 2019), and also being altered through the interactions and exchanges taking place between the parties (Brower et al. 2000). For example, the exchange relationship might change due to a particular exchange event with a strong emotional or instrumental context, but such events have not yet been fully characterized (Ballinger & Rockmann 2010). Moreover, there might be negative events in the interactions between the leader and subordinate, although research on such dyadic conflicts within an LMX interaction context remains scarce (Kacmar, Bachrach, Harris & Noble 2012: 44). Moreover, while the roots of a positive exchange cycle have been studied, the situations that trigger poor conduct and a negative exchange cycle have only been studied to a considerably lesser extent (Cropanzano et al. 2017).

An important notion of the SET, as well as the LMX theory, is the exchange of valuable, tangible and socio-emotional resources between actors (Cropanzano & Mitchell 2005), further distinguished as having personal or professional characteristics (Sheer 2015). One important viewpoint on social exchanges between the leader and subordinate are the commodities that are being exchanged, e.g. money, information, goods, status, service, and affiliation (Wilson, Sin & Conlon 2010). For example, the actions of a leader might spark a sense of perceived obligation, leading to a positive response from the side of the subordinate. Consequently, they might return such perceived support with a higher degree of commitment. What must be noted is that the leader usually has far more possibilities to offer especially tangible elements such as a pay raise or bonuses. Subordinates, on the other hand, often have resources to exchange in terms of higher performance and support for the leader. This exchange can be mutually beneficial, for example where the leader is able to provide pay rises in exchange for a subordinates' increased performance, or the parties might exchange work-related information. From a more personal perspective, the leader might offer empathy or some other kind of socio-emotional resources for their subordinates (Wilson et al. 2010). Moreover, it must be noted that exchanged resources also include elements such as trust and fair treatment (Liden & Maslyn 1998; Scandura 1999).

The social exchange process can be seen as becoming bi-directional as social exchanges influence the development process of the LMX, and the developing quality of the relationships is likely to impact on future exchanges (Sheer 2015). Moreover, the value of the exchanged commodities defines the quality and level to which the relationship will develop (Wayne et al. 1997). In the social exchange process, a pivotal exchange action is described as an initiating action, and it can be either positive or negative (Cropanzano et al. 2017; Eisenberger, Lynch, Aselage & Rohdieck 2004) and determine the course of the relationship. However, the social exchange relationship might also be influenced later on through anchoring events. For example, there might be negative exchange events that are marked by an extreme emotional and instrumental context, and which influence the relationship quality even in a mature relationship. These anchoring events might not only change the relationship, but also the way that following events are perceived (Ballinger & Rockmann 2010: 373).

There are multiple situations in which the exchange relationship between the leader and follower might be compromised. For example, unprofessional conduct on the part of the leader (e.g. bullying from the side of the leader) is perceived as a negative anchoring event. Moreover, the parties have expectations of each other, as well as expectations of the rate of exchanges that take place between them (Liden et al. 1993; Maslyn & Uhl-Bien 2001; Wayne et al. 1997). The subordinate, especially in high-quality relationships, might expect a certain kind of conduct, for example, substantial support from their supervisor (Lester, Turnley, Bloodgood & Bolino 2002). Furthermore, in cases where the leader is seen as lacking empathy or perceived as incompetent by the subordinate, the trusting relationship between the parties could be compromised (Grover et al. 2014).

Trust is defined as "*a psychological state comprising the intention to accept vulnerability based upon positive expectations of the intentions or behavior of another*" (Rousseau et al. 1998: 395). Trust can be seen as being built through communication and interaction, and it has been said to be one of the most important constructs within organizational relationships (Savolainen & Häkkinen 2011) such as leader-member exchange relationships (Schriesheim, Castro, and Cogliser 1999). However, there are situations in which trust can be destroyed (e.g. Grover et al. 2014). Destructive interactions and communications with the leader offer an important insight into this context (Fairhurst & Connaughton 2014), and it has been said that poor communication practices lead to distrust and breaches of trust. Moreover, injustice (Dirks & Ferrin 2002), workplace bullying (Savolainen et al. 2014), betrayal, supervisory incompetence, lack of caring, deception or an abuse of power (Grover et al. 2014) were found as behaviours leading to trust deterioration in a leader-subordinate relationship. Although the probability of serious trust deterioration has been linked to the earlier stages of the relationship (i.e. tenure, or trust reservoir: Lount et al. 2008; Andiappan & Treviño 2010), trust deterioration is also possible in high-quality LMX relationships (Scandura & Pellegrini 2008). Moreover, breaches of trust can be seen as influencing the overall climate of the workgroup, causing damage even on an organizational level (Savolainen et al. 2014).

Two kinds of trust breaches have been identified; those that are recoverable, and those that are not. Although minor breaches of trust are often recoverable, these events are often found to accumulate, leading to a more serious deterioration of trust that might not be recovered (Grover et al. 2014). The notion of how trust has been broken is important when determining the possibility of trust restoration (Schoorman et al. 2007). In addition, an important aspect is at what stage of the relationship trust is breached, and when trust is breached very early on, trust breaches are seen to be more destructive and harder to repair (Lount et al. 2008). Moreover, trust repair is seen as being highly dependent on the actions of the person violating or breaching trust (Grover et al. 2014). One important reconciliation tactic is an apology (Tomlinson et al. 2004). Additionally, the timeliness and sincerity of the apology, the past relationship history, and the probability of a future violation have an effect on the willingness to reconcile (Tomlinson et al., 2004). However, if the trust within the relationship cannot be restored, the relationship might be terminated (Grover et al. 2014; Savolainen et al. 2014).

Unjust or unequal conduct of the leader in, for example, the case of resource division might be considered as threatening the exchange relationship, and this connects LMX relationships to the social context of other relationships within the workgroup (Omilion-Hodges & Baker 2013). Subordinates might, for example, believe that their leaders are accountable for exchange inconsistencies in the team and organizational settings, and be dissatisfied with the leader's distribution of resources (Anand, Vidyarthi & Park 2015). However, one important element of LMX is the fact that the leader develops relationships that vary in quality, and rate of exchange between subordinates within the same work group (called LMX differentiation) differs (Liden et al. 2006; Vidyarthi et al. 2010). The research findings on the outcomes of LMX differentiation are contradictory, and LMX differentiation has also been linked to positive outcomes. However, the notion of high LMX-differentiation (i.e. relationships varying substantially in quality existing within the work group) might lead to a process of social comparison and a perception of unfairly distributed resources. LMX differentiation has been linked to lowered follower satisfaction and well-being (Hooper & Martin 2008), however, studies on the negative impact of the differentiation beyond the LMX dyad remain narrow (Tse, Lam, Lawrence & Huang 2013).

Differentiation and the perception of justice can be seen as being intertwined with the psychological contract perceived by the follower, which is an implicit exchange agreement between employee and employer (e.g. Rousseau 1995). The psychological contract can embrace both legal contracts and the subjective expectations of the employee (Suazo, Martínez & Sandoval 2009). This contract can be compromised by unfulfilled promises, whether founded on the subjective perception of the employee or an actual breach of contractual terms (e.g. Conway & Briner 2005; Hecht & Allen 2009). Although psychological contracts are formed between the employee and their organization, the immediate manager can be held responsible for the realization of the employee's employment contract, including any promises the employee perceives the organization has made and the obligations the employee believes it may have (Guest & Conway 2002; Parzefall & Coyle-Shapiro 2011). Within the literature, the role of psychological contract breaches on the deterioration of LMX quality has been identified as an area that should be studied more carefully (Liden et al. 2016). As examples of these contexts; the immediate manager is usually the person distributing rewards and resources within the organization, and subordinates will assess the extent to which their psychological contract is fulfilled depending on their perception of how fairly that distribution process is being implemented (Dulac, Coyle-Shapiro, Henderson & Wayne 2008).

If leaders fail to fulfil the obligations the employee expects of them or the organization, both the leader-follower relationship and the employment relationship might suffer from a loss of trust (Grover et al. 2014; Restubog & Bordia 2006), leading to a psychological contract breach (e.g. Morrison & Robinson 1997; Robinson & Rousseau 1994). Trust losses in interpersonal relationships have been seen as severe, possibly leading to termination of the relationship (Savolainen et al. 2014). Subordinates who feel their justified expectations of reward have not been met by their employer can feel they have been unjustly treated (Hollander 1978). The perception of a breach of psychological contract has been identified to be formed in a processual manner, in that it is based on exchange events within the employer-employee relationship (Conway & Briner 2005; Parzefall & Coyle-Shapiro 2011). Moreover, a perceived breach of the psychological contract may relate to work assignments or the work itself, as well as to any expectations related to the exchange and interaction that takes place in the work relationship (Morrison & Robinson 1997; Parzefall & Coyle-Shapiro 2011). Such perceived breaches thus provide an evident link to LMX theory, and connect LMX relationships to a wider organizational context. The process of negative events is presented in Figure 1.

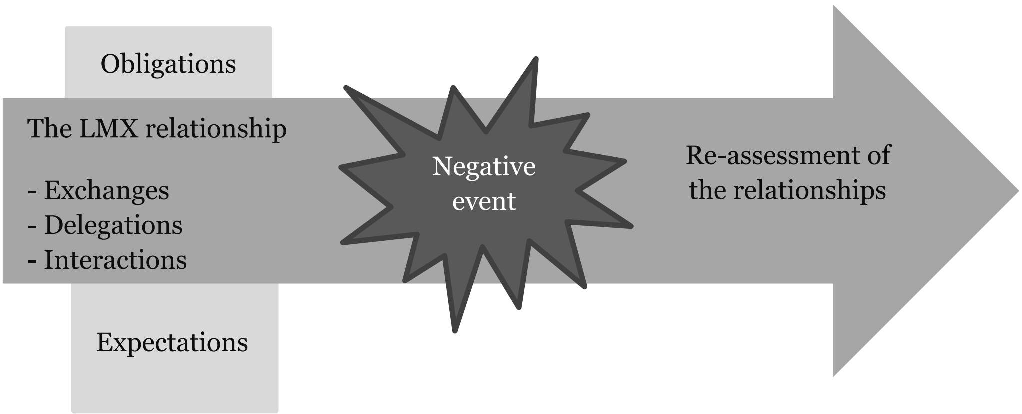

Figure 1. The process of negative events

2.2.3 The work wellbeing outcomes of LMX relationships in the context of globalized work

Due to globalization, the increased need for the international mobility of skilled employees has grown (De Cieri, Cox & Fenwick 2007; Collings, Scullion & Dowling 2009). These international workers are for example expatriates, people who reside outside their home country owing to their work (see Brewster et al. 2014), or international business travellers, are all seen as an important asset for the company (Bonache, Brewster, Suutari & Cerdin 2018; De Cieri, Cox & Fenwick 2007; Collings, Scullion & Dowling 2009). However, it can be stated that globalized work increases the demands of one's job, and this might pose a risk for the wellbeing of international workers (Mäkelä & Kinnunen 2016; Nurmi & Hinds 2016). The internationalization of work can be seen as increasing the physical or temporal distance between the leader and subordinate. Due to this increased distance, the individuals may have a lower degree of access to important organizational resources such as information and decision making possibilities (e.g. Breu & Hemingway 2004; Nurmi 2011), and also experience isolation and loneliness (Burkholder, Joines, Cunningham-Hill & Xu 2010; Rezaei, Shahijan, Valaei, Rahimi & Ismail 2018). Moreover, it has been seen that individuals physically distant from their leader have the least access to information and supervisory support (Nurmi 2011: 131).

It has been said that the one of the most important resources in an organizational context is indeed the relationship with the leader (Schaufeli & Taris 2014). The relationships with the leader (i.e. the LMX relationship) can therefore be viewed as a resource, and in previous studies, the high quality LMX relationship has been recognized as one of the focal resources for an individual (Erdogan & Liden 2002). A high quality LMX relationship can be viewed as a resource that is highly valuable for individuals (Harris, Wheeler & Kacmar 2011). On the other hand, low quality LMX relationships are strongly linked to a narrower distribution of resources such as supervisory support and information (e.g. Gertner & Day 1997). Furthermore, the demands linked to international work and the resources of one's job (e.g. high-quality LMX) have been linked to work wellbeing in a globalized work context.

In this thesis, three perspectives of wellbeing are examined in the context of globalized work. The positive side of wellbeing in the context of globalized work was studied through satisfaction with an expatriate job. Job satisfaction is defined as being a positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job or job experiences (Locke 1976: 1300). However, in previous studies, the importance of international work context specific indicators of wellbeing have been acknowledged because general measures may not capture the specific issues that affect that kind of work (Mäkelä & Kinnunen 2016). The focus in previous literature has been on expatriates' general job satisfaction (Bonache 2005; Froese & Peltokorpi 2011), but in this study (Article 3) the context specific indicator of wellbeing was satisfaction with an expatriate job. Furthermore, the well-being of international business travellers (IBTs) is studied in regard to general and travel-specific job exhaustion. Job exhaustion is a central dimension of burnout, and refers to feelings of strain and fatigue that occur due to a person's work (Maslach, Schaufeli & Leiter 2001; Salmela-Aro et al. 2011). As a context specific indicator of wellbeing, international business travel related exhaustion (referring to feelings of strain and fatigue that occur during (or due to) international business travel) were examined.

Two widely adopted theoretical frameworks used to study work wellbeing are the Conservation of Resources (COR) theory (Hobfoll 1988; Hobfoll, Halbesleben, Neveu & Westman 2018), and the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) theory (Bakker et al. 2014; Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner & Schaufeli 2001). The main notion of the COR theory is that having or gaining valuable resources is related to wellbeing, and the lack or loss of resources leads to stress. Moreover, loosing valuable resources influences the individual even more than gaining them (Hobfoll 2001). The valuable resources an individual is able to obtain and maintain, however increase their ability to cope with stressful situations (Hobfoll et al. 2018). In previous studies, social support (e.g. a high-quality LMX relationship) widens the pool of other resources for the individual, as well as offering a possibility to replace and reinforce resources that are lacking (e.g. due to the physical distance of one's supervisor) (Hobfoll 1988). Moreover, those individuals who are in possession of greater resources are better able to cope with resource loss, as well as having an increased ability to gain more resources. However, if the individual is not able to gain sufficient resources, or experiences some minor and chronic resource loss, despite significant resource investment, a negative wellbeing process might be initiated (Hobfoll 2001).

The JD-R theory comprehends job wellbeing as a result of two processes: a health impairment process or a motivational process. A health impairment process emerges when the demands of one's job (e.g. an extensive amount of international business travelling) are felt to be overwhelming and straining, leading to impaired work wellbeing (e.g. exhaustion), and through that, leads to decreased organizational outcomes such as lower performance (Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner & Ebbinghaus 2002). In the motivational process, the resources of one's job (e.g. a high-quality LMX) lead to better work wellbeing (e.g. job satisfaction), and through that, better organizational outcomes (e.g. better performance) (Bakker et al. 2014; Breevaart, Bakker, Demerouti & van den Heuvel 2015). Moreover, job resources such as a high-quality LMX have been seen to buffer the negative effects caused by job demands, and those subordinates with access to multiple job resources are more capable of coping with straining job demands (Bakker et al. 2014).

In previous studies, the importance of supervisory relationships in the context of expatriates is indisputable (Benson & Pattie 2009; Pattie, White & Tansky 2010). It has been suggested that a high-quality LMX relationship between the leader and the expatriate follower is important for the job satisfaction of the expatriate, in particular when the local supervisor is located in same country as the expatriate during their stay (Boyd & Taylor 1998; Froese & Peltokorpi 2013). Moreover, different kinds of social support positively influence the adjustment of the expatriate to their new environment (Bhaskar-Shrinivas, Harrison, Shaffer & Luk 2005; Lee 2010), and the level of adjustment, in turn, relates to the job satisfaction of the expatriate (Gudmundsdottir 2013). However, from the perspective of leadership, expatriation might pose a challenge for leader-follower relationships, for example if the expatriate is located in a physically distant location (Benson & Pattie 2009). This poses a challenge also for relationships between the expatriate and his/her own leader, if their leader is located in another country than themselves. However, there is only limited research on expatriates and the physical distance from the leader, but the link between the physical distance of expatriates and their mentors (also equated with the supervisory relationship) has been examined (Carraher, Sullivan & Crocitto 2008; Zhuang, Wu, Wen 2013), and the situation of having a mentor who is physically distant (e.g. residing in the home country) has been seen to have a negative relationship to job satisfaction among expatriates (Carraher et al. 2008).

The physical distance might also pose a challenge for international business travellers (IBTs), although this stream of research has been scarcely studied. In previous studies, the intensity of travel (e.g. the number of business travel days and duration of travel) in the context of international business travel has been studied, and linked to the wellbeing outcomes of IBTs. For example, the intensity of travel has been linked to an increased risk of physiological and psychological problems, as well as raising the risk of job exhaustion among IBTs (Striker et al. 2000; Bergbom et al. 2011; Patel 2011; Burkholder et al. 2010; Mäkelä et al. 2014). However, physical distance should also be taken into account, as the longer the duration of trips and the further away the destination of IBTs, the greater might be their distance from the leader. This can be seen as limiting the availability of important resources gained from the leader, so negatively influencing the wellbeing of the employees. In one previous study, a statistically significant positive correlation was found between supervisor support and satisfaction with work-related travel (Mäkelä, De Cieri & Mockaitis 2015). Nevertheless, in that study, the regression analysis showed that family support contributed to IBTs' satisfaction with work-related travel, but supervisory support did not. However, the nature of leadership is more comprehensive, and constitutes other areas than just supervisory support, for instance through the existence of high-quality LMX relationships. Employees in high-quality LMX relationships are seen to receive more information (Sias 2005), instrumental help, and also emotional support (Hsu et al. 2010) from the leader. These factors can be seen as a buffer from the negative effects (e.g. job exhaustion) of intensive business travel.

To conclude, in the context of globalized work, the connection between leadership and the wellbeing of international workers such as expatriates and IBTs has only scarcely been studied in previous literature. It seems that the leader is often a source of valuable resources important for the wellbeing of the subordinates, and therefore, this connection warrants further research. Especially, the issue of physical distance between the leader and the subordinate is a factor that has rarely been taken into account.

3 METHODOLOGY

In this section the methodological choices of the research, as well as research settings are discussed in more detail. Moreover, the philosophical foundations of the dissertation including ontological and epistemological assumptions are examined. After that, the analysis of the data of the papers, research quality, and methods employed are described.

3.1 Philosophical foundations

There are many philosophical and methodological choices that guide the research process. Through philosophical and methodological stances, the researcher will denote how the study is positioned in the research field. The philosophical foundations of the study can be dissected through the concepts of ontology, epistemology and methodology. Ontology and epistemology create a view of how reality and knowledge are seen, what is the reality, and how it is formed (Burrell & Morgan 1979). Ontological perspectives can be divided into subjective and objective, indicating whether the reality is created as is there being a single truth (objective), or whether the truth is constructed, for example, by individuals and contexts (subjective) (Burrell & Morgan 1979; Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008). Epistemology, on the other hand, is concerned about how reality can be known, and what are the sources and limitations of that knowledge. It asks whether knowledge is something that can be real and hard, or is the knowledge based on experience, and thus highly subjective and essentially personal in nature (Burrell & Morgan 1979). Epistemology indicates for example, the rate of interpretation needed to find out the truth (Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008). These philosophical assumptions therefore guide the methodology of the study conducted (Burrell & Morgan 1979).

This dissertation aims to discover the influence of context on leadership, as investigated through Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) theory. It concentrates on how the different contexts investigated in this study influence on both the people experiencing them, as well as the relationships between variables. Therefore, this dissertation adopts a viewpoint of both qualitative and quantitative research methods, which can be seen as complementing each other, and providing results that could not been comprehended using only one method (Jack & Raturi 2006). It has been said that the use of multiple different ways of collecting and analysing research data strengthens the research findings. These may include variations in people, time and space (Jack & Raturi 2006). In this dissertation, both qualitative and quantitative research methods were conducted. Moreover, the data collected included both longitudinal as well as cross-sectional data. Moreover, the data of the dissertation was collected using multiple methods. A qualitative single-case study was carried out, as well as survey studies through which two distinct quantitative data sets were conducted, in addition to extensive qualitative data. However, it can be said that the qualitative and quantitative research methods differ in their ontological and epistemological stances, and this should be acknowledged when multiple research methods are used.

The qualitative parts of this dissertation are seen as adopting a constructionist approach, which takes into account subjective and shared meanings. The qualitative parts of the dissertation interpret the experiences of the individuals in certain contexts (i.e. the situation of a new leader and the situation of negative events), and how the reality was subjectively constructed. The interest of this research component was on how the individual comprehends and interprets certain situations and events. Constructionist assumptions build on hermeneutical and phenomenological backgrounds, concerned with subjective and shared meanings (Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008). Moreover, it has been said, that quantitative approaches often adopt an epistemological standpoint of positivism, which sees knowledge as something that can be measured empirically. These positivist assumptions try to predict and explain what occurs in the world, and search for causalities and regularities (Burrell & Morgan 1979). However, more recently there have been calls to integrate the strengths of qualitative and quantitative research methods, rather than comparing them. This has led to a consideration of a pragmatic paradigm (e.g. Morgan 2007). The central notion of pragmatism is that theories are contextual, and in addition generalizable, and it is said that "*its emphasis on transferability offers a paradigm that can revise previous or create new disciplinary theories based in particular context but still generalizable to others*" (Shannon-Baker 2016: 331). Therefore, the overall focus of this study is based on an interpretive nature of knowing the truth, with some emphasis on the pragmatic paradigm of knowledge.

3.2 Qualitative research data and analysis

The data for the two qualitative papers included in this dissertation was collected using two different methods. The data for the Article 1 was collected longitudinally, as part of a single case study. The data for the Article 2 consisted of extensive qualitative data, collected through an open question which was a part of a large-scale survey.

Data collection of qualitative data

The data collection of the Article 1 was conducted longitudinally over approximately one year, in a situation of a new leader entering the organization. This case study was selected due to the unique nature of the case; namely, a new leader entering the organization as an outsider. The aim was to study the development of the newly established leader-follower relationships over a certain period of time. In this study, an outside leader entered an organization in which leaders were traditionally selected from within the organization. The organization was a large Finnish company working in the logistics industry. The new leader was a woman, where previous leaders had traditionally been men. She was middle-aged, and the leader's new team was male dominated. The team comprised of 29 people, of which 25 were men. The occupational role of the subordinates was homogeneous, and each of the interviewed employees had the same hierarchical relationship with the leader.

This study was conducted as a part of a bigger research project aiming to study knowledge development in general in multiple organizations. The data collection process included interviews with the new leader (theme interviews), and also with subordinates (semi-structured interviews). Additionally, a managerial development intervention was conducted by two members of the research group during the process, including managerial coaching and observations by the facilitators about the situation. The managerial intervention conducted in the first phase after the initial interviews of the subordinates was informal in nature, including coaching-like discussions with the leader, based on the concerns and thoughts subordinates had raised during their interviews. The conducted interviews varied from 15–90 minutes in duration, were conducted face-to-face, and were recorded. In total, 40 interviews were conducted within the timespan of the study.

The data collection process was conducted in three phases, and the process is presented in more detail in Figure 2. The first phase took place before the leader started in their new position. At this stage, all 29 subordinates and the new leader were interviewed. Moreover, a coaching session and observations of the new leader were carried out. The second stage of the data collection took place when the leader had been in the new position for approximately five months, and the leader was interviewed at the time. After the leader had been with the organization for eight months, the leader and a convenience sample (n=9) of the subordinates were re-interviewed. The participants were selected on two main selection criteria; the first one was intention of gaining a sample as heterogenic as possible. Therefore, subordinates of all ages and different sexes were interviewed. Another important selection criterion was that the subordinates interviewed in the follow-up interviews participated in the first interviews since this study is longitudinal. The number of subordinates was restricted to a maximum of 10 by the organization due to resource constraints, and unfortunately, one subordinate was unable to take part in the re-interviews.

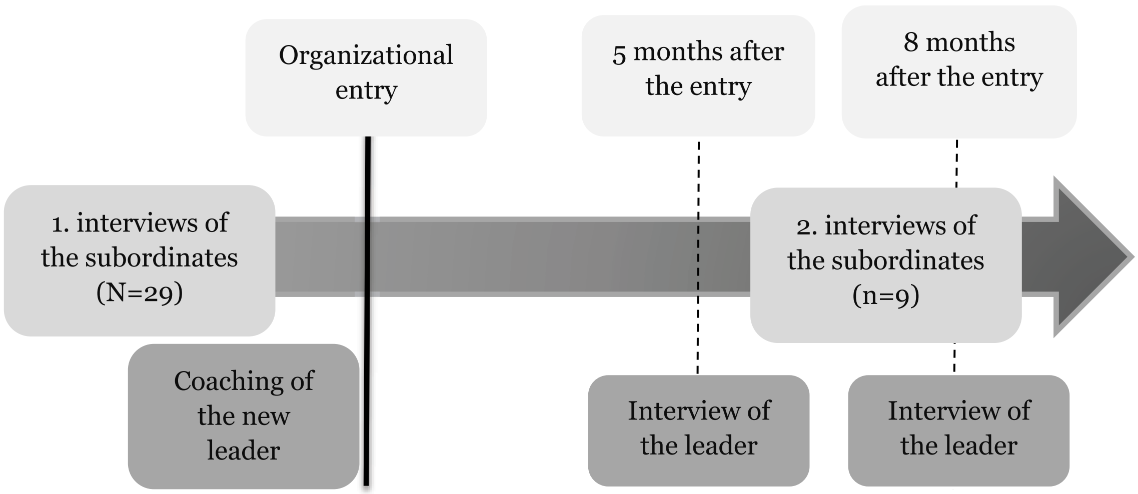

Figure 2. The interview process of Article 1.

The data of the Article 2 was collected over the period of 2011-2013, by obtaining responses to an open question. There were 1,701 survey answers, including 386 individual answers from the respondents to the open-ended question. The open question was part of a larger survey study focused on themes such as work wellbeing, leadership, and work performance. There were five Finnish organizations involved in the study, operating in the public and private sectors, and working in the fields of logistics services and early childhood education services. Two specialist organizations operated in the insurance and pension sectors. 83% of the respondents answering the open ended question were women, and the mean age of the respondents was 43.4 years. They had been working in their current organization for a mean of 10.8 years, 61% had an elementary or secondary level educational background, and 39% had higher level education.

A one-way ANOVA analysis was conducted to compare the age of informants who responded to the open-ended question with those who had not. The Welch's test was used as the variances differed significantly according to Levene's test (F = 11.498, p = 0.001). The analysis revealed that the means were significantly different in the response groups regarding age (F (1, 639.678) = 8.649, p = 0.003). The means comparison shows that those who answered the open-ended question were a little older (mean 43.4) than those who did not answer (mean 41.3). Due to a non-normality of data, a Mann-Whitney U test was used to compare employment years in the corporation between the two response groups. However, there were no statistically significant differences seen between those who responded (Mdn = 6.92) and those who did not respond (Mdn = 6.00) (U = 218728, p = 0.600).

The differences between response groups regarding gender (women vs. men) and education (elementary or secondary level education vs. higher education) was examined using cross-tabulation and the chi-square test. Cross-tabulation indicated that women (29%) were significantly (χ^2 (1) = 47.632, $p < 0.001$) more active in responding than men (13%). Moreover, those who were highly educated (32%) were significantly (χ^2 (1) = 20.226, $p < 0.001$) more active in responding to the open-ended questions than people with a lower educational background (21%).

The open question that the data was collected with was included in the part of the large-scale questionnaire which investigated subordinates' thoughts on their leader and their supervisory relationships, with questions based on the LMX-UVA scale developed by Tanskanen, Mäkelä and Viitala (2019). After that, there was a question related to trust losses in LMX relationships arising from negative events occurring between a leader and follower. The exact question was: "Have you, at some point during your career: a) lost trust in your supervisory relationship, b) fallen out with the supervisor permanently, and/or c) sought to exit the supervisory relationship for reasons related to the supervisor?". After answering the question, the informants were asked to recall and describe those negative events with an open answer, ensuring that the events were retold in their own words (Jackson & Trochim, 2002).

There were some important points to consider for using open questions to collect data. First, the research subject was highly delicate, and through open questions the informants could be offered with greater anonymity, encouraging them to honest answers (Erickson & Kaplan 2000; Jackson & Trochim 2002). Moreover, they were able to take as much time needed to answer the question in a private setting. Furthermore, the method provided the researcher with quite an extensive amount of qualitative data on individual incidents. Most of the responses varied from being a few words to several sentences, while some informants provided longer accounts. Those answers that were shorter than one sentence or did not answer the question directly were eliminated, leaving a total sample of 336 responses.

Analyses of the qualitative data

The data of the two qualitative papers of the dissertation were analysed using thematic and content analysis methods. The need for qualitative methods in leadership studies has been confirmed (e.g. Parry et al. 2014), and both content analysis (Martin et al. 2013; Schilling 2009; Treviño, Brown & Hartman 2003), and thematic analysis (Hyde et al. 2009, Kiffin-Petersen, Murphy & Soutar 2012) have recently been used in management research. Qualitative research methods such as thematic analysis have previously been applied to studies of the LMX relationship (Kramer 2006). Moreover, the use of qualitative content analysis in studying LMX relationships and for example the process surrounding the dynamics of the relationship, has been called for (Schilling 2017).

There are many similarities in these two approaches, including for example, the philosophical background, consideration of context, as well as a search for themes (Vaismoradi, Turunen & Bondas 2013). The rationale for using qualitative methods is to understand a particular phenomenon from the perspective of those who are experiencing it (Vaismoradi et al. 2013: 398). Thematic analysis aims to systematically identify and organize data into patterns or themes that uncover the underlying nature of the phenomena (Braun & Clarke 2012). Thematic analysis is one of the key methods in qualitative research, and a highly flexible one that is suitable for use with different kinds of data (Braun & Clarke 2006). Additionally, thematic analysis is an appropriate method for capturing complexities of meaning within textual data (Guest, MacQueen & Namey 2012: 11), and encoding qualitative material (Boyatzis 1998).

In qualitative content analysis, the goal is to “provide knowledge and understanding of the phenomenon under study” (Downe-Wamboldt 1992: 314), and content analysis can be used to interpret textual data and uncover underlying themes and patterns (Hsieh & Shannon 2005). Qualitative content analysis is an appropriate tool for analysing vast amounts of textual data, to recognize patterns and frequencies. Moreover, content analysis allows the researcher to quantify the data in addition to qualitatively investigating it (Grbich 2013). Therefore, this analysis method was chosen because the amount of data to be processed (addressed in Article 2) was large. The data was analysed using latent content analysis, which allows more interpretation on the part of the researcher, and seeks to discover underlying meanings from what has been said (Elo & Kyngäs 2008).

The analysis processes

The data for the first article was collected through a qualitative case study, and it should be noted that the selection of a case study was not simply a methodological choice, but rather a choice that reflected the focus of the study (Stake 2005). As the aim of the study was to examine a complex social phenomenon in its context (i.e. a new leader entering an organization), the rationale of using a qualitative interpretive case study method can be justified (Eisenhardt & Graebner 2007). When conducting an interpretive case study, the goal is to achieve an in-depth view of the phenomena through longitudinal examination (Walsham 1995). As the specific context of the study was of importance, as was obtaining an in-depth understanding of the actions and thoughts of the participants, a qualitative case study method afforded an appropriate research avenue (Stake 1995).

When conducting a qualitative case study, the process of analysis often starts very early on in the process, and even during the data collection process (Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008). The data supporting this study were analysed by applying abductive logic, and the preliminary codes were predetermined loosely according to the appropriate theoretical model. The analysis was conducted partly with the assistance of QSR Nvivo software. First, indications of prior-to-entry experiences were searched for from the coded data. The subordinates were interviewed prior to the entry of the new leader, and the interviews were carefully analysed. At this stage of analysis, the data was examined with intentions of finding stories and conceptions about the period prior to the organizational entry of the new leader. At the second stage, the organizational entry period was examined. Again, the interviews and stories of the new leader were examined, and the experiences and thoughts of the subordinates were compared and contrasted with the thoughts of the leader. At this stage, the data was coded with the intention of finding indications of the conceptions that lay behind the development process of the development of LMX. At the third stage of the analysis, the feelings and thoughts of the leader and subordinates were examined through the concepts of the development of higher LMX relationships and the feelings of the new leader in regard to being an insider. Next, patterns were identified, and placed into categories, from which themes arose concerning the development of the new leader's relationships.

The credibility of the study was ensured by discussing the themes with two researchers who carried out the intervention. The two researchers had collected the first round of data, and moreover, had familiarized themselves with the data collected by the author prior to holding the discussion on themes. Specifically, the discussion revolved around the data findings, and involved reinforcing the conclusions and observations related to the themes drawn by the author.

The data presented in the second article was analyzed using qualitative content analysis, partly with the use of QSR Nvivo software. The first phase of the analysis process was to scrutinize and breakdown the data, and then conduct content analysis to code the open-ended questions to highlight differences and similarities. Qualitative content analysis often starts from being close to the text, and moves towards obtaining an understanding participants' experiences (Graneheim, Lindgren & Lundman 2017). The data was open coded, which involves carefully reading the data and simultaneously making notes (Elo & Kyngäs 2008). During the open coding process, the emphasis was on identifying interesting features of the data, and marking parts that indicated a potential category. Each reported incident was a unit and was coded. The codes were constantly compared to determine whether the code would fall into an existing category, or form a new category. These categories reflected *behavioural examples of the incidents*, and were connected to the dimensions of the LMX, for example, "disrespectful comments about the subordinate's personal characteristics" (revealing affect), or "giving a promised task to a friend" (revealing loyalty). Therefore, the research interest lay in identifying the features of the incidents in relation to the dimensions of the LMX.

Next, those categories that were connected or seen to overlap were merged into potential themes with conceptual similarities. As a result, eight potential themes such as bullying, favouritism, and a lack of support and information were developed. The themes were distinct, yet broad enough to summarize the ideas comprised within the text segments (Attride-Stirling 2001: 392). As a final result, three main theoretical themes were created from the potential themes, in which the patterns identified were reflected against the literature-based analysis of LMX breach to portray the types of LMX breach that had been experienced by the specific informants. At this stage, the extracts that supported each theme were read carefully once more, and found to confirm the coherence of the themes (Braun & Clarke 2006). Moreover, the incidents of each theme were counted to provide knowledge on their frequency and the extent of the themes.

Evaluating the research quality of qualitative data

The appropriate way to evaluate the quality of qualitative methods has been a topic of debate, and it has been proposed that the trustworthiness of the study is an aspect that should be evaluated (Lincoln & Guba 1986). Furthermore, it has been proposed that the quality of a qualitative study should be measured using the following criteria: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Guba 1981). The qualitative parts of this dissertation are next evaluated through these criteria.

It has been said that one of the most important determinants of the trustworthiness of the qualitative study is its credibility referring to the internal validity of the study (Guba 1981; Lincoln & Guba 1986). There are multiple ways of ensuring the credibility of a qualitative study, including elements such as well-established research methods, random sampling, and triangulation. In this dissertation, two distinct qualitative data were collected. The first data set (Article 1) was collected as a single case study with 40 interviews in total. One element of the credibility of the study is acquainted with the organizational settings and situation, defined through the case study settings of the study. Moreover, there was triangulation in terms of research methods (interviews, observation), as well as multiple researchers observing the situation and conducting the interviews within the organization. Both of the qualitative data sets included a wide range of informants. Especially, the qualitative data set of the second qualitative study (Article 2) included over 300 individual textual accounts. The research project has been scrutinized by colleagues, as well as by peers and academics as the work has been presented for example, in scientific conferences. All of these methods have been proposed as important in confirming the credibility of a study (Shenton 2004).

The transferability of results is connected with the external validity of the results, indicating to what extent the findings of the study can be applied in different situations. However, due to the nature of qualitative studies, this is often impossible (Shenton 2004). One important observation of transferability is that the researchers should offer sufficient details about the context of their findings. Due to the nature of the first qualitative study (Article 1) being a case study, the context of the study is important, and is widely explained. In the second qualitative study (Article 2), the context is provided through an explanation of certain phenomena. However, it is important to note that the aims of the qualitative studies conducted in this dissertation were not to produce generalizable results, but rather to evoke new research avenues and interpretations of the respective situations, which have rarely been studied.

When assessing the dependability of a qualitative study, an important viewpoint is to provide a detailed report about the research process with all of its stages. This ensures that the study might be replicated, albeit that the same results are unlikely to be gained (Shenton 2004). The processes of both of the qualitative research projects featured in this dissertation were explained, including the methods that were implemented. In theory these research projects could be duplicated, however, such duplication is unlikely to gain the exact same results, as the informants will always be influenced by issues related to their own personal traits and beliefs, as well as the surrounding context.

As a final consideration, the confirmability of the results of a study refers to the objectivity of the researcher, and that the results of a study truly reflect the experiences the study's informants intended to convey. To reduce the degree of the possible investigator bias of the researcher, triangulation can be seen as an important tool, as well as a detailed presentation of the methods used (Shenton 2004). Therefore, the research methods were clearly and in detail presented. Moreover, collegial triangulation was used to reduce the possible investigator bias of the researcher.

3.3 Quantitative research data and analysis

Data collection of quantitative data

The first quantitative data set was collected and reported in Article 3. The data was collected in the year 2016, in co-operation with the Finnish trade union TEK (Academic Engineers and Architects in Finland). The survey was sent by TEK as an e-mail invitation to each of its 1,168 members shown as living abroad on its member register. A total of 305 survey responses were returned. Four responses were excluded because the respondents no longer worked abroad, and an additional 11 because the respondents did not work while living abroad, leaving a final number of 290 eligible responses (response rate 24.8%). Of the respondents, 76.7% were male, and the average age of the respondents was 42.3 years. In this study, the respondents were expatriates and the three most common host countries were Germany (16.2%), USA (14.1%), and Switzerland (9.3%). The respondents lived in a total of 51 host countries. The majority of respondents (61.4%) reported that they were working abroad on their own initiative, and 35.9%had been sent by their employer (2.8%of respondents did not respond to this question).

In Essay 4, the second quantitative data set of the dissertation was collected in 2015 from a Finnish software and service company operating in several countries and employing over 13,000 staff. The sample (N=569) was collected through a web-based survey, and was directed to those employees who had been on at least one business trip during the previous year. The sample was multinational, and comprised employees of 21 nationalities, living in 18 countries (listed in Table 2). From the respondents, 77% were men, and the average age of the respondents was 42.45 years. 80% reported being married or cohabiting, and 65% had children. The organizational position of the respondents was in the middle hierarchy for 40%, and slightly more respondents had lower-level positions than those having higher level positions. A majority of the respondents had worked in a role requiring travel for some time (10.16 years, SD=8.18).

Table 2. Nationalities and countries of residence of the respondents of Essay 4.

Nationality	Country of residence
Austrian	Australia
British	Austria
Chinese	China
Croatian	Czech Republic
Czech	Denmark
Danish	Estonia
Dutch	Finland
English	France
Estonian	Germany
Finnish	India
German	Latvia
Icelandic	Lithuania
Indian	Netherlands
Latvian	Norway
Lithuanian	Poland
Norwegian	Russia
Polish	Sweden
Russian	United Kingdom
Slovak	
Spanish	
Swedish	

Measures and analysis of quantitative data

In Article 3, the Leader-member exchange quality (i.e. the functional distance) was measured using an eight-item LMX scale based on LMX-UVA scale (Tanskanen et al. 2019). Sample items included: “We trust each other” and “We can genuinely listen to each other’s opinions.” Responses were given on a five-point Likert scale anchored with strongly disagree (1) and strongly agree (5) and the Cronbach's α for the scale was 0.96.

Physical distance was measured with the question "Does your immediate supervisor mainly work with you [...] (select one of the following options): a) in the same country and in the same office, b) in the same country but in some other office, c) in Finland, d) in some other country." As the aim of this study was to explore whether the supervisor was located in the same country or in a different country to the expatriate, and for the purposes of analysis, responses were recoded as a binary variable with the first two options as 1= same country, and last two as 0=another country.

Satisfaction with the expatriate job was measured through four items modified from the satisfaction scale used in the context of international business travel (Mäkelä & Kinnunen 2016; Westman, Etzion & Chen 2009). These items were modified to match the expatriate job context (sample item: "I like working as an expatriate"). The items were rated on a five-point Likert scale anchored with completely disagree (1) and completely agree (5) and the Cronbach's α for the scale was 0.754.

The control variables implemented were gender, age and length of stay in the current country (in full years). Additionally, organizational position was included as a control variable because it has previously been shown that the effects of leader distance may vary depending on the organizational level (Antonakis & Jacquart 2012). Expatriation type was also controlled for in the study model.

In Article 3, the research hypotheses were tested by using a moderated hierarchical regression analysis using IBM SPSS Statistics. The following analysis procedures were conducted: first, the control variables were entered at step one to control for their effects. The second step was to enter the indicators of physical and functional distance. Finally, at the third step, the interaction terms of physical and functional distance were entered.

In Essay 4, the duration of international business travel was measured with the question: "How many international short-haul business travel days have you had during the past 12 months?" and "How many international long-haul business travel days have you had during the past 12 months?" The answers to both questions were round numbers and the total number of international business travel days was calculated by adding the two numbers together.

Leader-Member Exchange quality was measured with an eight-item LMX scale based on the LMX-UVA scale of Tanskanen, Mäkelä and Viitala (2019). Sample items included: “We trust each other” and “We can genuinely listen to each other’s opinions.” Responses were given on a 5-point Likert scale anchored with strongly disagree (1) and strongly agree (5) and the Cronbach’s alpha for the scale was 0.95.

Job exhaustion was measured by using three items from the Bergen Burnout Inventory scale (BBI–15) (Näätänen et al. 2003; Salmela-Aro et al. 2011). Respondents were instructed to think about their work in general while assessing the items: “I am snowed under with work”, ”I often sleep poorly because of the circumstances at work”, and “I constantly have a bad conscience because my work forces me to neglect my close friends and relatives”, Responses were scored on a 6-point scale anchored with never (1) and all the time (6). The Cronbach’s alpha for job exhaustion was 0.77.

Because the aim of the study was to specifically capture perceptions concerning international business travel related job exhaustion, respondents were instructed to think specifically about their international business trips while addressing the above-mentioned three items with a similar scoring (1–6). Items were: “When on a business trip, I am snowed under with work”, “I often sleep poorly because of the circumstances while I’m on a business trip”, and “I constantly have a bad conscience because my work trips force me to neglect my close friends and relatives”. The Cronbach’s alpha for international business travel related exhaustion was 0.67, which is slightly below the recommended 0.70 value. However, the inter-item correlation values varied between 0.346 and 0.464 which fit the recommendations made by Briggs and Cheek (1986).

The control variables implemented were gender, age, children (no/yes), marital status (married/cohabiting; living separately; single), organizational position (1–10, high to low), experience of work requiring business travel (in years), and domestic business travel duration during the past 12 months. These were controlled because there is evidence that they are related to the outcome measures used in this study and could be possible confounding factors (Feldt et al. 2009; Ho & McKercher 2014; Jensen 2013; Mäkelä & Kinnunen 2016; Purvanova & Muros 2010; Salmela-Aro et al. 2011).

The research hypotheses were analysed with curvilinear and linear regression methodology, using IBM SPSS (IBM Corp. 2016) to estimate descriptive analysis and linear models. The analysis was conducted in three phases. First, descriptive statistics were analyzed. Second, the functional forms (e.g. threshold effect) of the studied relationships were examined. The control variables were adjusted in all models. Moreover, the interactions between international business travel duration and LMX were examined. In the third phase, linear connections were parametrized and their effects were presented as regression coefficients.

Evaluating the research quality of the quantitative methods

Reliability and validity are common methods of quality evaluation in quantitative research. Reliability refers to what extent the measures of the study are accurate, and whether the results would be same if repeated under the same conditions on different occasions (Heale & Twycross 2015). Validity, on the other hand, refers to whether the conclusions drawn from the study offer a realistic and accurate representation of what happened (Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008). In other words, if the scale measures what it was intended to measure (Heale & Twycross 2015). One of the most common indicators for determining the reliability of a study is the Cronbach's alpha measure, which determines the internal consistency of an instrument. Cronbach's alpha is a number between 0 and 1, and reliability is assured with score of 0.7 or higher (Heale & Twycross 2015). In the scales of the two quantitative studies of this dissertation, the Cronbach's alpha was over 0.7, with the exception of one scale. However, the reliability of the scale was determined by ensuring that the inter-item correlation fitted the parameters recommended by Briggs and Cheek (1986).

In the third article of the dissertation, two-factor and single-factor models for LMX and satisfaction with expatriate job scales were compared, in order to control for common method bias. A single-factor solution produced a poor fit, with the data supporting the idea of two separate concepts and showing that common method bias was not a significant problem in our study. In Article 4, a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted with Mplus 8.0 (Muthén & Muthén 1998–2017) with robust maximum likelihood estimation to examine the validity of the measurement model. The CFA model included measurements of LMX, job exhaustion and international business travel related exhaustion. The error variances between matching job exhaustion and international business travel related exhaustion items were freed to also be estimated as between the items "Our cooperation advances both of us in performing at work" and "We can openly handle even challenging issues with each other" from the LMX scale. The modified measurement model produced a satisfactory model fit regarding standard fit indices ($\chi2(70)=267.50$, $p<.001$; RMSEA=.074; SRMR=0.037; CFI=0.934; TLI=0.914) and their cut off values, where RMSEA and SRMR <0.080 and CFI and TLI >0.900 indicate a satisfactory fit (Hu & Bentler 1999).

The method biases can also be controlled in other ways, for instance by careful planning of study procedures prior to the data collection (MacKenzie & Podsakoff 2012: 543). The common method bias can be reduced, for example by developing scales that are simple enough to understand and complete, and by ensuring that study participation is voluntary. In the quantitative studies of this dissertation, participation was voluntary, and the questions used in the surveys were simple. Moreover, many of the scales used in the quantitative studies were previously validated and used, which ensured the validity of the measures selected.

It is important to evaluate the generalizability of the research findings, which means that broad conclusions about the phenomena studied can be drawn, based on the research findings of a particular study. The results of the study are readily transferable to other contexts and actors (e.g. Polit & Beck 2010). It has been said that the generalizability of the results is the major determinant of the quality of a quantitative study (Kerlinger & Lee 2000). To ensure the possibility to evaluate the generalizability of the findings, the characteristics of the study sample were described in detail in the published articles. Moreover, in these studies two different data sets were used, and the sample was heterogeneous as there were two different groups of participants undertaking globalized work (expatriates and IBTs). Furthermore, the data set featured in Essay 4 was collected from multiple countries, with multiple nationalities, therefore offering results that can be more reliably generalized in the context of globalized work. However, the samples of both studies were collected in western countries, and therefore the generalizability of the findings should be limited to countries with the same or similar cultural and economic backgrounds.

The study settings of the quantitative papers was cross-sectional in design, and consequently no reliable conclusions on the causal direction of the effects could be drawn. It would therefore be beneficial to collect longitudinal data concerning the dynamics of leader-member exchange relationships in order to more comprehensively understand the processes that influence the relationship outcomes. As a second observation, the data collection was based on the self-reports of the informants, which could lead to common method variance affecting our findings. Common method variance causes false internal consistency. However, it has been argued that it is an over-simplification to assume that common method variance automatically affects variables measured with the same method (Spector 2006). Moreover, it is important to take into account, that the employee is the most important source of information on his or her own work situation (e.g. Mostert 2011), and therefore self-reports are justified in the settings of this research.

4 SUMMARY OF THE ARTICLES

4.1 LMX development process in the context of a new leader

The single-authored Article 1: "The development of the LMX relationships after a newly appointed leader enters an organization", aimed to discover the development process of the LMX relationship in the situation of a newly appointed leader. The LMX theory perceives the dyadic relationship between the leader and the subordinate as developing through interaction and exchange processes. However, studies on LMX theory lack the viewpoints of the longitudinal development of the relationship. Furthermore, both the LMX process as well as organizational transitions have so far been studied mainly from the viewpoint of the subordinate. Situations where the newcomer is in leading position have been researched to a much lesser degree, and would merit from further studies (Manderscheid 2008). The article therefore adopted a qualitative, interpretive case study method to examine the complex situation of a new leader entering the organization in this context.

The findings of the article revealed that the process of a new leader taking charge and developing dyadic relationships with subordinates is a complex, multidimensional, and a non-linear process. Moreover, the development process of the relationships is rather lengthy, and it seems that the context of a new leader elongates the process of the relationships to reach their mature stage, also adding fluctuation to the process. In a situation of a new leader taking charge, there are multiple viewpoints to consider. Firstly, the development process is to a great extent tied to exchanges and communication between the new leader and the subordinates. The exchanges are related to formal and informal sides of the relationships, and to comprehending tangible and intangible elements. It can be stated that these exchange processes are pivotal for both the leader and their subordinates. Through the process, the parties are able to acquire needed information about each other, and the new leader will learn how to act in their new position, and what is expected of them. Interestingly, the data indicates that the development intervention conducted helped the leader feel that the staff members were already familiar to them, enhancing the learning and the relationship development process of the new leader before they had started even in their new position. Moreover, through exchanges with the leader, the subordinates were seen to gain access to more extensive resources.

It seems that acquiring information is especially important for the new leader, who is often expected to effectively lead the subordinates and make a change of some kind. As the leader and their subordinates are engaging in a process of exchanging resources (relating to e.g. information or work tasks), they are assessing the others' ability to perform as expected. It seems that for the new leader it is important to establish who they can trust in the new group of subordinates. These trusted interpersonal links are essential for the new leader to be successful in their new position. Moreover, the findings of the study suggested that despite the traditional view of the LMX development process, there was some fluctuation within the process, and there were some negative exchange cycles initiated in which some of the relationships took some backward steps.

The exchanges that take place within the everyday life of the organization will construct the affective relationship between the leader and their subordinates. It became clear that the personal side of the relationship was important, and that everyday communication practices (e.g. informal greetings, etc.) developed the relationship even further. However, it seemed that the subordinates were largely assessing the professional capability of the leader, and how he or she was able to take charge and perform the managerial duties expected of them. What was especially intriguing was that past supervisory relationships, as well as the preliminary expectations of the new leader or the circumstances surrounding their arrival (e.g. an outside leader instead of someone known from within the organization) seemed to have quite a strong influence on the development process of the relationships. Those subordinates with negative preliminary expectations were highly negative at the later stages of the process, and the relationship between them and the leader was difficult. Moreover, these findings suggest that for the successfulness of the new leader, the occurrences and the climate surrounding the change taking place strongly influence the new leader's ability to take charge through the development of interpersonal relationships.

The contribution of this study to the literature on LMX relationships is twofold. First, the study brings the managerial viewpoint on the development of LMX relationships into discussion. The situation faced by a newcomer to a managerial position is demanding, as the leader has to develop many LMX relationships simultaneously. Second, the study scrutinizes the development process of LMX relationships longitudinally. The study revealed the unique context that a leader transitioning into a new position and organization creates. Although LMX relationships are conservatively seen as developing rather quickly into their stable form, the findings of the study indicate that the process is in fact more complex. The new leader has to adapt to all of the required information surrounding their work and their new role, especially if they are entering the position from outside of the organization. Furthermore, the leader is required to develop multiple LMX relationships simultaneously with all of the subordinates.

4.2 What are LMX Breaches?

The single-authored Article 2 titled “Spanning leader–subordinate relationships through negative interactions: An examination of leader–member exchange breaches”, investigated the negative events that take place within LMX relationships. The aim of the paper was to examine the dynamic and processual nature of LMX relationships through negative exchange interactions within the LMX relationship, leading to a reassessment of the quality of the relationship. LMX breach occurs when a party to the LMX relationship perceives that an expectation or promise concerning the conduct of the other party or the content of the expected exchange agreement has been unmet. An LMX breach is realized through the events and interactions taking place between the leader and subordinate, leading to a cognitive sense-making process through which the parties of the LMX relationship reassess the strength of their relationship with the other party. (Kangas 2020) The data (N=336) of the article was collected through responses to open questions, and was analysed using qualitative content analysis.

Throughout the findings of the second article, it became clear that there might be negative events that occur in leader-subordinate interactions, and those events shape the perception that the subordinates have about their relationship with their leader, as well as their opinions about the leader and their actions. The findings indicate that through these negative events, subordinates are re-assessing their own LMX relationship, and whether they can trust the leader in the future. This re-assessment seemed to have an influence on the relationship quality, leading to a deterioration of trust and even a termination of the relationship.

The relationship between the leader and the subordinate is seen as being built on the exchanges that take place between them. As stated in previous research, the LMX relationship is highly connected to the exchange of tangible and intangible resources, and exchanges of those resources. These interactions and exchanges are multidimensional, taking place in varying situations within organizations. The specific negative events were identified as being connected to the affective relationship between the leader and subordinate, the dyadic relationship in the context of other actors, the resources that the leader is able to provide, as well as the professional conduct of the leader. It seems that subordinates hold different kinds of expectations, according which they expect leaders to behave. These expectations are related to the personal behaviour of the leader (e.g. empathy, loyalty, respectfulness), the leader's conduct within the context of other dyads (equity, justice, confidentiality), and the professional side of leadership (the distribution of resources, professional conduct, supervisory support).

The findings indicate that the negative events experienced range from highly personal and subjective, to vertical conflicts that are strongly embedded in the surrounding context. The events were connected to exchanges between the parties, and possibly modifying the course of future exchanges and interactions within the relationship. The findings of the study revealed two kinds of processes, through which the negative events influenced the exchanges the parties engaged in. First, the negative events were perceived as single, anchoring events with strong emotional or instrumental value (following the rationale of Ballinger and Rockman 2010). It seems that even single negative exchange events might change the course of the perceived relationship between the leader and the subordinate. In the context of a negative exchange event, the subordinates might assess the equity of the leader, leading to a social comparison among the work group, and contrasting their own LMX relationship with other dyadic relationships within the group. In addition to negative exchange events, the LMX relationship might suffer from a lack of positive exchange events. This means that the subordinate holds certain expectations about the conduct of the leader, as well as to what the subordinate feels she/he is entitled to according to their own efforts or promises that have been made. For example, the subordinate might feel the relationship lacks the expected support and information expected from the leader. If the leader fails to answer these expectations, the subordinate might feel that the leader has failed them.

Interestingly, the results of the article indicate that the professional role of the leader is especially important for the subordinate. Negative events related to the professional conduct of the leader and the resources the leader provided (or did not provide) were the predominant theme of the experienced negative incidents. Therefore, it is important to comprehend the professional meaning of the leader as the person who the subordinates expect to provide both resources, as well as their professional support. A high-quality LMX relationship is an important resource for the subordinates, and discrepancies concerning the expectation of acquiring professional resources is perceived as highly damaging.

The contribution of the study was twofold. Firstly it makes a theoretical contribution by introducing the breach viewpoint on relationships through the concept of LMX breach. Secondly, the study offers a unique contribution by identifying the characteristics of those incidents leading to an LMX breach in supervisory relationships. Therefore, based on the literature review of the article, a new theoretical concept of LMX Breach was developed, comprising the breach as being developed through discrepancies of unmet obligations and expectations concerning the conduct of the other party, or the exchanges that take place between them. As a result of the LMX breach, a re-assessment of the relationship quality, as well as a willingness to engage in future exchanges might take place. As a result, the relationship might suffer from an extensive trust loss and even be terminated.

4.3 Physical distance increases the satisfaction with an expatriate job of out-group subordinates

Article 3, “Satisfaction with an expatriate job: The role of physical distance and the quality of the LMX-relationship between expatriate and supervisor”, examined the job satisfaction of expatriates as influenced by LMX and physical distance. The article adapts the theoretical framework of conservation of resources (COR) theory, stating that possessing multiple differentiating resources is positively linked to work wellbeing (Hobfoll 2001; 2002). However, high functional and physical distances have been linked to lowered job satisfaction through a conception of lost resources. The article examined the influence of both functional (measured as LMX quality) and physical distance on expatriate job satisfaction, as well as the interaction effect of the two aspects. Although in the article the term ‘functional distance’ was used, in this dissertation introduction the term LMX quality has been adopted.

One of the most distinct features of the international work context might be the physical distance between parties (Avolio et al. 2014; Zander, Mockaitis & Butler 2012). Previous studies have linked physical distance between the expatriate and their mentor to a lowered job satisfaction on the part of the expatriate (e.g. Carraher et al. 2008). In this study, the level of physical distance was defined as working in same (low distance) or different (high distance) country as the supervisor. The functional distance between the parties was examined through the quality of the Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) relationship (Graen & Uhl-Bien 1995), which has been related to job satisfaction (Epitropaki & Martin 2005; Erdogan & Enders 2007) as well as expatriate success (Benson & Pattie 2009; Pattie et al. 2013).

The study data draws from 290 Finnish expatriates, and was analyzed using moderated hierarchical regression analysis. The analysis showed that having a high-quality LMX relationship with the leader was positively connected to the satisfaction with an expatriate job. The physical distance was not directly related to satisfaction with an expatriate job. However, the data analysis revealed there is an interaction effect between LMX and physical distance; whereby among those expatriates whose LMX quality was high, also having a low physical distance increased the satisfaction with the expatriate job. Interestingly, those expatriates who were in a low-quality LMX relationship experienced higher satisfaction with an expatriate job when the physical distance to their leader was also high. Contrastingly, working in another country with the leader in a situation of a high-quality LMX led to lower satisfaction with an expatriate job.

The contribution of this study is threefold. Firstly it brings into discussion the context-specific job satisfaction (in this study the context of international work), which was studied by way of satisfaction with an expatriate job. Secondly, the article contributes to the field of expatriation through the context of physical distance, as this is one dominant feature of an expatriate job. Thirdly, the article makes a contribution to the literature of leadership, emphasizing the pivotal role of the conditions and context in which leadership occurs. Furthermore, from the contextual perspective of physical distance, the article raises interesting questions about the interplay of physical distance and LMX relationship quality.

4.4 Physical distance from the leader protects low quality LMX IBT's from international business travel related exhaustion

Essay 4, titled "Effects of short-haul and long-haul business travelling on international business travelers' job exhaustion - does Leader-Member Exchange relationship quality have a role in that relationship?" investigated the psychological wellbeing of international business travellers (IBTs) through the concepts of exhaustion, and international business travel related exhaustion. The study adapted the theoretical viewpoint of job demands-resources (JD-R) model, in which the duration of international business traveling (short-haul and long haul travel duration causing physical distance) was seen as a demand of one's job, and leadership (examined through LMX) contributed as a resource. Furthermore, the possibility of the LMX relationship as buffering the effects of job demands caused by intense traveling was examined.

It has been stated that intense business traveling is related to negative work wellbeing through, for example, long working hours, time spent in airports and airplanes, and operating in stressful and risky work environments that are common when travelling intensively (Gustafson 2014; Mäkelä & Kinnunen 2016). If the demands of one's work are overwhelming, this may lead to exhaustion. In previous studies, leadership has been recognized as an important job resource

(Harms et al. 2017; Schaufeli & Taris 2014) that increases the job wellbeing, as well as acting as a buffer to the negative aspects caused by the job's demands.

The study data (N=569) was analyzed using curvilinear and linear regression methodology. The results showed a linear relationship between long-duration business travel and experienced job exhaustion, especially international business travel related exhaustion. Moreover, a high-quality LMX was found to be linked to lower levels of both types of exhaustion. The interaction effect revealed that there is an interplay between the LMX quality and international business travel duration. Consistent with the findings of Article 3, the findings of this article reveal that if a person has a low-quality LMX relationship with their leader, then physical distance is beneficial. IBTs who had a low-quality LMX relationship with their leader suffered less from international business travel related exhaustion when the amount of long-haul international business travel days was high. Also in this article, a high-quality LMX was related to impaired wellbeing in the context of high physical distance.

The results of Essay 4 emphasise the importance of considering the international context for wellbeing outcomes. The results of the study revealed that the duration of international business trips has a greater effect on increasing international business travel related exhaustion than general job exhaustion among international business travellers. This finding supports the idea of the matching principle (Chrisopoulos et al. 2010), and the importance of studying context-specific antecedent and outcome variables (Mäkelä & Kinnunen 2016).

The contribution of the paper is threefold. Firstly, the study takes a novel approach to context-specific work wellbeing by studying international business travel related job exhaustion. Secondly, the study revealed different types of business travelling, in terms of short- and long-haul travel duration and using curvilinear study methods, revealed the influence of these aspects on IBT wellbeing. Thirdly, the paper contributes to the literature of leadership by emphasising the importance of the context on the process of LMX and its outcomes.

The summarized results of Article 3 and Essay 4 suggest the importance of a context-specific examination of the LMX relationship. High-quality LMX relationships have been linked with positive wellbeing outcomes in a domestic work context, and the findings of this dissertation extend this rationale to the international work context. The results of Article 3 and Essay 4 show that the quality of the LMX relationship is important also in the context of globalized work, as high-quality relationships are directly related to higher satisfaction with the expatriate job, as well as lower general and international business travel related exhaustion. It seems that the effect of the physical distance between the leader and subordinate is highly dependent on the relationship quality; the results of both Article 3 and Essay 4 indicate that for subordinates that are in a low-quality LMX relationship, a physical distance from their supervisor is beneficial for their wellbeing. On the other hand, those subordinates in a high-quality LMX relationship suffer from lower wellbeing when spending a lot of time away from their supervisor.

5 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The rationale for conducting this study was sparked by the notion that although LMX theory is among one of the most studied leadership theories, there are still viewpoints to consider and further develop. This doctoral dissertation has examined leader-member exchange relationships in different contexts. The aim of the study was to investigate how those contexts influence the development, maintenance, as well as the outcomes of LMX relationships. The contribution of this doctoral dissertation is threefold. Firstly, it reveals the development process of the LMX relationship in the context of new leader, a situation that has rarely been studied within the field of LMX studies. Secondly, the dissertation contributes to the literature of LMX by investigating the dynamics of the LMX relationship by investigating the negative events that occur within LMX relationships through a novel theoretical concept of LMX breach. Thirdly, the study contributes to the field of the international context of LMX by investigating the wellbeing outcomes of LMX relationships in international and physically disperse environments.

This threefold contribution is made by answering three research questions. Research question 1 asks: How does the context of a newly appointed leader influence the development process of LMX relationships? Research question 2 asks: What are the characteristics of negative events within the LMX relationship? Research question 3 asks: How is the international context (causing e.g. a physical distance) of the LMX relationship related to well-being outcomes? This is specifically examined through two further sub-questions that ask: How is physical distance (working in the same country vs. a different country) from the leader) and the quality of the LMX relationship linked to satisfaction with the expatriate job?; and How is short- and long-haul business travel (causing physical distance between the leader and the subordinate), and the quality of the LMX relationship related to general and international business travel related job exhaustion?

These research questions are answered in the following section and the theoretical contribution of the study is established.

5.1 Theoretical and methodological contribution

The main theoretical contribution of the study is placing LMX relationships within a different context, in which the development, maintenance and outcomes are dissected. Therefore, the study answers the calls to contextualize the theory on LMX relationships. There are prevailing views how the LMX relationship is traditionally seen to develop and maintain its quality. The process has been seen as rather quick, and the relationship quality seen to remain stable (Bauer & Green 1996). However, there are only a few studies examining LMX relationships longitudinally (Liden et al. 1993; Nahrgang et al. 2009), and the development process of the LMX has been presented as extremely fast (Liden et al. 1993). The findings of this dissertation offer some contradictory findings on the development process of the LMX. First, the findings reveal that the development process of the LMX is longer than thought, as well as non-linear in nature. The longitudinal research setting of Article 1 is unique, demonstrating the development process of the LMX relationships of a newly appointed leader over the course of approximately one year. Moreover, the article offers a novel viewpoint on the development process of a newcomer LMX, and a viewpoint of the leader in that process. Although the development process of the LMX has been studied to some extent, the context of a newcomer and their LMX development is rare, and existing studies have tended to focus on the context of a subordinate as a newcomer (e.g. Chen & Eldridge 2011; Jokisaari 2013; Zheng et al. 2016).

The findings from the first article offer several interesting viewpoints on the development process of new leader LMX relationships. It seems that the process is long, and starts even before the time that has been previously estimated. Traditionally, the development process of LMX has been seen to start when the parties meet each other for the first time (Dienesch & Liden 1986; Dockery & Steiner 1990). However, the findings of the first article propose that expectations formed prior to the first meeting are crucial, and could even threaten the whole development process of the relationships. This finding is to some extent in line with more recent studies on newcomer adjustment and their LMX development, where the prior expectations were seen to influence anticipated organizational support (Zheng et al. 2016).

However, the findings of Article 1 of this dissertation reveal that especially, the prior expectations of the subordinate group of the new leader might influence the process. It seems that if the attitudes towards the entrance of the new leader were pessimistic, the whole development process of the LMX relationship could be compromised. One possible explanation could be the shock related to change that takes place after the leader succession, especially if the subordinates were satisfied with their former leader. This conforms with the findings of earlier studies on leader succession and LMX quality, where the subordinates' relationships with the formal leader were connected to their intentions to leave the organization after the new leader had taken charge; if the subordinates had a good LMX relationship with the departing leader, they were more likely to leave themselves (Ballinger et al. 2010).

The findings of the Article 1 support earlier notions of the LMX development in general, where the relationships have been seen as developing through sequential interactions and exchanges (Graen & Uhl-Bien 1995). However, it seems that the context of a new leader poses a challenge, as the subordinates have quite strong role expectations towards the new leader. It could be that the role of the leader is to a great extent pre-determined, and that subordinates are reflecting the experiences of past leaders when forming their perceptions of the new leader. However, the findings reveal that for the success of the leader, and their ability to acquire the role of leader and handle related tasks, their LMX relationships with subordinates were focal. This finding is in line with previous studies, where social support and interpersonal relationships have been recognized as an important determinant of newcomer adjustment (Chen & Eldridge 2011), and leader success (Gabarro 2007).

The second contribution of this dissertation is to unravel the process of maintaining LMX relationships. As noted earlier, LMX relationships are seen as remaining stable in time (Bauer & Green 1996). The findings of Article 2 offer some opposite perspectives, by presenting a novel theoretical concept of LMX breach, unravelling the presence of negative events within the LMX relationship that potentially lead to a deteriorated perception of relationship quality and trust between parties. These findings align with the most recent theoretical suggestions of scholars about the change and fluctuation within LMX relationships (Cropanzano et al. 2017; Liden et al. 2016). However, Article 2 offers the first empirical evidence of such events.

Moreover, the study offers a theoretical contribution of viewing negative events in LMX relationships through a concept of LMX breach. Drawing from SET and the breach literature of psychological contract, LMX breach offers a unique viewpoint on the formation of negative events within leader-subordinate interactions. LMX breach was defined through the negative events and interactions that take place within the LMX dyad, comprising of unmet expectations and promises concerning the conduct of the other party, or the content of the expected exchange agreement. The LMX breach leads to a cognitive sense-making process through which the parties to the LMX relationship reassess the strength of the relationship with the other party. Through the concept of LMX breach, the viewpoints of shock and negative events and the effect of such events on the maintenance of the LMX relationship can be empirically dissected.

The results of Article 2 support recent notions about the development of social exchange relationships viewed as being built through an ongoing process of sequential, as well as isolated events. These events occur in the micro level interaction processes between the parties, thorough which they assess the quality and expectations of the exchange (Ballinger & Rockmann 2010; Brower et al. 2000; Hofmans et al. 2019). However, the presence of negative events and shocks within LMX relationships should be noted. The findings of Article 2 also emphasize the importance of expectations on the process of the LMX relationship, aligning with the findings of Article 1 (Kangas 2013). It seems that unmet expectations regarding the exchange and conduct of the leader, lead to feelings of breached trust and obligation. In earlier studies, the expectations of the parties have been recognized as being focal in predicting the future relationship quality, and any possible deterioration of this quality through unmet expectations (Maslyn & Uhl-Bien 2001; Wayne et al. 1997).

Moreover, the findings from Article 2 offer some interesting insights on how the perception of the LMX breach is developed. There were two processes identified through which the negative events took place. First, there were single anchoring events identified as occurring in different levels of exchange. These events were perceived as highly detrimental for the perception of the relationship and the leader. This is in line with previous studies indicating the importance that even single negative incidents within the exchange process might lead the relationship to deteriorate in quality (Ballinger & Rockmann 2010; Parzefall & Coyle-Shapiro 2011). Interestingly, in line with the findings of the first article of the dissertation, the findings of the second article indicate that the lack of positive exchange events could lead to a re-assessment of the perceived relationship quality. Moreover, especially a lack of expected exchanges concerning the professional side of the relationship seemed to dominate the findings. In other words, a lack of resources related to information or support, as well as negative professional respect towards the leader were seen as detrimental and causative for the perceived LMX breach. This finding strengthens the role of the (high-quality) LMX relationship as an important organizational resource (Erdogan & Liden 2002; Han 2010), and emphasises the managerial role expectations placed on the leader by the subordinates. It seems that many of the perceived breaches of the LMX relationship reflected the expectations that the role of leader creates.

The findings of Article 2 also contribute to the calls made to examine dyads in a larger organizational context, for example in contrast to other relationships within the work group. It seems that experienced negative events are often contrasted to other members of the group to determine the equity and just behaviour of the leader. The results showed that the LMX dyads were part of a broader social network, with multiple actors influencing the experience of an LMX breach, which is a finding in line with previous studies of LMX relationships in organizations (Graen & Uhl-Bien 1995; Regts et al. 2018; Sparrowe & Emery 2015). It seems that the subordinates are reflecting their own relationship and even their perception of the leader in contrast with elements of the leader's other relationships within the work group, through events that take place in the course of their daily interactions within the workgroup. The subordinates were contrasting their own standing in the group compared to others, but also evaluating the leader and their conduct in differentiating situations. These findings support previous notions of the importance of social comparison within LMX relationships (Henderson et al. 2009; Hooper & Martin 2008; Hu & Liden 2013), but also offer an interesting viewpoint on the perception of the leader as being influenced by the leader's actions in other dyadic relationships.

In addition to the development process of newly established LMX relationships, as well as the maintenance and change within already established dyads, this dissertation also contributes to the field of LMX by examining the understudied areas of LMX relationships in an international context (Pellegrini 2015). Moreover, the distance within the dyads is considered (Antonakis & Atwater 2002) as it is often an inevitable consequence of working internationally (Avolio et al. 2014; Zander et al. 2012). The distance from the supervisor has been linked to limited resources being provided by the leader, leading to negative well-being outcomes (Golden & Veiga 2008). However, the findings from Article 3 and Essay 4 are to some extent controversial. The findings of Article 3 indicate that the physical distance between the subordinate and the leader was not linked to a lower satisfaction with an expatriate job. However, the quality of the relationship they have (i.e. the functional distance between the parties) was linked to the satisfaction with an expatriate job, therefore fortifying the importance of a high-quality LMX relationship within the international work context, and as an important resource for subordinates. This finding is in line with previous studies that see a high-quality LMX as an important resource (Erdogan & Liden 2002). Moreover, the findings offer an important contribution on examining LMX relationships within the context of expatriation, which have been called for in previous literature (Benson & Pattie 2009; Pattie et al. 2013).

Moreover, the findings of Essay 4 offer a contribution to the field of leadership within the context of international business travellers, which is an understudied area in the literature. In line with the findings of Article 3, the findings of Essay 4 emphasise the role of leadership within the context of international and physically disperse work. The findings of Essay 4 also support the important role of high-quality LMX relationships within the context of international work; namely, those IBTs who have a high-quality LMX relationship with their supervisor experienced less exhaustion (both general and international business travel related exhaustion). These findings (and also those from Article 3) are line with multiple studies linking LMX quality with well-being outcomes in a domestic context (Li, Sanders & Frenkel 2012; Agarwal et al. 2012; Dulebohn et al. 2012; Tanskanen et al. 2019).

However, the connection between LMX and wellbeing seems not to be that straightforward, when the physical distance between the parties is taken into account. The findings of Article 3 revealed that having a high-quality LMX relationship with the supervisor in a situation of high physical distance impaired the job satisfaction of the expatriate. However, for those having a low-quality relationship with the leader, the high physical distance was found to be beneficial for work wellbeing. This finding was supported by the findings of Essay 4, in which subordinates in a low-quality LMX relationship were seen to experience less international business travel related exhaustion when the duration of their long-haul business travel was high.

These findings offer one of the most intriguing insights on the physical distance context for the LMX relationship. It seems that although the influence of physical distance has been linked to a lowered wellbeing of the subordinate, the influence is highly determined by the relationship quality that exists between the leader and the subordinate. In a situation of a low-quality LMX relationship, the physical distance from the supervisor might offer a context in which the wellbeing of the subordinate is in fact improved. Moreover, if the subordinate has a high-quality LMX relationship with the leader, the influence of physical distance is more severe. This finding reflects and supports recent propositions that contextual and environmental surroundings have an influence on the outcomes of LMX relationships, and that in some situations, the high-quality relationship might in fact be burdening for the follower (Bernerth, Walker & Harris 2016).

To conclude, the overall theoretical contribution of the dissertation challenges many prevailing perceptions about LMX relationships (including their development, maintenance and change), as well as offering a unique contribution by examining the influence of the international context on LMX relationships. The dissertation has examined LMX relationships within different contexts, and it can be concluded that these contexts can all be defined as challenging. There are multiple characteristics within these contexts creating challenges for leaders. These contexts shape the development process as well as the maintenance of LMX relationships, create fluctuation and non-linearity within the relationships, and even pose a great risk for the relationship quality to deteriorate or terminate. Furthermore, the findings of the dissertation raise into question the dark side of LMX, and whether the presence of a high-quality LMX relationship might actually be damaging in some situations, for instance in the context of physical distance.

All of these contexts bring into question the instrumental value of leadership, as the importance of the leader's role in dividing important resources and providing supervisory support and information was emphasised. It seems that especially in the contexts portraying challenging elements, this side of leadership is especially important for the subordinates. When considering the leadership literature in general, this study contributes by emphasizing the importance of the context, situation, and actors in leadership. Moreover, leadership should be more firmly comprehended as a non-linear process involving turning points within its lifespan.

In addition, this study offers a *methodological contribution* to the study of LMX relationships. As noted earlier, studies of LMX relationships lack the viewpoint of longitudinal investigations of the relationships (e.g. Liden et al. 2016). Therefore, this study answers this call by investigating the development process of LMX relationships longitudinally. Moreover, scholars have raised questions of investigating leadership through qualitative approaches, and LMX relationships with qualitative content analysis (e.g. Schilling 2017). This study employs qualitative research methods, through which a deeper understanding of the phenomena of leader-follower dyads was achieved. Moreover, it was methodologically valuable to use multiple methods and different kinds of data sets (both qualitative and quantitative), which provided a more comprehensive understanding about the studied phenomenon.

5.2 Practical contribution and implications

In addition to its theoretical implications and contributions, this study offers also practical implications to leaders and subordinates, and the organizational actors who support them. Especially, this study offers a practical contribution to the field of leadership in organizations.

Practical contribution

This study widens the possibility to recognize and understand the challenging situations and contexts that leaders and followers might face in today's changing business environments. First of all, the study contributes by widening the understanding about the context of a new leader taking charge. It must be noted, that the process of a new leader taking charge and adapting into their new role is in many ways different than the process of a newcomer occupying a subordinate role in a team. When a new leader takes charge, in addition to forming interpersonal links and learning the ways of working in a new organization, the leader is often required to make a change of some sort and successfully lead their subordinates. Moreover, it becomes clear that the leader should also consider the expectations of their subordinates, which are to a great extent formed before their entry into the post. Within this study, these expectations about the new leader were seen as detrimental for the development of interpersonal relationships, and subsequently influenced the climate of the team. Thus, the process of a new leader taking charge is multidimensional and complex, as the leader is simultaneously occupying the roles of an organizational newcomer, and also the leader of a work group. Against this backdrop, the importance of organizational support for the new leader should not be ignored.

This dissertation contributes practically to the topic of negative events that occur between the leader and the subordinate, by identifying the characteristics of such events. As in all interpersonal relationships, within the relationship of the leader and the subordinate there might be disputes, quarrels and misunderstandings. It seems that there are a lot of perceptions and beliefs about how the leader should behave and do their job, based on both formed expectations and common sense. It could be speculated that the role of a leader is complex, and subordinates might be over sensitive when forming their perceptions of the leader’s conduct and behaviour. Moreover, it seems that the rationalizing that lies behind perceived negative events is not simple. The subordinates are observing their leader in multiple roles; as a representative of the organization as well as a leader to other subordinates. The leader could be seen as a scapegoat figure, as the leader is often in a difficult position between receiving orders from higher up in the organization, and executing those orders on team and dyadic levels. In addition, it should be noted that the disputes seen in the research of this dissertation were often influenced by surrounding relationships, and that the subordinates were forming their perceptions of the leader through their conduct in other leader-follower relationships.

Additionally, this dissertation offers a practical contribution in helping to understand the context of globalized work. This form of working is growing fast (as are other new forms of work such as virtual work and remote working), and increase physical distance between leaders and their subordinates. These new ways of working are revolutionizing the perceptions about communication and relationships in organizations, as the level of face-to-face contact might be considerably decreased. Developing and maintaining relationships through virtual channels increases uncertainty, and might compromise for example, the leader’s possibility to recognize subordinates that are physically or psychologically exhausted. It could therefore be stated, that the context of globalized work is to a great extent changing the traditional forms of leading people.

Practical implications

An important practical implication is to view leadership as a co-created and dyadic process. The success of the relationship to some extent depends on both parties of the relationship. Through the findings of this dissertation, it became clear that leadership and the role of the leader is important in an organization, and developing and maintaining high-as-possible quality relationships is pivotal. However, leaders should also consider relationships embedded in larger contexts, and understand that challenging contexts (e.g. physical distance) might neutralize the influence of high-quality relationships. Leaders, as well as subordinates, should therefore invest in developing open and honest communication practices with each other, and leaders should encourage honest feedback practices between themselves and their subordinates.

Communication and interpersonal interactions are important considerations for leaders entering into new positions and organizations, and means through which the leader is able to develop and maintain relationships within the new workgroup. Both parties should engage in these processes with as few as possible expectations, and any prevailing expectations should be dealt with. In this process, human resource management (HRM) has an important role. In the situation of a new leader entering an organization, in addition to helping the leaders to learn the formal side of the organization and the tasks that are expected of them, it is of importance to support the development process of their newly established LMX relationships, through for example, addressing the expectations the parties hold of each other and the work/organisational situation. Formal development interventions could therefore be used to enhance the successfulness of the new leader, although the varying organizational contexts should be taken into account in development of such interventions.

Furthermore, the findings of the dissertation acknowledge the occurrence of negative events between the leader and the subordinates. However, recognizing those incidents might be challenging, or perhaps not even possible for the leader. Leaders could strive for improving interaction and communication patterns that would foster an open and free exchange culture. The role of other organizational actors, for example HRM, may be detrimental when dealing with negative events taking place between the leader and subordinates. Neutral channels for open feedback should be provided to permit subordinates to freely express their concerns and perceived negative events, and to foster the development of procedures to address such situations. Moreover, organizations should strive harder to recognize the important role of the leader in overall organizational settings, where the leader acts as an individual actor, but in addition, as a representative of the organization.

The changing organizational environment with a more physically dispersed context presents great challenges for the communication processes between leaders and their subordinates. The leaders should be able to adapt and implement different channels to communicate with their subordinates, from whom they might be physically distant. Especially in an international context, the utilization of modern communication channels such as chats, social media and video conferences should be acknowledged. Moreover, the active role of the subordinate might be emphasised in physically dispersed working environments, and it is important for subordinates to engage in an exchange situation with the leader, and for example by volunteering to undertake projects or tasks for the leader. This viewpoint is also important in modern organizations, in which work is more and more often organized through virtual channels and carried out remotely. Nowadays, work can be done from multiple locations, airports, hotels, home etc. Moreover, working teams have become more and more remote, and global in nature. Leaders must therefore develop new ways to interact and built trust with followers through virtual channels.

The deployment of virtual communication channels when physically far from the leader and colleagues offers a possibility for informal communication, and through that, further the development of the LMX relationship. The development and maintenance of virtual communication channels and applications for working remotely are to a great extent dependent on the HRM practitioners of the organization. Such practices should be supported by organizations, and access to the relevant tools should be easy. HRM should offer training for leaders and subordinates who are physically distant to utilize these applications, and moreover, training could be offered to inform the parties of the challenges that physically distant work might offer, and how these challenges could be dealt with. Additionally, the leader and subordinate might be offered the possibility to conduct physical encounters in the forms of, for example, shared business trips.

The findings of this dissertation reveal that the development and maintenance of leader-follower relationships is an ongoing and dynamic process, influenced by different contextual elements. Moreover, the negative quality of the perceived relationship can be detrimental to working relations, and often influencing the overall wellbeing of the individual, as well their intentions to stay or leave the organization. The challenging context caused by multiple elements in today’s working life should be also be recognised and more strongly comprehended by the organizations, and dyadic parties should be supported to develop and maintain functioning relationships in a full range of contexts.

5.3 Limitations and suggestions for future research

As with all research, this dissertation also has limitations which are discussed next, along with suggestions for future research.

The first limitation of the study is that the majority of the data collected investigated the LMX relationship from a single viewpoint, in this case, the subordinate viewpoint. Only Article 1 addressed the dyadic perspective of the LMX relationship by interviewing both the new leader and the subordinates of the same dyad. The data from Article 2, Article 3 and Essay 4 were all from the viewpoint of the subordinate. This might create some bias in the answers by reflecting only the subordinate's perspective. These (or similar) events should be studied at the dyadic level, in order to gain a more holistic understanding of the phenomena. It would have been interesting to examine the larger network of relationships, for example in the situation of the new leader entering the organization, or the development of the new leader's LMX with their immediate leader. Therefore, future studies should investigate the development process in the light of the larger social context surrounding newly formed LMX relationships.

Secondly, as being qualitative in nature, the findings from Articles 1 and 2 might not be generalizable. Article 1 was conducted as a single case study, and thus offers a limited and highly context-bound view on the process. The contextual elements of Articles 1 and 2 should be taken into account as having an influence on the process. Moreover, the findings of Article 2 are lacking the viewpoint of a longitudinal investigation of the development of LMX breaches. In future studies, researchers could aim to collect data taking into account the context and occurrences prior to and after the negative event that takes place, although the collection of such data could be demanding. Moreover, the development of a scale measuring the LMX breach could be helpful, as it would offer a tool to measure negative events within LMX relationships. In this study, the perceived negative events are presented in retrospect which might alter the memory of the subordinates. However, incidents of strong value are often recalled quite accurately. To gain a deeper understanding of LMX breaches, in-depth interviews could offer further valuable insight.

Although the data of Article 1 was collected longitudinally, the data of Article 2, Article 3, and Essay 4 were collected at one data point. The examination of the LMX relationship in an international context was cross-sectional, and therefore, the causality of the results could not be determined. Thus, LMX relationships would benefit from being studied longitudinally to unravel the true dynamics that lie within them. In answer to calls made by scholars, the possibility of mature LMX relationships changing must be also be considered, and tools should be developed to help us more deeply understand what happens during these processes. One possibility could be employing process study methodologies (e.g. Langley, Smallman, Tsoukas & Van den Ven 2013; Savolainen & Ikonen 2016) that are concentrated to *"how and why things emerge, develop, grow, or terminate over time"* (Langley et al. 2013: 1).

Although this dissertation contributes to many aspects of current LMX theory, there are many further avenues for future research that can be suggested. First, the development process of LMX relationships must be studied more closely, especially in contexts that are challenging, for example, the situation of a newcomer, or establishing new LMX relationships that are marked with physical distance. The changing nature of leadership should also be understood, and leadership, including the development, maintenance and outcomes of dyadic relationships, and leadership in virtual environments (e.g. e-leadership) should be further studied. Moreover, LMX relationships should be studied over a fuller period of time, in relation to their evolution and how the relationships end. Additionally, the role of trust breaches and trust restoration should be studied within the challenging contexts that the LMX is embedded in. Especially, how the trust between the parties is built, for example in virtual and remote work environments, should be given further examination. Moreover, global crises such as the current COVID-19 pandemic could have a major impact on, for example, the need for working remotely and increasing the physical distance between people.

The ever-growing role of globalized work should be acknowledged, and studied more extensively within the field of leadership, especially in regard to the dyadic relationships that exist between leaders and followers. Currently, research on LMX relationships that is embedded in the context of globalized work is still scarce. Future studies should take into account the modernized nature of leadership (for example, due to distant and virtual work), and the influence those forms of work have on the wellbeing of the parties involved. Moreover, the surrounding social contexts of the relationships should be investigated more extensively, such as the situation of two leaders (dual leadership) (Vidyarthi et al. 2014), and also in the global context.

The contextuality of LMX relationships is also an aspect that should be more thoroughly investigated. It seems that the contextual environment of these relationships is complex, and the relationships can be seen as influencing, and being influenced by, the situational contexts that surround them. Furthermore, the findings of this study confirm that the role of LMX relationships within challenging contexts is not passive, but also rather creates the context. The quality of these relationships can be seen as an interactive component in, for example, how the physical distance between the parties is comprehended, and the possible neutralizing of the negative influence of distance. Some calls have been made to investigate the role of the LMX relationship as also constructing the context, and the findings of this study support this notion of a complicating role of leader-follower relationships in different contexts.

To conclude, it can be stated that leaders are facing multiple challenges in today's fast-paced organizations, including changing roles, growing demands and expectations, as well as physically disperse environments. To some extent, the traditional view on leadership needs reconsideration. The role of the leader is changing, as well as changing perceptions on leadership and the demands being placed on leaders. However, in the presented research, it became clear that the managerial role of the leader was important for the subordinates, and the development of dyadic relationships and negative events that occurred within the relationships were tied to resource exchanges and the communication between parties. The nature and quality of dyadic relationships played an important role in each of the challenging contexts addressed in this research. Although high-quality relationships between the leader and follower are often considered to neutralize the challenges that the relationships face, the connection is more complicated and context-bound, shown for example in the context of physical distance. Therefore, it seems that understanding the complex role of interpersonal links within organizations is pivotal in comprehending a successful leadership process.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Subordinates' interview schedule (before the leader entered the organization).

1. Nimesi.
2. Kuinka kauan olet ollut X:lla töissä?
3. Minkälainen paikka tämä on olla töissä?
4. Kun ajattelet tätä työyhteisöä ja työpaikkaa, niin mitä tykkäät täällä olla töissä?
5. Onko täällä jotain erityisiä asioita, mitkä mielestäsi toimii oikein hyvin?
6. Minkälaiset asiat eivät toimi niin hyvin?
7. Miten kuvaisit edellistä esimiestäsi?
8. Mihin tarvitset esimiestä?
9. Minkälainen mielestäsi ylipäätään on hyvä esimies?
10. Jos mietit seuraavaa esimiestä, niin minkälainen tämän pitäisi olla?
11. Mikä mielipiteesi on siitä, että uuden esimiehen paikka on myös ulkoisessa haussa?
12. Minkälaisten asioiden haluaisit muuttuvan, kun uusi esimies tulee?
13. Minkälaisten asioiden haluaisit säilyvän ennallaan?
14. Kun ajatellaan, että esimiehellä on porukka työntekijöitä, mutta sitten tulee aina se henkilöiden välinen suhde myös, että on esimies ja alainen. Niin onko jotain pelisääntöjä mielestäsi, mitä pitäisi olla alaisen ja esimiehen puolelta, mitä pitäisi noudattaa?
15. Onko jotakin sellaista, mitä voisit itse tehdä, kun tulee uusi esimies, jotta asiat lähtisivät mahdollisimman hyvin kaikkien kannalta eteenpäin. Onko jotain, mitä pystyisit tekemään?
16. Tuleeko jotain mieleen vielä mitä ei olla puhuttu, mitkä tämän tyyppisistä asioista jutellessa olisi hyvä nostaa esiin?

Appendix 2. The interview themes for the leader after organizational entry (5 months in the organization).

1. Miten on lähtenyt sujumaan? (5 kk organisaatiossa)
2. Miten on tässä ajassa muuttunut asiat verrattuna ensipäiviin ja –viikkoihin?
3. Mitkä tällä hetkellä ovat tärkeimmät työtehtävät?
4. Millainen on tavallinen työpäivä?
    a. Millaisia aamurutiineja?
    b. Alaisten huomioiminen?
5. Keskustelua alaisten rooleista
6. Miten olet oppinut tuntemaan alaiset?
7. Miten sinut on otettu vastaan?
8. Onko ollut vaikeita tilanteita?
9. Etä- ja lähiryhmät
    a. Muodostuminen
10. Suhteet kollegojen ja oman esimiehen kanssa
11. Työssäjaksaminen
12. Oma työn ja yksityiselämän yhteensovittaminen
13. Odotukset ja todellisuus

Appendix 3. The interview schedule for the subordinates (8 months after the new leader entered the organization).

1. Nimi.
2. Miten asiat on työpaikalla sujuneet sitten viime syksyn?
3. Kun sait kuulla uudesta (ulkopuolelta tulevasta esimiehestä), niin oliko sinulla jotain odotuksia asiasta?
4. Miten X toimii esimiehenä?
5. Miten hän aluksi rupesi toimimaan uuden ryhmän kanssa?
6. Jos vertaat aiempiin esimiehiin, niin miten kuvaisit häntä/ hänen toimintaansa?
7. Tukiko työyhteisö uutta esimiestä?
8. Onko työyhteisö muuttunut uuden esimiehen myötä?
9. Pitäisikö jotain muutoksia vielä tulla?
10. Kuinka aktiivinen olet itse ollut tutustumaan uuteen esimieheen?
11. Onko häneen ollut helppo tutustua?
12. Minkälaista on esimiehen kanssa toimiminen jokapäiväisissä asioissa?
13. Toimiiko esimies kaikkien työntekijöiden kanssa tasapuolisesti?
14. Miten kuvailisit omaa esimies-alaissuhdettasi esimieheen tällä hetkellä?
15. Toivotko että suhde kehittyisi vielä?
16. Viime syksynä, kun tehtiin haastatteluja, niin niiden pohjalta kerrottiin uudelle esimiehelle yhteenvetona jotain asioita teidän työyhteisöstänne, mitkä oli nousseet esiin, mitä toivoitte, että olisi eri lailla jne., niin näkyykö tämä mielestäsi siinä, miten uusi esimies on toiminut työssään?
17. Uskotko että tämä on auttanut häntä sopeutumaan työyhteisöön?
18. Tuleeko mieleen jotain erityisiä tapahtumia tai tilanteita, jotka on vaikuttanut mielipiteeseesi uudesta esimiehestä ja tämän toiminnasta esimiehenä?
19. Onko uusi esimies nykyään jo kiinteä osa työyhteisöä?
20. Mitä siihen vaadittaisiin?
21. Tuleeko mieleen jotain muuta vielä?

Appendix 4. The interview themes of the leader (8 months after organizational entry)

1. Miten on mennyt viime aikoina?
   a. Paremmin, huonommin?
   b. Miksi?
2. Miten olet kerännyt informaatiota työtehtävistä/ työpaikan kulttuurista / oppinut perusasioita?
   a. Kysely
   b. Tarkkailu
   c. yms?
3. Keneltä parhaiten saanut informaatiota?
   a. Keneltä olisi mielestäsi kuulunut saada?
4. Millainen vaikutus oli sillä, että sinulle kerrottiin asioita työyhteisöstä ennen kuin tulit työyhteisöön?
   a. Onko tämä auttanut sopeutumaan?
5. Olisitko toivonut aluksi enemmän tietoa / opastusta jossain asiassa?
   a. Mitä ja millaisessa?
6. Kuka/ketkä olleet avainasemassa sopeutumisessa?
7. Oletko täysin jo X:lainen?
   a. Mitkä tekijät vaikuttaa eniten?
   b. Mitä pitää oppia?
8. Mitkä asiat on tuntuneet vaikeimmilta sopeutumisessa/työyhteisön oppimisessa?
9. Tuleeko mieleen mitään tapahtumia, jotka ovat vaikuttaneet työyhteisöön sopeutumiseesi?
   a. Jotain ”käännekohtia”?
10. Oletko kokenut stressiä sopeutumisen aikana?
    a. Millaiset asiat/ mikä vaihe aiheuttanut tätä?
    b. Mikä helpottanut mahdollista stressiä?
11. Keneen koet, että on tärkeintä luoda suhteita?
    a. Alaiset
    b. Oma esimies
    c. Joku muu?
12. Millaiset suhteet on ollut oman sopeutumisesi kannalta kriittisiä?
13. Miten suhteet on kehittyneet työyhteisössä sitten edellisen haastattelun?
    a. Onko noussut uusia läheisiä suhteita?
    b. Onko jotkut laskeneet ”alaspäin”?
    c. Miksi?
14. Mitkä on olleet suhteiden kehittymisen kannalta tärkeitä asioita?
    a. Millaisten ihmisten kanssa on tutustunut helpommin?
    b. Ominaisuudet?

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The development of the LMX relationships after a newly appointed leader enters an organization

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This study examines the development of the Leader–Member Exchange (LMX) relationships of a newly appointed leader. The aim of the study is twofold; first to shed light on the development process of LMX relationships when a new leader enters an organization; and second, to examine the effect of a managerial development intervention that was implemented. The study was executed as a longitudinal single-case study in which a leader and their subordinates were observed and interviewed over a period of approximately one year. The study's contribution is first to reveal how several critical incidents occurring during the first year of the tenure of a new leader affected the relationships the leader formed. The second contribution is to show how the development intervention supported the leader and the development of the LMX relationships.

Keywords: leader–member exchange; LMX development; new leader; development intervention; new leader assimilation

Introduction

A managerial position in an organization is demanding, requiring an ability to make an impact on people, to make things happen and to lead subordinates. For a leader, one of the most challenging situations in their career might be entering an organization as a newcomer. Previous studies suggest that these situations and the adaptation and learning required of the new leader are demanding, and unfortunately new leaders quite often fail to meet the challenge (Denis, Langley and Pineault 2000; Watkins 2003; Arneson 2005). These situations can be devastating for the leader, both in personal and career terms, and moreover, the failures can adversely affect the organization (Burke and McKeen 1994; Arneson 2005; Gabarro 2007).

For a new leader, the key element in successful managerial succession is building interpersonal links with the organization (Bridges 2003). Interpersonal relationships help the newcomer learn about the organization and the workgroup, the role that is expected of them, the necessary skills and knowledge and will guide them on how to act in the new position (Miller and Jablin 1991; Gabarro 2007; Korte 2010). Consequently, the development of interpersonal relationships is pivotal to the success of a newcomer in the process of quickly learning the organization and the ways of working (Korte 2010). The interpersonal relationships new leaders build within the first year will, to a great extent, determine how successful they are in their role (Gabarro 2007) and additionally, the relationship between the leader and the subordinate is highly important as it is often

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perceived as the foundation of leadership (Graen and Uhl-Bien 1995) as well as having an influence on the well-being and climate of the work community.

The interpersonal relationships between a leader and subordinate can be examined with the Leader–Member Exchange (LMX) theory. The LMX theory concentrates on leader–subordinate relationships that are constructed on mutual interaction and exchange (Dansereau, Graen and Haga 1975; Graen and Cashman 1975; Graen, Novak and Sommerkamp 1982). This theory perceives the relationship between a leader and a subordinate as the foundation of leadership, making it a crucial factor in the process of the new leader taking charge and acquiring managerial authority, as well as helping the parties to learn about each other and develop their organizational roles.

The LMX theory, in general, is described as incomplete and as meriting further investigation. There is a dearth of research regarding leader–member relationships and their development (Graen and Uhl-Bien 1995; Schriesheim, Castro and Cogliser 1999; Schyns and Wolfram 2008). The studies examining the development and aspects related to the development process have concentrated on the subordinates' view of the process. Furthermore, the issue of the lack of a managerial viewpoint on LMX relationships has to be raised (Greguras and Ford 2006). Further studies of situations where newcomers accept new managerial positions are still needed (Manderscheid 2008).

It has been suggested that when a leader enters a new organization, the learning process and the process of relationship development can be enhanced with a formal development intervention called the *new leader assimilation* (Schiavoni 1984). Prior research offers evidence of development intervention being positively related to the swifter adaptation of the incoming leader (e.g. Manderscheid 2008; Manderscheid and Ardichvili 2008b). There is also an opportunity to study what enhances the development of the LMX relationship that should not be ignored.

To conclude, the situation where a leader enters an organization is challenging for all parties, and it is crucial that the leader succeeds and is able to build interpersonal links within the organization. Therefore, the aim of the study is twofold: first to shed light on the development process of LMX relationships when a new leader enters an organization; and second to examine the effect of a managerial development intervention that was implemented. Therefore, the research questions are:

(1) How do the LMX relationships of a newly appointed leader develop?
(2) How can the development process of the leader's LMX relationships be enhanced by a managerial development intervention?

Theoretical framework

For a new leader, the first year in post is the most crucial; moreover, the formation of interpersonal relationships is the single thing that most determines the success of the new leader (Berlew and Hall 1966; Gabarro 2007). Through interpersonal relationships, the new leader will learn about the organization and its people, the role that is required of the leader, as well as the skills and knowledge required to succeed in the managerial position (Miller and Jablin 1991; Gabarro 2007; Korte 2010). Forming interpersonal relationships becomes a fundamental aspect of establishing themselves for the newcomers (Korte 2010), as does the alignment of expectations, because navigating those processes can ease the leaders' transition and reduce the stress suffered (Manderscheid and Ardichvili 2008a). Therefore, one fundamental aspect for the leader is the process of familiarization with the organization and its people. That process requires communication and interaction, which will also help create social networks (Saks and Ashforth 1997) that ease integration into the organization (Ostroff and Kozlowski 1992). Next, we will examine leadership building and the development of interpersonal relationships through the LMX theory.

The development of the leader–member exchange

LMX theory describes the relationship, its quality and characteristics, and the exchanges between a leader and their subordinate as being the construct of leadership. The relationships and the exchanges are individual and diverse between a leader and different subordinates, and the relationships can be divided into high-quality relationships and low-quality relationships. The advantages of high-quality relationships are indisputable; the subordinate gets more extensive resources and support and, in exchange, the leader expects loyalty, commitment and trustworthiness. Moreover, high-quality leader–subordinate relationships can be seen as positively influencing the working climate and career development, as well as reducing managerial stress and subordinate turnover and adding value to the organization through the benefits brought by productive employees (e.g. Dansereau, Graen and Haga 1975; Liden and Graen 1980; Springer 2006; Yukl, O'Donnell and Taber 2008).

Prior research has usually treated LMX relationships as beginning when the parties meet for the first time in their new roles (Dienesch and Liden 1986; Dockery and Steiner 1990), although there have been implications of previous encounters having an influence on present and future LMX relationships (Ballinger, Schoorman and Lehman 2009). There are some important features, which can be identified from the point of view of the leader: affection for subordinates, and the assessment of subordinate productivity and ability during the initial interaction in the LMX development process (Dienesch and Liden 1986; Dockery and Steiner 1990, 408).

After the first meeting, the relationship between the leader and the subordinate usually starts to develop further through interaction and proposals of exchange, when the leader assigns some tasks to the subordinate. At this stage of LMX development, the performance of the subordinate is still the most important factor for the leader (Bauer and Green 1996). The delegation of tasks can be seen as a sign of trust on the part of the leader (Scandura and Lankau 1996), and as the position of the leader is often quite unstable and complex, trust in subordinates is critical (McAllister 1995).

As the frequency of interaction and communication between the leader and the subordinate increases, the relationship enters a more personal stage and comes to include enhanced social exchanges and a certain attachment that develops between the parties (Bauer and Green 1996). There is a feeling of mutual responsibility and obligation towards each other and the relationship can be described as stable and the leadership has often developed to become high-quality (Graen and Uhl-Bien 1995; Scandura and Lankau 1996).

LMX relationships have been suggested to develop quite rapidly, and remain stable over time. However, prior research confirms that instances of workplace injustice are not uncommon (Andiappan and Trevino 2010). There has been some evidence of negative incidents between the leader and the subordinate having an effect on the LMX relationships (Restubog et al. 2010). However, the field is still lacking in research on the development process of LMX relationships, and moreover, the managerial viewpoint on them (Graen and Uhl-Bien 1995; Schriesheim, Castro and Cogliser 1999; Greguras and Ford 2006; Schyns and Wolfram 2008). In addition, research conducted on LMX relationships and their development is usually cross-sectional, and therefore, longitudinal data would be welcome to examine the process in more detail.

Development intervention supporting the new leader

The importance of different development interventions in organizations has been recognized, but the arrival of a new leader is often neglected, even though the situation is challenging and could have devastating results if not carefully handled (Burke and McKeen 1994; Arneson 2005; Gabarro 2007). One recently studied intervention for management development has been developed for these kinds of situations to support the learning process of a newly appointed leader: it is called *the new leader assimilation* (Schiavoni 1984; Manderscheid 2008; Manderscheid and Ardichvili 2008b). This intervention is usually conducted as a feedback process in which the subordinates are interviewed and the feedback given by them is used as a foundation for the training and coaching of the new leader prior to their entry into the organization. The opportunity for open communication and interaction provided by the intervention influences many aspects of the new leader's adaptation and learning process, one of which is relationship development (Manderscheid and Ardichvili 2008a, 2008b). Prior studies suggest that the development intervention conducted can help to reduce managerial stress by helping new leaders learn about the organization and become acquainted with their subordinates more quickly (Saks and Ashforth 1997; Manderscheid and Ardichvili 2008b).

Although only one study focusing on the intervention supporting newly appointed leaders was found, the results are promising; they indicate that the intervention spurred more open communication between new leaders and the subordinates. Moreover, the new leaders learned about their subordinates, became aware of their expectations and could subsequently act according to those expectations, which could enhance the development of interpersonal relationships (Manderscheid and Ardichvili 2008a).

Research design

As the aim of the study is to examine a complex social phenomenon in its context (i.e. a new leader entering an organization) the rationale of using a qualitative, interpretive case study method can be justified (Eisenhardt and Graebner 2007; Silverman 2005). When conducting an interpretive case study, the goal is to achieve an in-depth view of the phenomena through longitudinal examination (Walsham 1995). As the specific context of the study was of importance, as was obtaining an in-depth understanding of the actions and thoughts of the participants, a qualitative case study method offered an appropriate research avenue (Stake 1995).

This study was conducted as a part of a bigger research project aiming to study knowledge development in general in multiple organizations. The research project consisted of several different sub-projects employing different development methods. Knowledge development was studied from different viewpoints in the organizations involved. In the specific organization under study here, the focus was to study a newly appointed leader and that person's knowledge development. A managerial development intervention adapted from the leader assimilation intervention was conducted by two members of the research group in a business unit with twenty-nine subordinates and their immediate superior, who had recently been hired into the organization. The intervention started with the subordinates being interviewed while the process of recruiting a new leader was still underway. The intervention essentially involved interviews with the leader and the subordinates, observation by the facilitators and two coaching/feedback sessions with the new leader. The interviews varied from 15 to 90 minutes in duration. All 29 subordinates and their supervisor were interviewed. The job profile of the subordinates was homogeneous. Each of the interviewed employees was an immediate subordinate of the new leader and, therefore, in the same hierarchical relationship with the leader. There were twenty-five men and four women in the subordinate group. The author of this article joined the research group at the latter stages of the process and conducted the final interviews of the participants. However, the author had unlimited access to all research material collected from this organization as well as opportunities to discuss the situation with the people who conducted the intervention.

Data collection and analysis

The study was conducted longitudinally, over approximately one year, and the data collection was executed in three stages. The data were collected through interviews, which have been acknowledged to be the most important data collection method in interpretive case studies (Walsham 1995). The interviews of the subordinates were semi-structured, and the leader was interviewed in more depth using theme interviews. In addition, the observations of the facilitators and the author were used to clarify the overall picture of the situation.

Stage 1

The first stage of data collection took place *prior to the entry* of the new leader and consisted of interviews of the subordinates during the recruitment of a new supervisor, and a coaching session with, and observation of, the new leader. The subordinates were asked for their input on the situation where a new leader was hired and possible improvements the new leader should make, with questions such as: What do you need a leader for? What kind of leader is a good leader? Which things work and which do not work at your workplace? These answers were shared with the subsequently recruited new leader, and the leader later addressed these issues with the subordinate group.

Stage 2

The second stage of the data collection process took place when the leader was interviewed once the leader had spent *five months in the organization.* Moreover, the leader was offered an opportunity to report their thoughts on how the first months in the organization had been going as a part of the development intervention. The questions asked of the leader were related to themes that included relationship development and everyday life in the new organization, and what the leader had done to fit in.

Stage 3

The leader was re-interviewed by the author and one facilitator approximately *eight months after entering the organization* on their thoughts on the situation (with relationships, adaptation, etc.) at that time. At the same time, the author re-interviewed a convenience sample (N = 9) of subordinates on the actions of the new leader, prior expectations versus reality and how the relationships had developed. The number of subordinates was restricted to 10 by the organization due to resource constraints.

Unfortunately, one of the interviewees was absent at the time of the interviews, so the final number interviewed was nine. The author selected the subordinates to be re-interviewed according to the following guidelines: the subordinates' participation in the first round of interviews, willingness to discuss their experiences openly and obtaining a mix of subordinates with differing viewpoints on the matter.

All interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed. The first interviews were transcribed by a professional stenographer, and the interviews conducted by the author were transcribed by the author. To ensure the transcriptions accurately reflected the interview content, the tape recordings and the transcribed texts were compared.

When conducting a qualitative case study, the process of analysis often starts very early on in the process, even during the data collection process (Eriksson and Kovalainen 2008). The data supporting this study were analysed applying abductive logic, and the preliminary codes were predetermined loosely according to the leadership development model (Graen and Uhl-Bien 1995). First, the transcripts were colour-coded according to predetermined codes before the texts were compared to establish similarities and differences in the statements. Next, the statements were coded in more detail to a new level of abstraction, and patterns were identified. The more defined and detailed codes were then placed into categories, from which the themes arose concerning the development of the new leader's relationships. The credibility of the study was ensured by discussing the themes with two researchers who conducted the intervention. The two researchers had collected the first round of data, and, moreover, had familiarized themselves with the data collected by the author prior to the discussion on themes. That discussion revolved around the findings, and involved reinforcing the conclusions and observations related to the themes drawn by the author.

Findings

Four themes arose from the data concerning the relationship development of the newly appointed leader:

(1) *The expectations of the subordinates prior to the entry of the new leader.*
(2) *Informal communication between the new leader and their new subordinates.*
(3) *Managerial decisions made by the leader.*
(4) *Work-related incidents.*

The aim of the study was to examine how the relationships of a newly appointed leader would develop, and the data indicate that the process of relationship development starts even before the leader enters an organization. The predetermined attitudes and expectations of subordinates seemed to influence the quality of the relationships later on. Once the leader had taken up the position in the organization, relationship development was mainly influenced by the mutual interaction of the parties. The interaction consisted of elements such as decisions made by the leader, everyday communication and even some negative incidents occurring between the leader and a subordinate. Each of these themes is presented in more detail below. Additionally, the leader's feelings on the development intervention and the development of their relationships through the intervention are presented in more detail.

The expectations of the subordinates prior to the entry of the new leader

On the subject of the relationship development of the new leader, one interesting aspect arose from the interviews: their anticipatory expectations appeared to shape the attitudes of the subordinates in the long run. Those subordinates whose expectations were optimistic prior to entry, assessed their relationship with the leader to be more satisfactory later on, and reported the learning process of the leader to be more successful. They were, in general, more positive towards the new leader, as well as towards the assessments and decisions the new leader had made.

One element that probably had quite a strong influence on the expectations was the awareness that the new leader might be recruited externally, whereas the unit had previously promoted from within. The situation generated both negative and positive expectations of the new leader. The negative expectations were mainly related to the capability of the new leader to fit in and gain the requisite knowledge of the organization and the work without being familiar with the basic tasks undertaken in the organization. Examples of negative feelings expressed by the unit's staff included:

> I don't think it would be good at all, not at all, if the new leader comes from outside the organization. They wouldn't know a thing. He or she would have to start from the scratch, so I think that it would be best to take the new leader from inside the house.
>
> (Subordinate 1)
>
> It would be a lot worse if the new leader came from outside, I do not know if (an outside) leader could make things work…Good sides? I cannot think of anything.
>
> (Subordinate 2)

Some staff members did, however, view having a leader new to the group and organization as offering a fresh start. Some subordinates also thought that if the leader was promoted from within the group, they would find it difficult to establish a distance from the former work tasks and to concentrate on managerial tasks. Furthermore, some staff members saw an external appointee as having a greater chance of influencing subordinates than someone promoted from within. The unfamiliarity with the group could be beneficial, whereas a leader promoted from within and with relationships in place, would find it harder to establish authority:

> It could be… good on the other hand. An external leader would not have the liability of knowing the basic tasks and if the new leader were thick-headed they could get… everybody to participate when needed.
>
> (Subordinate 3)
>
> It can be, a good thing (an external leader), he or she might have some new ideas, although sometimes, you can tell that, when there is a new person from outside they do not have the needed knowledge… I think an outsider will do as well.
>
> (Subordinate 4)

Informal communication between the new leader and their new subordinates

Once new leaders enter a new organization, they must acquire information about the organization and the new subordinates. The data indicate that informal communication and interaction is essential when new leaders are learning the informal aspects of the organization and developing interpersonal relationships. The new leader in our case felt that interaction, for example during lunch breaks, was central to developing the relationship and becoming an insider. The leader saw coffee breaks as another opportunity to get to know the subordinates:

> I said that I don't need my own coffee machine in my room, I will go and sit with them (the subordinates) – and there we all sit – and discuss whatever sport and so on… There I feel like I am one of them.

Informal communication permits the leader to become acquainted with the subordinates and their routine work. It seems that the process of developing interpersonal relationships in a new organization is quite a slow-moving process and the situation was still developing several months after the arrival of the new leader. Moreover, the state of the relationships of the new leader appears to be influenced by situational factors and the state of the mutual communication and interaction at any particular time. It seems that the relationship grew through informal communication and interaction, and the subordinates also became keener to suggest work-related improvements to the leader. The leader described the relationships after a few months in the organization in the following terms:

> Yes, I have had more, and constantly more people are coming to my in-group. Some have stayed more distant though.
>
> I have talked more and more with all these people… it feels like they are also on my side. And they come and tell me what has happened during the day… and additionally they come and tell me what could be done, as in improvement ideas.

However, there was some fluctuation in the inner circle of subordinates of the leader during the period in which the research was conducted. It seems that situational factors cause some subordinates to grow closer to the leader as the relationship between them develops. On the other hand, some subordinates move from the in-group to a more distant status. The leader described the situation following almost a year in the organization:

> Well, in a way I am closer to almost everyone, in contrast to our last talk… I could say that to some extent I know them… however, from time to time there is someone new who gets closer, who approaches me… and then one subordinate who was away a lot [on sick leave], I haven't talked with him that much. And that is how the relationship develops after all, by talking… that is how you get acquainted.

The presence of mutual interaction appears to be crucial for the subordinates as well. An interesting finding was the difference between the parties in the way interaction was perceived. Some subordinates felt that there was mutual interaction, while some subordinates perceived the situation differently. Evidently, the situation is complex and the perceptions of different subordinates vary quite considerably. Some staff members perceived a lack of interaction and lack of knowledge as signalling poor leadership:

> The situation has improved over time, but the thing that bothers me is that the leader sits here [in their room], even the door closed, and sort of closes themself in, and isn't present there [among the subordinates].
>
> (Subordinate 5)
>
> When the previous leader was here, you could always discuss things… but after the change, whatever you ask, you won't get an answer, and then you feel frustrated… it is like we don't

> have a leader here, you can't ask for anything, and you won't get an answer, and sort of no leader who tells us how the things are done.
>
> (Subordinate 6)

However, some subordinates felt the leader was keen on getting acquainted and communicated well with them. The communication and interaction that influenced the development of the relationship on the part of the subordinates did not have to be complicated or extensive; one element that was noted was that the leader was keen to get acquainted when they started. One relatively small detail the subordinates mentioned was the fact that the leader greeted everyone each morning and asked how they were doing:

> Said hello to everyone, which was nice. The leader sort of contacted everyone… the leader was more familiar in a way, and made contact.
>
> (Subordinate 7)

Managerial decisions made by the leader

In addition to informal, everyday communication, the interaction between the parties is more complex; there were several incidents between the leader and the subordinate group that might have influenced the parties' perceptions of each other. For example, the managerial decisions of the leader in certain situations and the way the leader handled the situations influenced the perceptions of the subordinates about the leader, their leadership, and by implication, their relationship. The leader pointed out at least one incident that occurred at the case company. It involved two members of staff being dismissed after a complaint that they had contravened shared rules and values. The confrontation that gave rise to the dismissal of the staff members happened in public, and therefore affected the subordinates not directly involved in the matter. The new leader talked about the incident in a positive way and felt the decision to be justified and fair. The leader interpreted the incident as reinforcing their managerial role and respect from their subordinates, and also their interpersonal relationships. The leader considered the subordinates to be pleased with the decision that was made, and saw the incident as a turning point on the route to taking charge of the situation:

> There was this one (incident), that changed the subordinates attitudes toward me… and then I heard someone saying, 'Yes!' somewhere… and they were really satisfied with that (decision).

Although the leader seemed aware of only positive opinions, in fact, opinion among the subordinates on whether the leader's action had been correct was mixed. Those who felt that the leader was acting unfairly also felt less connected to the leader, and assessed their relationship as more distant. We can conclude that such situations influence how the group of subordinates perceives the leader, and therefore, how the relationships develop. One subordinate described their feelings about the situation as follows:

> A leader should have self-control… the leader just lost control and shouted; and I was like, no, not like this.
>
> (Subordinate 6)

Work-related incidents

In addition to the informal communications and actions of the leader, work-related interaction processes were also identified. The first one is the *positive delegation-answer-cycle*, in which the leader delegates some tasks to a subordinate, and the relationship between the parties is enhanced through the mutual exchange during the delegation. This factor has a positive effect on the relationship between the parties. In the case company, the new leader promoted one subordinate from the group. The promotion increased that person's responsibility and they helped the leader with some managerial tasks. The decision was influenced by the interpersonal capabilities of the subordinate and the evaluation of other team members and managers. One important aspect for the leader was the fact that the subordinate expressed their interest in the delegated tasks. The leader described the process of selecting a trusted subordinate as follows:

> I thought that this subordinate was more interested in the task. He showed that he was interested.

The person promoted had expressed an interest in developing and advancing their career even before the new leader took up their post. The subordinate was optimistic that a new leader would make changes and so the attitude to and expectations of the new leader were optimistic.

In addition to positive delegation-answer-cycles, the data indicated that there were also some negative or reversed delegation-answer-cycles. Another subordinate who had held the position before was asked to return to their former duties. While not directly expressing any dissatisfaction with the task-delegation decision, there were some strong indicators that the subordinate felt mistreated. From the leader's viewpoint, the withdrawal of responsibilities was not a pre-planned step and the leader did not recognize the possibility that the subordinate would feel harshly treated.

The next section examines the learning process and adaptation from the viewpoint of the leader, and also presents the development intervention and its influence.

The effect of the development intervention on the leader's interpersonal relationships

The anticipatory expectations, communication and interaction processes between the parties and the managerial decisions of the leader are elements that build relationships and hence affect the adaptation of the leader. The processes increasingly help the leader to feel like an insider adapted to the ways of the organization. There were a few situations that contributed to the feeling as the leader took charge. First of all, as the leader learned the basic functions of the organization and the tasks which the subordinates performed, the leader could influence the subordinates and amend and develop the tasks:

> …and I asked [a subordinate] why? 'We are just accustomed to do so.' I was like, okay, pretty good custom, but it does not seem to work. And I can say that this is because this and this are observed. Not only by us, but someone else also... and then we were able to make it work better.

The second factor at this stage is the awareness of the leader of their organizational role and the organization in general. As the leader learned about the organization and the subordinates, they were able to mould their management skills to fit the organization. In the case company, the new leader developed new methods to disseminate information and also used different methods to lead people. At this stage, the new leader felt they had acquired authority and developed methods to influence people:

> I think that before it was managed from above and people were just told what to do, and controlled, like in the army... Now there are no sanctions and I think that they [the subordinates] work just as well.

One important aspect of the relationship development of the new leader was the development intervention conducted during the study. The purpose was to help the leader to get to know the subordinates and recognize their expectations of the leader. Moreover, the intervention acted as a feedback channel and enhanced the communication between the parties. The leader perceived the intervention as helpful. One paramount factor the new leader mentioned was their ability to become acquainted with the subordinates to some extent even before taking up the position. The new leader reported the most important contribution of the development intervention was helping to process the expectations and hopes of their subordinates, which countered the feeling of isolation initially experienced on taking up the position:

> It has been helpful… I got information about the group and the people… and in a way got help on getting to know them… in the first [interview with the subordinates during the intervention] where they could tell their hopes and so it was the best.

The subordinates appreciated the opportunity to give feedback offered by the intervention. The subordinates were keen on giving feedback and were willing to express their feelings and hopes towards the new leader. One main aspect was the outside facilitators, who the subordinates trusted and spoke to openly during their feedback sessions. Additionally, the subordinates felt that the leader had taken on board some advice from the coaching and the subordinates' feedback interviews. One subordinate put it thus:

> Definitely there were some good points, because from what I have gathered from talking with other co-workers there were some good points (and feedback) given… I have had a hunch that the new leader has been able to take some advice and carry out some practices, at least if you compare to the previous leader.
>
> (Subordinate 4)

Discussion

The aim of the study was twofold; first to shed light on the development process of LMX relationships when a new leader enters an organization, and second to examine the effect of a leader development intervention that was implemented. The contribution of this study to the literature on LMX relationships is threefold. First, the study brings the managerial viewpoint on LMX relationships into the discussion. The situation faced by a newcomer to a managerial position is demanding as the leader has to develop many LMX relationships simultaneously. Second, the study scrutinizes the development process of LMX relationships. Third, it introduces managerial development intervention into the LMX discussion.

LMX theory has traditionally recognized the first meeting as being the starting point of the development of the LMX relationship (Dienesch and Liden 1986; Dockery and Steiner 1990) and the development process at this stage is usually perceived as being influenced by the traits and behaviour of the parties (Bauer and Green 1996; Dienesch and Liden 1986) and how the parties see each other. However, this study contributes to the existing literature by establishing that the expectations of the parties (and particularly those of the subordinates) formed prior to the entry into the organization are important to how LMX relationships develop later. In some cases, the expectations can even be seen as leading to the later development process being bypassed. It seems that especially when the expectations were pessimistic, the overall attitude towards the leader and their actions remained negative. Moreover, the data indicate that in making the leader feel that the staff members were already familiar to them, the development intervention enhanced learning and the relationship development process of the leader even before they set foot in the organization.

As the relationship between the leader and the subordinates developed, interaction and communication became an important aspect of the process. This study uncovered different communication and interaction processes between the leader and subordinates. That communication and interaction, especially informal, everyday communication, were seen as opportunities to build and enhance the relationship as the parties learned about each other over time. However, it seems that a lack of communication is also important. Moreover, the parties seemed to perceive the communication that was occurring differently. One interesting finding was that the leader felt that while relationships were built on communication and routine interaction, they could also be damaged by their absence. The leader was aware that, during the study, various subordinates moved into the in-group and some moved further away. For example, the leader noted that the relationship with one subordinate suffered from the lack of communication and interaction due to the subordinate being absent for some time. These findings challenge the notion of stability in LMX relationships. In addition, the current research challenges the accepted rapid pace of the development of LMX relationships. The study findings show that relationships were still developing after the leader had been in the organization for almost a year.

The interaction processes between the leader and the subordinates were more complex than expected, and in addition to informal communication, there were incidents between the leader and the subordinates. The previous research is almost silent on the effect of such incidents on the relationship between a leader and a subordinate. Incidents changing the perceptions of the subordinates about the leader and their actions might alter their understanding of how fair the leader is. Incidents that undermine the respect subordinates have for their leader can affect the whole relationship (Scandura and Lankau 1996). This is particularly salient if the leader is seen as acting unjustly.

Any perception of workplace injustice can fundamentally influence both the organizational climate and the job satisfaction of employees. Prior research confirms that instances of workplace injustice are not uncommon (Andiappan and Trevino 2010). It must be assumed that such incidents influence LMX relationships and, therefore, the organizational climate and the well-being of the employees. One focal viewpoint is that parties define the concept of justice or injustice, and reflect it against their own experiences and attitudes. The data collected from the interviews in the case organization indicated that the incidents between the leader and their subordinates were perceived differently by the parties, and that those differences in perception might influence the LMX relationship. The incidents provided evidence of managerial decision-making that contributed to the subordinates' assessment of the managerial potential of the leader, despite the fact that the critical incidents did not directly concern all the subordinates. Prior research supports the view that actions of the leader considered unjust adversely affect the workplace climate and the interpersonal relationships in an organization (Scandura and Lankau 1996; Andiappan and Trevino 2010) and we can, therefore, assume they affect LMX relationships too.

The LMX literature identifies the delegation-answer-cycle between the leader and the subordinate as an interaction process (Bauer and Green 1996; Scandura and Lankau 1996). This study supports the previous research and suggests that there were delegation processes in the case company that did enhance the LMX relationship between the new leader and the subordinate. The leader's trust in the abilities and assessment of the personal characteristics of their subordinates influence to whom the leader delegates tasks. There is, however, evidence of the LMX relationship between the parties being more complex and being subject to influence by different dimensions. First, this study noted in addition to a positive delegation, a negative or reverse delegation in which the leader removed some delegated responsibilities from one subordinate. That might have had an effect on how the subordinate felt about the leader and how the relationship between them developed. In addition to the delegation cycles, there were some incidents occurring between the leader and the subordinates that impacted on the LMX relationship. Therefore, it seems that the delegation of responsibilities between the leader and the subordinates can either enhance the quality of the relationship or diminish it.

In prior research, LMX relationships have been presented as quickly developing to their final form and remaining stable over time (Bauer and Green 1996; Dienesch and Liden 1986). This study argues that in the situation where a newcomer assumes a managerial position, the process of developing LMX relationships is not as rapid as has been suggested, even if the new leader has some previous managerial experience. One major obstacle facing a new, externally appointed leader seems to be the fact that they have to learn so much: a completely new organization; its culture and ways of working, and in addition, they must develop LMX relationships with all of their subordinates. It seems that the difficulty of developing multiple LMX relationships simultaneously has an impact on the pace at which the leader is able to develop the relationships.

Limitations of the study and implications for future research

The study revolves around a single-case study and is a description of a situation, as interpreted by a researcher. That means that any generalization should be attempted only with caution, as a case study can never be guaranteed to accurately describe reality. The understanding of the phenomenon could have been deepened with the exploration of multiple cases. Additionally, it would have been interesting to interview the new leader's superior to gain a broader view of the adaptation process undertaken by the new leader. Another limitation of the study is the limited scope for generalization to an international context, as the study was conducted in a Finnish organization. Moreover, more specific connections to individual elements of the LMX theory could be made.

This study provided interesting insights into leader development interventions and into the development of LMX relationships. Future studies might advance research on leader assimilation development interventions and their effects prior to and during entry into an organization. This study indicates that the process of LMX is more complex than it was thought to be and the existence of multiple dimensions should be recognized. The presence of critical incidents and the effects of those incidents are suggested as another avenue of future study. To support future research agendas, a theory of key incidents should be investigated in interactions between leaders and subordinates.

To conclude, further research on the organizational entry of a new leader is required. In addition, the viewpoint of the leader on the LMX relationships and how those relationships develop after the leader enters an organization from outside should be examined further. Moreover, other aspects of the LMX theory could be explored. This study has identified some obstacles relating to the development of LMX relationships involving an external appointee to a managerial position. It would be interesting to investigate, in a future study, the subsequent success or failure of such a leader and the contributing events.

Practical implications for HRD

From the HRD perspective, it is important to understand the demanding situation created when a new leader enters an organization as an outsider. The situation presents challenges to all parties: the leader, their new subordinates and the organization itself. This study offers some insights into how the relationship between the leader and their subordinates – and therefore the way the new leader takes charge – could be enhanced. The leader development intervention could be further developed to fit different organizations in complex contexts. Moreover, this study encourages HRD professionals to develop new leader orientation intervention initiatives and programs.

The study indicates that the expectations of the subordinates play an important role in the process of the interpersonal relationship development process. The challenge for HRD professionals is to develop the ability to recognize these expectations and/or to help the new leader to identify those expectations too, and then to act accordingly; then both HRD professionals and leader should clearly focus on enhancing the development of relationships on the part of the new leader.

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Spanning leader–subordinate relationships through negative interactions: An examination of leader–member exchange breaches

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Abstract
The study aims to discover the dynamic and processual nature of a supervisory relationship (here a leader–member exchange) through a novel, theoretical concept termed leader–member exchange breach, and by examining the characteristics of negative exchange interactions within the leader–member exchange relationship. The notion of the leader–member exchange breach is empirically defined through data on 336 responses to open-ended questions on negative interactions between leaders and subordinates, analyzed through qualitative analysis methods. The results of the study raise questions about the complexity of leader–member exchange relationships and show that breaches of the leader–member exchange relationship might lead to a reassessment of the dyadic relationship between leaders and their subordinates, spanning or even breaking the exchange relationships. This study extends current knowledge on leader–member exchange relationships by providing a viewpoint on the leader–member exchange breach that helps explain the processual and dynamic nature of those relationships through interpersonal interactions and exchanges.

Keywords
Leader–member exchange, qualitative analysis, leader–member exchange breach, negative interactions

Within the complex set of relationships in organizations, leader–member exchange (LMX) relationships between leaders and their subordinates are fundamental and have been described as the foundation of leadership (Graen and Uhl-Bien, 1995). The LMX relationships are unique and range

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in quality from low to high. The quality and nature of LMX relationships can be assessed through exchange and communication between the parties, and the LMX relationships develop through reciprocal exchange processes (Bauer and Green, 1996; Graen and Uhl-Bien, 1995; Liden et al., 1993). The quality of these relationships is usually assessed subjectively, and a positive follower perception of the LMX relationship, that is, the perception that the follower has a high-quality relationship with the leader, has been connected to high levels of follower job performance, organizational commitment, and job satisfaction (e.g., Cogliser et al., 2009). Moreover, on a general level, high-quality LMX relationships are also linked to lower levels of turnover intention or role conflict (Gertner and Day, 1997).

Research suggests that the development and maintenance of an LMX relationship should be viewed through microlevel interaction processes between the leader and the subordinate (Hofmans et al., 2019), and that the LMX process is also altered through the interactions and exchanges between the parties (Brower et al., 2000). The social exchange process includes both tangible and intangible (i.e., communicative) exchanges and interactions between parties, usually the leader and the subordinate, including exchanges of resource distribution and feedback, and can be divided into work and personal exchanges (e.g., Sheer, 2015). Traditionally, the development of LMX, the social exchange process included, has been viewed as a linear, continuous, and smooth process progressing toward a mature state and remaining stable at the stage of development it attains (Bauer and Green, 1996; Dienesch and Liden, 1986; Liden and Graen, 1980).

However, things do not always go smoothly, and studies have queried LMX stabilization and possible changes in LMX relationships (Brower et al., 2000; Cropanzano et al., 2017; Day, 2014; Mäkela, 2009). Research indicates that the exchange relationship might change due to an exchange event within a strong emotional or instrumental context but has not yet been able to fully characterize such events (Ballinger and Rockmann, 2010). Moreover, while the roots of a positive exchange cycle have been studied, the situations triggering poor conduct and a negative exchange cycle have been studied to a notably lesser extent (Cropanzano et al., 2017). Furthermore, the research on dyadic conflict within the context of the leader–subordinate interaction remains scarce (Kacmar et al., 2012). Subordinates might, for example, hold their leaders accountable for exchange inconsistencies in the team and organizational settings, for example, being dissatisfied with the leader's distribution of resources (Anand et al., 2015). Followers' feelings that there are discrepancies between what the organization is obliged to provide and what they actually receive might manifest in the supervisory relationship (Henderson et al., 2008). However, although the LMX theory encompasses the quality of the exchange relationship, whether there is a perception of promised exchange remains unknown (Liden et al., 1997).

Research on LMX has been criticized for emphasizing the perspective of the leader in the LMX process (Graen and Uhl-Bien, 1995), and there have been calls for a more thorough investigation of the follower's role in the process of leadership (e.g., Shamir, 2007). For example, the authors found only one study illustrating how leader deception influences the perception of the LMX held by subordinates and their commitment to the leader and the organization (Griffith et al., 2011). Therefore, the current study examines perceived breaches of the dyadic exchange relationship from the perspective of the follower because such breaches might have a considerable influence on the deterioration of follower commitment, job satisfaction, and ultimately can even result in the termination of the working relationship (e.g., Conway and Briner, 2005; Coyle-Shapiro, 2002).

Accordingly, this study aims to explore the dynamic and processual nature of LMX relationships by employing qualitative research methods to examine negative exchange interactions within the LMX relationship that can lead the parties to reassess the quality of the relationship. The study aims to make both theoretical and empirical contributions, and accordingly its aims are twofold: First, to make a theoretical contribution to the existing LMX literature by introducing the breach viewpoint on the relationships through the concept of the *LMX breach*. Second, the study offers an empirical contribution by identifying the characteristics of the incidents leading to the LMX breach in supervisory relationships. The following theoretical review presents the concept of the LMX breach in detail.

Conceptualizing LMX

Firmly, rooted in the social exchange theory and the role-making model of leadership, the LMX theory defines the unique, dyadic relationship between a leader and each of their subordinates (e.g., Graen and Uhl-Bien, 1995). The relationships are "negotiated over time through a series of exchanges, or 'interacts' between leader and member" (Bauer and Green, 1996: 1538). Honest and open exchanges build trust (Butler, 1991), the presence of which later indicates a high-quality LMX relationship with trust extending beyond the requirements of the formal employment contract (Dienesch and Liden, 1986). It has been said that the subordinate's trust in the leader positively predicts that subordinate's experience of the quality of the LMX (e.g., Sue-Chan et al., 2012), and breaches of trust alter the LMX relationship, making the relationship dynamic rather than static (Brower et al., 2000).

High-quality LMX relationships are characterized by mutual trust, obligation, and respect (Graen and Uhl-Bien, 1995), leading to multiple positive individual- and organizational-level outcomes (Gertner and Day, 1997). The expectations of the parties have been linked not only to the development process of the LMX (Liden et al., 1993; Wayne et al., 1997) but also to predict the quality of the mature relationships (Wayne et al., 1997), as unmet expectations are linked to lower-quality exchange relationships (Maslyn and Uhl-Bien, 2001). Moreover, it is suggested that the occurrence of affective events can cause the relationships to fluctuate in quality in each of their development stages (Cropanzano et al., 2017).

The nature of exchange within the LMX relationship both defines the quality of the relationship and simultaneously develops it (Sheer, 2015). However, the exchange process is sometimes perceived as a continuum (e.g., Bauer and Green, 1996), although possible fluctuations should be acknowledged. An important viewpoint on the LMX relationship concerns the multidimensionality of the relationships (Liden and Maslyn, 1998), portraying the characteristics and nature of the relationships between the parties (Dienesch and Liden, 1986; Liden and Maslyn, 1998). Moreover, the dimensions of LMX can be seen as currencies of exchange (Dienesch and Liden, 1986; Sheer, 2015).

The dimensions consist of features related to the relationship on both the personal and professional sides of the LMX (Dienesch and Liden, 1986; Liden and Maslyn, 1998). The dimensions recognized are *affect,* which manifests as a liking for someone and sits on the interpersonal side of the relationship; *loyalty,* which signals a faithful attitude to another person that is unaffected by situational factors; *contribution* relates to the exchange in the work context and comprises the resources the supervisor provides beyond those required by any formal agreement; and *professional respect* for the other party sits on the work-related side and is built on both subjective experiences and the perceptions of others (Liden and Maslyn, 1998: 50). The dimensions of affect, loyalty, and professional respect are viewed as social currencies of exchange and contribution as a work-related currency (Maslyn and Uhl-Bien, 2001). These dimensions can signal the quality of the LMX because they are often strongly present in high-quality relationships, as lower-quality relationships are usually based on contractual exchange and low-level personal contributions and commitment (for a review see, Gertner and Day, 1997). In the following section, the exchange process within the LMX relationship is examined in more detail.

Leader–member exchange processes

The dynamics of supervisory relationships can be described through a social exchange process (Cropanzano et al., 2017). Following the rationale underpinning the social exchange theory (Blau, 1964), an exchange process can be defined by the presence of reciprocal transactions, in which, "an action by one party leads to a response by another" (Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005: 876). The social exchange process begins with one party, either leader or subordinate, treating the other party in a way that triggers a reciprocal cycle of exchanges (Cropanzano et al., 2017; Eisenberger et al., 2004). This pivotal exchange has been described as initiating action that leads to either a positive or a negative exchange cycle. On the negative side, for example, abusive behavior, incivility, and bullying by the leader are perceived as negative initiating actions (Cropanzano et al., 2017). Moreover, there might be *anchoring events* that change the course of the exchange relationship (Ballinger and Rockmann, 2010).

Exchanges can be based on tangible or intangible elements (specifically communicative types), divided into work and social exchanges (Sheer, 2015). The notion of LMX is firmly linked to tangible exchanges through organizational resources (Erdogan and Liden, 2002), such as salary progress and tasks (Wilson et al., 2010). The leader can often unlock goods, such as monetary benefits and career advancement opportunities (Wilson et al., 2010); however, there might be situations in which the process of tangible exchanges between the dyadic partners is compromised. An example would be if subordinates feel their expectations of rewards have not been met by their employer, leading them to feel they have been unjustly treated (Hollander, 1978). It has been noted that perceived justice and equity (Henderson et al., 2008; Hooper and Martin, 2008) are essential for successful exchange relationships. The notion of LMX differentiation (Henderson et al., 2009; Liden et al., 2006) suggests that leaders develop relationships varying in quality and level of exchange with each of their subordinates. Such variance can lead subordinates to perceive an injustice if they view the leader to be distributing resources inequitably. The process of LMX differentiation has been shown to influence follower outcomes on dyadic levels (Henderson et al., 2008) and increase relational conflict in teams (Hooper and Martin, 2008).

Moreover, there are also many intangible—that is, communicative—exchanges between a leader and follower. In general, leadership can be seen as being built on communication (Fairhurst and Connaughton, 2014), which can be divided into work communication exchanges and social communication exchanges (Sheer, 2015: 222–223). Intangible exchanges are often related to feedback, or work-related information that is distributed between the parties, in addition to development opportunities and mentoring provided by the leader (Wilson et al., 2010). Such intangible exchanges can revolve around aspects like flexibility, attention, and influence (Graen and Scandura, 1987); as when a leader provides affiliation resources, such as encouraging words or sympathy and the subordinate offers their commitment and loyalty in return (Wilson et al., 2010). Accordingly, a supervisor being perceived by subordinates to be incompetent or lacking in empathy has been identified as one of the most influential factors in situations where trust has been destroyed in leader–follower relationships (Grover et al., 2014).

It is important to note that interaction and the communication of the leader per se can be destructive (Fairhurst and Connaughton, 2014) and lead to a negative exchange outcome. That negative outcome within the social exchange process might, for example, be triggered by unacceptable behavior by a leader, such as bullying or unprofessional conduct (Cropanzano et al., 2017), which would also encompass a situation where a leader takes credit for actions performed by a subordinate (Sparrowe and Liden, 1997). Furthermore, deception on the part of a leader will also negatively influence subordinates' perception of the LMX, and thus, their commitment to the leader and the organization, leading to a deterioration of trust, subsequently weaken the quality of the LMX relationship in the eyes of the subordinate (Griffith et al., 2011). Therefore, through unmet expectations (Ballinger and Rockmann, 2010) or destructive communication practices (Fairhurst and Connaughton, 2014), a negative exchange cycle could be initiated.

Spanning the relationships within the leader–subordinate dyad: LMX Breach

The beliefs and expectations of the subordinate regarding the relationship influence the impact of the actions of the leader and of incidents arising in supervisory relationships (Game, 2008). The very earliest notions about the social exchanges in organizations suggested that the relationship is firmly based on each member's expectations of the actions of the other (Hollander, 1978: 73). The expectations within the social exchange relationship might be related to communication and interaction, perceptions of justice, or the conduct of the leader (Grover et al., 2014; Lee, 1999; Son et al., 2014).

The expectations of the parties, and whether those expectations were fulfilled, manifest in the parties' everyday interaction, which affects the way they perceive the quality of the relationships (Uhl-Bien et al., 2000). For example, subordinates—and especially those who perceive their LMX relationship to be a high-quality one—might expect substantial support from their leader in certain situations (Lester et al., 2002). However, if the leader fails to meet their subordinate's expectations of them, the leader–follower relationship might suffer from a loss of trust (Grover et al., 2014; Restubog and Bordia, 2006).

Moreover, research indicates that the behavior and actions of the immediate manager can trigger several different emotional responses and reactions among subordinates (Andiappan and Treviño, 2011): Employees often harbor a sense of injustice when they witness actions they consider unfair on the part of a manager, and those negative feelings can have severe consequences that might stretch to irremediable loss of trust and withdrawal from the relationship (Griffith et al., 2011; Grover et al., 2014).

To conclude, LMX relationships are processual and developed through reciprocal exchange and interaction cycles based on tangible and communicative elements (Brower et al., 2000; Sheer, 2015). Moreover, expectations guide the perceptions of the leader and the dyadic relationship with the subordinates. However, there might be negative incidents and events interrupting the exchange (Ballinger and Rockmann, 2010; Cropanzano et al., 2017) that is fundamental to the relationship and those incidents compromise the trust and respect between a leader and subordinate, which will weaken the LMX in the perception of the follower. Moreover, the expectations relating to the exchange and other aspects of the LMX relationship might be unfulfilled. Therefore, based on the literature review above, the current research introduces the concept of the *LMX breach* based on the literature review above. An LMX breach occurs when a party to the LMX relationship perceives an expectation or promise concerning the conduct of the other party or the content of the expected exchange agreement to be unmet. An LMX breach is defined here as being realized through events and interactions taking place between a leader and subordinate leading to a cognitive sensemaking process through which the parties to the LMX relationship reassess the strength of the relationship with the other party. Below, we empirically examine the process involved in an LMX breach.

Method

The data supporting this study consist of the individual accounts of 386 informants collected by eliciting responses to open questions, distributed over the period 2011–2013 as a part of a larger survey study involving five Finnish organizations. Those organizations operate in the public and private sectors, and in the fields of logistics services, and early childhood education services, and there are also two specialist organizations operating in the insurance and pension sectors.

This analysis uses data extracted from a large-scale questionnaire focused on themes such as work well-being, leadership, and work performance. The open-ended question that is the foundation of this study was included in the part of the questionnaire investigating subordinates' thoughts on their leader and their supervisory relationships, with questions based on the University of Vaasa LMX scale (Tanskanen et al., 2019), followed by questions related to trust losses in LMX relationships arising from critical, negative incidents occurring in the interaction between a leader and follower. The exact question was "Have you, at some point during your career (a) lost trust in your supervisory relationship, (b) fallen out with the supervisor permanently, and/or (c) sought to exit the supervisory relationship for reasons related to the supervisor?"

Having answered the question, the informants were asked to recall and describe such events. The leader in question was defined as the subordinate's immediate manager at some point during their career. The respondents were advised there was no limit to the length of their answers. The open questions employed ensured the incidents related by the informants in their own words (Jackson and Trochim, 2002) could be captured.

Using open questions affords the informants greater anonymity and encourages honest answers on a delicate subject (Erickson and Kaplan, 2000; Jackson and Trochim, 2002). Moreover, the method provided researchers with a relatively large amount of qualitative data on individual incidents. Most responses varied from a few words to several sentences and some informants provided even longer accounts. Those answers that were shorter than one sentence or did not answer the question were eliminated, leaving a total sample of 336 responses that were narrative in nature, describing perceived breaches of an LMX in the informants' own words.

Analyses

This study adopts qualitative content analysis and thematic analysis methods, and in addition to connection to the existing literature on LMX relationships, new theoretical avenues were constructed based on qualitative data analysis. The aim of the analysis was to provide a rich description of the dataset and the characteristics of the LMX breaches, providing information about predominant themes emerging from the data (see Braun and Clarke, 2006). Content analysis was used during the initial analysis to code the data and thematic analysis to analyze and theme the codes that emerged. The data were analyzed in a theory-driven manner, and the characteristics and nature of the incidents were elicited in relation to the dimensions of the LMX.

The first phase of the analysis process involved the researcher becoming familiar with the data through a careful reading of the responses elicited, note taking, and comparing those data to identify differences and similarities (Elo and Kyngäs, 2008; Braun and Clarke, 2006). During the open coding process, the emphasis was on identifying interesting features of the data and marking parts that indicated a potential category. Each reported incident was a unit and it coded once only. The text was constantly compared to determine whether its learning would fall into an existing category or was best assigned to a new category. Those categories illustrated behavioral examples of the incidents, with connections to the dimensions of the LMX, such as "disrespectful comments about the subordinate's personal characteristics" (revealing affect) or "giving a promised task to a friend" (revealing loyalty). Therefore, the research interest lay in identifying the features of the incidents in relation to the dimensions of the LMX.

The next step of the analysis was to distill the content of categories that were connected or overlapping into potential themes with conceptual similarities. As a result, eight potential themes including, for example, *bullying*, *favoritism*, and *lack of support and information* were developed. These themes were distinct yet were broad enough to summarize the ideas comprised within the text segments (Attride-Stirling, 2001: 392). Next, three main theoretical themes were formed from these potential themes, in which the patterns identified were reflected against the literature-based analysis of the LMX breach to portray the types of the LMX breach experienced by the specific informants. At this stage, the extracts supporting each theme were read carefully once more and found to confirm the coherence of the themes (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Moreover, the incidents of each theme were calculated to provide knowledge on their frequency and the extent of the themes.

Findings

The findings of this study reveal several different types of exchange and interaction events leading to an LMX breach. The identified events interrupted the exchange aspect of the LMX relationship and compromised the trust and respect between a leader and subordinate, leading to the LMX breach through unmet expectations and promises perceived by the follower. Researcher designated three themes describing the LMX breaches perceived by the subordinate and the incidents leading to those breaches. Those themes are *broken affiliation*, *violated justice and loyalty*, and *unmet resource expectations*, linking the dimensions of the LMX to the incidents experienced. The data reflected the dimensions of the LMX and presented the exchanges and interactions as relating to tangible and intangible (communicative) elements (Table 1).

Broken affiliation

Within the first theme, the incidents flow from the dyadic relationship and interaction between the subordinate and their leader being emotionally charged, and those incidents violate the feelings of affect and the expected respect and empathy, from the other party. The subordinate's expectation of a leader responding with empathy to their concerns was established by (Wilson et al., 2010). The events that trigger the expectation might be single events, which happened years ago, but the importance to the subordinate is indisputable and resulted in the employee feeling there had been a breach in their supervisory relationship. That breach was sometimes of such severity that it affected the emotional state of the subordinate.

These incidents touched upon the dimension of *affect* in the LMX relationship, embodying mutual liking and affect between the parties to leader–follower dyads, and representing the possibility of that affect being undermined in an LMX breach. Moreover, the exchange could be seen as communicative and highly personal, such as when there was an expectation of empathy or respect in a certain exchange situation, or an expectation that a greeting is reciprocated in everyday interaction. It seems that these interactions served as anchoring events for future interactions and should be viewed as exchange occurrences with strong emotional or instrumental charge (Ballinger and Rockmann, 2010).

The incidents often occurred as a part of the everyday communication and interaction of the parties and in ordinary workplace exchange situations. Those interactions included negative comments or terse responses from the leader that the subordinates felt were meaningful and hurtful,

Table 1. Themes, definitions, and sample excerpts.

Theme/definition	Excerpts from dataset
Broken Affiliation (n = 50)	
Intangible, personal exchanges. Single, anchoring events. The LMX dimension of affect	"*When I originally (over 15 years ago) went to ask my leader for a moment to talk privately to report my serious illness that would require a quick operation, my leader barked; don't tell me you are pregnant again! It felt really bad and left a little crack in me*"
Broken expectations of sympathy or affect, unsupportive communication, bullying from the leader	"*My leader (2005[6 years before]) sneered and laughed at my opinion*" "*My former leader wouldn't greet me and just barked, that [she/he] would have never hired me*" "*I was subjected to serious and completely unjustified continuous bullying by the supervisor*" "*One of my former bosses did not like it at all when I contacted the trade union when there were disagreements about work (matters related to the employment contract). After that, he/she began to bully and do everything to force me to resign. I learned afterwards that he/she had been plotting how to get rid of me. I resigned eventually, and I would never go back to work for that person*"
Violated justice and loyalty (n = 68)	
Intangible, professional exchanges. The LMX dimension of loyalty	"*The leader blabbed my—and also other subordinates'—affairs to my colleagues.*" "*I once told [the leader] confidential things and they came up surprisingly in another context, then I was disappointed and decided that I will never again reveal any of my private matters!*"
Broken expectations of loyalty, unfair favoritism	"*My former supervisor told me things at work and outside it that should not have been passed on to subordinates. For example, about other people's affairs, that is why I could never trust him/her and have not spoken of my personal affairs, because I didn't trust that he/she would not have blabbed them*" "*My leader divided employees into two different castes, "good guys" and "dirty workers." Dirty workers did all the planning and generated ideas, [then] the manager took the credit and then drove the ideas forward with the good guys. At some point, the truth was revealed, and my leader was forced to leave the organization. The atmosphere of the work community was gone, and it did not recover in the future*"

(continued)

Table 1. (continued)

Theme/definition	Excerpts from dataset
Unmet resource expectations (n = 218)	
Intangible and tangible professional exchanges. The dimension of contribution and professional respect of LMX dimensions	"*The agreed salary increase did not materialize, even though I did the specialized vocational training required to obtain the salary increase. The second time the supervisor did not keep his promises about the content of the job description.*" "*Due to lack of guidance, I lost trust in the manager*"
Unmet expectations related to shared information and work-related resources. Unprofessional conduct of the leader	"*Asked for help in a very harsh situation and I have not received any contact [from my leader]*" "*In my work as an individual coach, I was once alone with a difficult customer relationship, and I did not receive the support/help needed to resolve the situation, despite my request*" "*My previous leader did not do tasks related to salary and work that were his/her responsibility, instead I had to do them. In addition, there were also small things where the management of the issue should have belonged to him/her, but I had to do it. These issues have been sorted out, but he/she has no longer got my full confidence*"

LMX: leader–member exchange.

as demonstrated by the subordinates being able to recall them sufficiently years afterward to describe their feelings and the specific actions of the leader or the tone used. These incidents are related to the personality and character of the parties and the actions of the parties directed at each other. In an employment relationship, the parties are usually expected to behave professionally and respectfully toward each other and responding to an exchange situation in a certain way, and therefore, the actions of the leader might be perceived as demonstrating a failure to fulfill an obligation in the eyes of the subordinate. Although many of the incidents within this theme could be considered rather minor, there were accounts of some more severe experiences gathered. Some subordinates felt the behavior on the part of the leader was hurtful and intended to diminish them, and the subordinates concerned felt the criticism they received targeted their personal characteristics.

The reported incidents eroded the subordinates' trust in the leader and continued to influence the feelings and perceptions of the subordinate for some considerable time afterward. In some cases, the subordinate had experienced negative behavior from the leader that they considered to constitute bullying, which has been identified as a serious issue with the potential to trigger a negative exchange (Cropanzano et al., 2017). It seems that in some of the incidents the relationship did not recover from the perceived breach and sometimes triggered the termination of the working relationship.

Interestingly, it seems that in some cases, the incidents between subordinate and leader prompt behavioral and affective changes on the part of the leader. There were incidents after which the leader seemed to withdraw from the affective exchange relationship and altered the behavior and attitude toward the subordinate. The leader might have assumed the relationship would include more developed personal exchanges with the subordinate including some outside of the working environment, and when that assumption was not met, withdrew from the exchange at work. These behavioral changes of the leader undermined the subordinate's trust and led the subordinate to perceive a breach of the LMX relationship.

To conclude, within this theme, the relationship between subordinate and leader suffered from an LMX breach triggered by affective incidents. In some cases, the incident might have been so personal for the subordinate that the leader would not even recognize the situation. Therefore, the experience of the breach was often highly individual—covering only the person telling the story. Therefore, the incident must be examined through the subjectivity lens and be acknowledged as potentially serious to the complainant.

Violated justice and loyalty

Within this theme, many incidents link to the larger social context in which the dyad is embedded such as the team. For example, the dyad might face conflicts with multiple actors interfering in the exchange and interaction processes of the dyadic parties. The trustworthiness of the leader can be assessed through the LMX dimension *loyalty*. The exchanges within this theme were also to a great extent, communicative, but related to the professional side of the relationship. One of the most regular incidents within this category was *betrayed confidentiality*, in which the leader had divulged a private or confidential matter to someone external to the dyad. There might have been a real promise made of confidentiality or an expectation of it due to the nature of the information shared and the leader's role.

In a dyadic relationship, there are multiple exchange processes related to the loyalty dimension of LMX: For example, subordinates are often willing and might even be obliged to discuss personal issues with their leaders, expecting loyalty in return. The willingness probably occurs because the subordinate views the leader as trustworthy, and an obligation can arise, for example, if the organization requires an employee to give personal details relating to their health to claim sick leave. However, the respondents cited instances of trust being broken, such as when the leader discussed private matters with someone unconnected with the issue. An important viewpoint was the presence of multiple parties, and in some cases, the realization of the incident through third parties.

Moreover, a person outside the dyad could be seen as a passive or active party to the perceived breach; a passive actor would be a colleague to whom the leader related a matter considered private by the subordinate perceiving the breach. An active actor would be a colleague who, for example, participated in the bullying of the aggrieved subordinate at work alongside the leader. Interestingly, some subordinates reporting an incident were bystanders and perceived a breach in their dyad, although the experience did not directly affect them. Such situations complicate the wider relationships within the work team and organization and also influence subordinates' perceptions of their relationship quality.

Within this theme were also instances related to *favoritism* applied to certain subordinates, evoking strong feelings of injustice among the subordinates who were witness to it. When subordinates experienced incidents of favoritism, it provoked strong feelings of inequity and made those subordinates reassess their standing in the group. It became clear that equality between subordinates is something subordinates expect, and in some cases, the perception of inequality between subordinates even led to a termination of the relationship. Moreover, unfair treatment led to behavioral changes between the parties; for example, some respondents described communication and exchange subsequently being limited.

In conclusion, loyalty is an important element within the dyadic relationship, and there is often a strong expectation of loyalty from the leader in return prompted by sharing private information. In addition, discussions among the work group contrasting justice and equity can often cause subordinates to reassess their own standing and the quality of their exchange relationship, and in such circumstances, the feeling that here has been an LMX breach is triggered by the actions of third parties.

Unmet resource expectations

In addition to the affective side of the LMX relationship and the elements related to the loyalty dimension, work-related resources controlled by the leader (e.g., career progression and shared information) including the leader's conduct and support are important to LMX relationships through tangible and intangible work-related exchanges. These interactions are related to the *contribution* dimension of the LMX and also that of *professional respect*. This theme encapsulating two LMX dimensions was the dominant one revealed by the survey.

The first expectation of subordinates relates to resources concerning their career and work role and the associated resources, for example, salary rises, a challenging task load, or a promotion path. When subordinates have career-related expectations, certain actions taken by a leader can be perceived as undermining those expectations; in other words, a discrepancy develops between expectations and reality. Although some of the decisions related to the career of the subordinate are made at a higher level of the organization, the immediate supervisor is strongly perceived as the agent of the organization responsible for the decisions made on the career and work of the subordinate. If their expectations are not met, subordinates' can perceive the exchange agreement to be breached and their trust in the leader to be unwarranted.

It is important to note that the references to resource expectations usually featured an element of reciprocity. The respondents often felt that their perception that a contract had been breached arose from a situation in which the subordinate fulfilled their side of the reciprocal resource exchange by improving their performance or by undertaking training, and therefore expected more extensive resources (such as new tasks or an improved salary) from the leader in return. In an organization, the leader is expected to do many things, including nurturing subordinates' careers or ensuring they receive appropriate remuneration as they progress within the firm. However, subordinates also expect leaders to take care of more routine organizational tasks, and some respondents reported failings on the part of the leader related to these routine issues.

In addition to the expectations around resources related to the career and tasks of the subordinate, the subordinates expected other intangible resources to be provided by the leader, for example, work-related *support* and *information*. The leader might not give enough support or feedback to their subordinates and that omission compromises the trust the subordinate feels in their dyadic relationship. One feeling expressed was that of frustration: The subordinates felt frustrated when the leader acted in ways contrary to those they expected, and they wrote of feelings such as powerlessness, desperation, and disappointment. It seems that the subordinates were expecting to engage in an exchange cycle related to intangible elements that would lead to a more extensive exchange of resources such as the provision of professional information and mentoring. The subordinates might have initiated the exchange of information but felt they were not getting anything in return. Moreover, due to the role of the leader, the subordinates often expected support from the leader in various situations, for example, in complicated customer interactions or defending the subordinate's actions in problematic situations.

In addition to the expectation concerning the work-related resources, or support and information from the leader, perceived *leadership* is also something the subordinates have expectations of. One viewpoint on the LMX relationship between the parties is the professional respect of the subordinate for the leader: Professional respect relates to the work dimension and includes respect for the leader and the assessment of the leader's actions, built on the subjective assessment of the subordinate (Liden and Maslyn, 1998). The respondents criticized leaders for (on occasion) being unprofessional, lacking strong leadership, demonstrating deficient leadership, and misusing their managerial position for personal benefit. In other words, the incidents diminished the professional respect for the leader. To a great extent, the incidents cited were tied to the behavior and conduct of the leader, and to some extent to the job tasks or work itself. It is important to note that the dimension of professional respect is to some extent based on personal reputation and subjective perception and not founded on exchange episodes as the other dimensions of LMX are (Sin et al., 2009). Moreover, these incidents are largely related to an overall atmosphere in the organization due to the leaders' actions or way of working. It seems that also within this theme were some behavioral or emotional changes, and some felt that they could no longer work under their supervisor.

To conclude, in a dyadic relationship, the subordinate has expectations of the behavior of the leader and also of the tangible and intangible resources the leader should provide them. When leaders act unprofessionally and do not discharge their obligations as their subordinates perceive they should, the subordinate can be disappointed that their expectations are not being met. The leader might not give enough support or feedback to the subordinate and that influences the trust the subordinate has in the dyadic relationship.

Discussion and conclusions

The aim of this study was to examine the dynamic and processual nature of LMX relationships, through negatively charged exchanges and interactions. The study aimed to present a theoretical contribution to the existing LMX literature by introducing a novel concept of the LMX breach. Moreover, the study offered an empirical contribution by illuminating the descriptions and representations of the negative incidents and interactions leading to the LMX breach in supervisory relationships.

Notions on the development of the social exchange relationship (e.g., Bauer and Green, 1996) suggest, in line with this study, that the relationship between the leader and their subordinate is an ongoing process, assessed through events (Ballinger and Rockmann, 2010), occurring in the microlevel interaction processes between the parties, where they assess the quality and expectations of the exchange (Brower et al., 2000; Hofmans et al., 2019). It should be noted that expectations of exchange or conduct, and not having those expectations met, lead to the perception that exchange expectations have been violated (Game, 2008). The results presented above also indicate that negative interactions can prevent a relationship from developing into one of high quality (Cropanzano et al., 2017) and also diminish the perceived quality of the exchange relationship (Ballinger and Rockmann, 2010; Cropanzano et al., 2017).

Therefore, this study suggests that the LMX breach can be defined through negative incidents and interaction occurring in LMX relationships that compel subordinates to reassess the quality of their relationship with their leader, as well as their willingness to engage in further exchanges with that leader. That situation also illuminates the dynamic and processual nature of LMX relationships and the possible deterioration of the relationship quality. As stated earlier, the dynamic view of LMX relationships is noteworthy (Gertner and Day, 1997), as is their processual nature (Day, 2014; Day and Miscenko, 2015; Van Breukelen et al., 2006).

Based on the data and the theoretical underpinnings of social exchange theory, an LMX breach can develop through two exchange-related processes. First, there might be *negatively charged initiative or anchoring* exchange actions, through which the relationship might take a turn for the worse. The results of this study support the finding that even a single, negative event affecting the parties can lead occurrences within social exchanges to deteriorate in quality (Ballinger and Rockmann, 2010; Parzefall and Coyle-Shapiro, 2011). The data presented above might suggest that negative, personal interactions in particular could be especially harmful and might also affect the person experiencing the hurtful incident for a long time. Although the duration of the LMX relationships in this data could not be defined, it might be assumed that these incidents can happen at any stage of the relationship (Cropanzano et al., 2017). Second, it seems that the process could be influenced by *a lack of positive exchange actions*. That could be the situation if, for example, the subordinate felt their relationship with their leader lacked certain positive exchanges or interactions with the leader such as necessary information or support. The absence of positive exchange actions is likely to lead subordinates to reassess the exchange quality in the relationship with the leaders. In addition, there are indications that certain LMX breaches escalate over time, particularly those triggered by issues with professional respect.

Interestingly, when dissecting the frequency of the perceived breaches, the theme related to resources and professional respect was predominant among those revealed by the survey responses. This finding implies that the role of the leader is strongly related to providing resources, such as support, information, and access to desired tasks. Breaches of the relationship related to these areas had an impact on the trust in the leader. The finding also indicates that having a strong LMX relationship could have a pivotal role as a resource, as realized through work-related exchanges, including shared information and support (Erdogan and Liden, 2002) and also career advancement and development opportunities (e.g., Han, 2010). However, these results bring into question the personal side of LMX relationships and emotions within those relationships. Although the breaches relating to more personal aspects of the relationship were less frequent, in some cases, the emotional response was strong. It could be that the more personal incidents were more severe in nature and therefore less frequent. This assumption is supported by a previous study, which found the interpersonal and abusive violations of trust were seen as more severe than those related to supervisor incompetence, for example (Grover et al., 2014).

Research suggests unmet expectations are linked to lower-quality LMX relationships (Maslyn and Uhl-Bien, 2001), and the results of the current research advance that finding in that they show unmet expectations could also be linked to deteriorating relationship quality and one or both parties withdrawing from the exchange relationship. This finding would seem to run counter to those relating to the more often studied exchange cycles within an LMX, in which the relationship is strengthened through exchange processes (Bauer and Green, 1996; Graen and Uhl-Bien, 1995). As noted earlier, the rationale behind negative exchange cycles certainly merits further study (e.g., Ballinger and Rockmann, 2010).

Furthermore, the respondents written responses made it clear that especially in work-related events, the influence of a social network within the organization and the effect of other actors on the experience of the LMX breaches were fundamental. The results showed that the LMX dyads were a part of a broader social network, with multiple actors influencing the experience of an LMX breach; a finding in line with recent studies of LMX relationships in organizations (Graen and Uhl-Bien, 1995; Regts et al., 2018; Sparrowe and Emery, 2015). Trust is important to a working relationship (e.g., Grover et al., 2014), as is perceived justice and equity (Henderson et al., 2008; Hooper and Martin, 2008), and the results of this study indicate that subordinates assess the trustworthiness and perceived commitment to justice of the leader by reflecting events taking place within other dyads.

Moreover, the relationships subordinates have with others, for example, in a work group or team, and the strength of those relationships influence their experience of an LMX breach. This viewpoint incorporating multiple relationships between different actors influencing each other is supported by previous studies (e.g., Sparrowe and Emery, 2015). Moreover, the findings of this study support the earlier notion of the role of social comparison (Henderson et al., 2009; Hooper and Martin, 2008) in relation to a person's perception of the quality of their LMX relationship. The results of this study indicate that by reflecting the nature of their exchange with the leader compared to others, subordinates also construct the perception of their own relationship with the leader and its quality. This reflects the notion that in the course of their daily interactions within the work group, subordinates contrast their own LMX relationship and their standing in the work group (Hu and Liden, 2013). Moreover, the data expose a set of incidents taking place within dyads, as well as in a broader context, such as at the team and organization level, linking the incidents on a dyadic level to, for example, the psychological contracts of the subordinates.

To conclude, the findings of this study make valuable theoretical and empirical contributions to challenge the static view of LMX relationships and introduce a novel theoretical concept of the LMX breach. Through several events illuminated by the data, the subordinates assess the strength of their relationship with the leader, and whether the expectations concerning the conduct of the leader or content of the exchange are being met. The breaches of LMX were linked to the dimensions of the LMX and had an impact on how the subordinates perceived the relationship on both personal and professional levels and were also related to both tangible and intangible resources.

Limitations of the study and implications for practice and future research

One obvious limitation of the study stems from the nature of the data. Although the dataset produced many answers, most of which were interesting and rich, the answers were generally rather short, and in the future, the phenomenon should perhaps be explored through interview data. In addition to the qualitative research methods, the phenomenon should be examined quantitatively and especially longitudinally so that the antecedents and outcomes of the phenomena could be identified more specifically. However, the current research does include some longitudinal information, as the perceptions of the subordinates were partly based on their recollections of past events, and in addition, some of them described a change in atmosphere or behavior after the incidents. Nonetheless, more longitudinal data would have offered stronger findings on the actual change in quality of the relationships in question. Additionally, the viewpoint of the leader would have been interesting, as the data now offer a limited and subjective view of the incidents. However, as stated above, the subjectivity of the incidents must be acknowledged and accepted.

The findings of this study offer interesting future research avenues and implications for practice. This study should prompt a discussion on the dynamic and processual nature of the LMX through its examination of conflicts on multiple levels and the dimensions of the relationship. In line with the recent suggestions for further research on the LMX (Day, 2014; Day and Miscenko, 2015), the results of this study suggest that the dynamic and processual nature of the LMX should be studied further. Moreover, future research might consider the variable forms of the negative incidents taking place between the dyadic partners in small, everyday interactions, but in addition also in the organizational context with multiple actors involved in the process. Furthermore, future studies should delve into the dyadic nature of the breaches and investigate the supervisory side of those negative interactions and exchanges.

In addition to the theoretical implications, practical suggestions can also be proposed. Although the fundamental, and in some cases challenging, role of the leader became apparent, the role of the subordinate in the process of leadership must be acknowledged. Therefore, it is most important for organizations to develop practices to help both leaders and subordinates deal with situations where a negative incident occurs in a dyadic relationship. However, from the viewpoint of the leader, as the results of this study indicate, recognizing those incidents might be challenging, or perhaps not even possible. The main emphasis should be on helping leaders in dyads to improve their relationships with their subordinates, especially the interaction and communication patterns fostering an open and free exchange culture. Additionally, neutral channels for open feedback should be offered to permit subordinates to freely express their concerns and perceived breaches of the LMX and to foster the development of procedures to address such situations. Moreover, organizations should strive harder to recognize the important role of the leader in overall organizational settings, where the leader acts as an individual actor but in addition, as a representative of the organization.

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Author biography

Hilpi Kangas is a doctoral student at the University of Vaasa, Finland. She has been studying leadership, and her interest is especially on dyadic leader–follower relationships concentrating on the LMX theory. Her focus regarding the dyadic relationships has been on challenging context the relationships take place, for example, a situation of a newcomer leader with multiple LMX relationships developing simultaneously (Kangas, 2013), or negative relationship breaches occurring in leader–follower interactions influencing the follower perceptions about the relationship. Moreover, she has studied dyadic relationships in international context (Mäkelä, et al., 2019) from the viewpoint of expatriates and international business travelers, linking, for example, physical proximity between the dyadic partners to well-being-related outcomes. She has published her research in international journals including Human Resource Development International, Leadership & Organization Development Journal, and Journal of Global Management.

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Satisfaction with an expatriate job

The role of physical and functional distance between expatriate and supervisor

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to focus on satisfaction with an expatriate job and how such satisfaction is linked to leadership. Specifically, this research examines how two different kinds of distances – physical distance and functional distance – between an expatriate and his/her supervisor are related to satisfaction with the expatriate job.

Design/methodology/approach – The study was conducted among 290 Finnish expatriates. Moderated hierarchical regression analysis was conducted in order to test the research hypothesis.

Findings – The results show that low functional distance with a supervisor is related to greater satisfaction with the expatriate job. The physical distance is not directly connected to expatriate job satisfaction, but the common effect of the two types of distance shows that among those whose functional distance is low, working in the same country with the leader is linked to greater expatriate satisfaction than recorded among those who were physically distant. Interestingly, expatriates with high functional distance are more satisfied with the expatriate job if they work in a different country to their supervisor.

Originality/value – This study makes a contribution in three areas; first, it addresses the understudied phenomena of international work-specific job satisfaction, specifically satisfaction with an expatriate job. Second, it provides new knowledge on the outcomes of leader distance in the context of expatriation, a work situation that is inherently related to changes in physical location and to organizational relationships. Third, it contributes to leadership literature and highlights the importance of the conditions and the context in which leadership occurs.

Keywords International mobility, Leadership, Job satisfaction, Expatriate, Leader distance

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

The internationalization of economies has grown dramatically increasing the need for internationally mobile and highly skilled employees (Collings *et al.*, 2009; De Cieri *et al.*, 2007; Salt and Wood, 2012). Expatriates, people living outside their home country owing to their work, are a critical group of these international professionals, and essential assets for their employers, and therefore, their experiences and success relating to work merit attention (Bonache *et al.*, 2018).

It has been stated, that one important predictor of expatriate success is job satisfaction (Culpan and Wright, 2002; Grant-Vallone and Ensher, 2001) defined as being a positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job or job experiences (Locke, 1976, p. 1300). Job satisfaction has been studied either as a general phenomenon similar for all employees or as an occupation-specific or work-specific experience, such as measuring satisfaction with a nursing job (van Saane, 2003) or international business travel (Mäkelä and Kinnunen, 2016). The focus in previous literature has been on expatriates' general job satisfaction (Bonache, 2005; Froese and Peltokorpi, 2011). However, research shows that especially when the aim is to explore employees' experiences in the international work context, it is important to take account of the international aspect of work because general measures may not capture the specific issues affecting that kind of work (Mäkelä and Kinnunen, 2016). This study contributes to current knowledge by following an occupation-specific or work-specific approach to job satisfaction and focusses on satisfaction with an expatriate job.

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Prior studies show that leadership plays a vital role in expatriates' general job satisfaction (Stroppa and Spieß, 2011). However, earlier studies about leadership and expatriation rarely take account of the specific nature of the international work context, in which, for instance, the distance from a leader is a pertinent issue (Antonakis and Atwater, 2002; Bligh and Riggio, 2013). Leader distance has been defined in several ways, for instance, referring to physical and functional distance between leader and follower (see e.g. Antonakis and Atwater, 2002; Antonakis and Jacquart, 2013; Griffith *et al.*, 2018; Napier and Ferris, 1993).

Physical distance can be caused by the physical structures of organizations, and globalization and new working structures are often shown to increase the physical distance between leader and subordinate (Avolio *et al.*, 2014; Zander *et al.*, 2012), especially in an international work context. Functional distance refers to the quality of the functional working relationship between the leader and the subordinate and has been studied with reference to leader-member exchange (LMX) theory (Graen and Uhl-Bien, 1995; Napier and Ferris, 1993, p. 337). The high quality of the LMX relationships is a significant antecedent of job satisfaction (Epitropaki and Martin, 2005; Erdogan and Enders, 2007), and has also been linked to expatriate success (Benson and Pattie, 2009; Pattie *et al.*, 2013).

Distance, both physical and functional, between the parties of these dyads may limit the availability of some important resources, such as the natural occurrence of interaction, support gained from each other and access to more developmental work tasks (Antonakis and Atwater, 2002; Varma and Stroh, 2001). Conservation of resources (COR) theory (Hobfoll, 2001, 2002) states that the resources people have are important for their wellbeing; and job satisfaction is an essential indicator of such wellbeing (see e.g. Mäkelä and Kinnunen, 2016) and therefore COR theory is adopted as a theoretical basis for this study.

Although there is a growing body of research investigating the supervisory relationships of expatriates (Kraimer and Wayne, 2004; Kraimer *et al.*, 2001; Pattie *et al.*, 2013), also highlighting the important role of the supervisor in the general job satisfaction of the expatriate (Stroppa and Spieß, 2011), the connection merits further study. The aim of this study is to focus on satisfaction with an expatriate job and how such satisfaction is linked to leadership. Specifically, this research examines how two different kinds of distances – physical distance and functional distance – between an expatriate and his/her supervisor are related to satisfaction with the expatriate job. Therefore, the contribution of this study is threefold; first, it addresses the understudied phenomena of international work-specific job satisfaction, specifically satisfaction with an expatriate job. Second, it provides new knowledge on the outcomes of leader distance in the context of expatriation, a work situation that is inherently related to changes in physical location and to organizational relationships. Third, the current study contributes to leadership literature and highlights the importance of the conditions and the context in which leadership occurs. Below, the relevant literature is reviewed and hypotheses developed.

Leader distance and satisfaction with an expatriate job

Physical distance and satisfaction with an expatriate job

Globalization and new working structures often increase the physical distance between leader and subordinate (Avolio *et al.*, 2014; Zander *et al.*, 2012), especially in an international work context. Expatriates working in the global or regional headquarters of multinational firms often have supervisors who are not located in the same country. From the leadership perspective, expatriation is challenging for supervisor–subordinate relationships especially given the frequent need to manage people who are physically distant and to manage the temporary nature of expatriate assignments (Benson and Pattie, 2009). The same challenges also apply to relationships between the expatriate and his/her own supervisor.

Although studies on expatriates and distance from a leader are limited, some research has investigated the link between the physical distance of expatriates and their mentors (Carraher *et al.*, 2008; Zhuang *et al.*, 2013). Those relationships are also equated with the supervisory relationship (Raabe and Beehr, 2003). It has been shown that the physical distance is connected to job satisfaction among expatriates, and having a mentor residing in the home country (i.e. someone physically distant) has a negative relationship to job satisfaction among expatriates (Carraher *et al.*, 2008). Moreover, the relevance of physical distance between leader and the follower has become evident through the studies focussing on globally dispersed or virtual teams, which are also an important form of globalized work (Jimenez *et al.*, 2017). As with expatriation, work in global teams is also characterized by a globally dispersed working environment and limited face-to-face contact with team members who are physically distant (Maloney and Zellmer-Bruhn, 2006).

Studies on global and virtual teams reveal that remote team members feel isolated and perceive that they do not have access to critical information, and that they are not involved in crucial team decisions (Armstrong and Cole, 2002; Breu and Hemingway, 2004; Cramton, 2001). Expatriates working at a physical distance from their supervisor may find it difficult to participate in decision-making processes led by their remote supervisor, or they may feel that they are outsiders because of the reduction of naturally occurring face-to-face communication. Relying on COR theory (Hobfoll, 2011), such negative experiences are likely to reduce a person's satisfaction with their work. In the domestic context, it has also been shown that extensive time spent in a virtual mode at work (i.e. where there is minimal contact with the supervisor) is negatively related to job satisfaction (Golden and Veiga, 2008).

Though the physical distance between the expatriate and his/her leader can thus be expected to impact on expatriates' satisfaction with their work, no earlier studies analyzing this could be found. The impacts of the location of the supervisor have been analyzed, for example, in the context of expatriate performance management, but there the location of the primary supervisor was not found to be related to how successful the performance management was: success was more dependent on process-related factors such as what kinds of goals are set, how they were set, and how they were evaluated (Suutari and Tahvanainen, 2002). However, in the light of COR theory and findings from studies of expatriates and their mentors, as well as on virtual teams, we hypothesize as follows:

H1. Physical distance between the supervisor and the expatriate is negatively related to satisfaction with the expatriate job.

Functional distance and satisfaction with expatriate job

Functional distance between supervisor and the subordinate refers to the degree of closeness and quality of the working relationship between the supervisor and the subordinate (Napier and Ferris, 1993). LMX (see e.g. Dulebohn *et al.*, 2012; Graen and Uhl-Bien, 1995; Schriesheim *et al.*, 1998) theory offers a widely used approach to study such distance, in that the basis of LMX theory is that the leader and each of his/her followers create a unique relationship. Typical features of high-quality relationships include trust, co-operation and mutual affect between the partners (Graen and Uhl-Bien, 1995). The presence of such characteristics indicates low functional distance between relationship parties (Antonakis and Atwater, 2002) and good availability of various resources (cf., COR theory) likely to lead to better wellbeing, for example, in the form of job satisfaction. Low-quality relationships are based on formal work tasks and contracts (Graen and Uhl-Bien, 1995) and can be seen as an indicator of high functional distance between leader and follower (Antonakis and Atwater, 2002) and, thus, as a situation in which fewer resources are available to the follower (Hobfoll, 2001, 2002). From the perspective of COR theory, this leads to reduced wellbeing for the follower.

The focal role of high-quality LMX relationships as an antecedent of job satisfaction has been acknowledged in numerous studies in the domestic context (Dulebohn *et al.*, 2012; Epitropaki and Martin, 2005; Golden and Veiga, 2008; Harris *et al.*, 2006, 2009; Vidyarthi *et al.*, 2014). It has also been argued that supervisory relationships in expatriate outcomes are undisputable (Benson and Pattie, 2009; Pattie *et al.*, 2010). Research on LMX in the context of a high-quality expatriation LMX relationship between leader and the expatriate follower is suggested to be important for the job satisfaction of the expatriate, in particular when the supervisor is a local person (Boyd and Taylor, 1998; Froese and Peltokorpi, 2013). Additionally, earlier expatriate studies have shown that different kinds of social support positively influence the adjustment of the expatriate to their new environment (Bhaskar-Shrinivas *et al.*, 2005; Lee, 2010). The level of adjustment, in turn, relates to the job satisfaction of the expatriate (Gudmundsdottir, 2013).

In addition, earlier studies have shown that LMX is positively related to expatriates' perceptions of organizational support (Liu and Ipe, 2010) as well as task and contextual performance (Kraimer *et al.*, 2001). Though the research evidence is still very limited with regard to job satisfaction, a study by Varma and Stroh (2001) reported that high-quality LMX was associated with female expatriate satisfaction with their assignments. Therefore, in the light of LMX and COR theory and related empirical evidence, we hypothesize the following about the role of functional distance:

H2. Functional distance between the supervisor and the expatriate is negatively related to satisfaction with an expatriate job.

Interaction effect of physical distance and functional distance on the satisfaction with an expatriate job

As hypothesized above, we expect low distance, both physical and functional, to lead to greater satisfaction with an expatriate job. One main assumption in COR theory is that having multiple different kinds of resources strengthens a person's wellbeing (Hobfoll, 2001, 2002). In particular, if one has multiple resources it is more likely that suitable support for varying situations is available compared to the situation where there is little variation of resources. Therefore, we also study the interaction effect of physical distance and functional distance on satisfaction with an expatriate job. Physical distance limits, for instance, natural interaction and opportunities to foster mutual support between leader and follower and therefore has been suggested to be a contextual factor with potential to moderate the effects of LMX on employee outcomes (Golden and Veiga, 2008; Howell and Hall-Merenda, 1999). It seems that physical distance between leader and the follower is likely to limit the available resources. However, this interaction effect has not been studied in the context of expatriation, and merits further research.

There are only a few empirical studies on the interaction effects of physical distance and functional distance on organizational outcomes. A study by Howell and Hall-Merenda (1999) showed that high-quality LMX was linked to stronger follower performance irrespective of physical distance, thus no interaction effect was found. In that study, the physical distance recorded between leader and follower varied from working on the same floor to working in a different city. In contrast with the present study, the distances involved were not as extensive as working in a different country and the study focussed on performance rather than satisfaction with work.

Another study on physical distance and LMX in the context of virtual teams analyzed the connection between leader distance and general job satisfaction (Golden and Veiga, 2008). The study showed that if the quality of LMX was high, job satisfaction was almost equal for those who worked in a limited virtual mode or an extensive virtual mode. The study also showed that operating in an extensive virtual mode (i.e. having limited contact with the supervisor) in a low-quality LMX relationship caused job satisfaction to be weaker than in a situation where the leader and subordinate worked in a limited virtual mode (i.e. the employee is in regular contact with the supervisor).

Identifying only these two empirical studies reporting different results indicates that more research on the boundary conditions under which the distant leadership occurs is required. Neither of the last-mentioned studies were conducted in the context of international work and therefore our study contributes to the research field of international work and global mobility. Earlier empirical findings are not totally aligned with COR theory's assumption that resources have cumulative or loss spiral effects (Hobfoll, 2002). In contrast, it seems that functional distance may operate as a resource that diminishes the negative effect of physical distance because both studies (Golden and Veiga, 2008; Howell and Hall-Merenda, 1999) reported that the positive relationship between low functional distance with a supervisor and its outcomes were not affected by physical distance. However, COR theory does allow that some resources may be more critical than others (Hobfoll, 2002).

Because existing empirical evidence is insufficient and prior research does not address the context of expatriation, we base our hypothesis mainly on COR theory's assumption that a situation characterized by more resources is better for individuals' wellbeing (e.g. job satisfaction) than a situation featuring fewer resources. Thus, we present the following hypothesis:

H3. Low functional distance will be related to higher satisfaction with an expatriate job among those who work in the same country as the supervisor than it will among those who work in a different country to their immediate supervisor. In addition, high functional distance will be related to lower satisfaction with an expatriate job among those who work in a different country to their supervisor than it will among those who work in the same country.

The proposed study model and hypothesized relationships are summarized in Figure 1.

Methods

Data collection

The hypotheses were tested and answers to research questions sought using data collected through an internet survey. The survey was carried out in co-operation with the Finnish trade union TEK (Academic Engineers and Architects in Finland) in 2016. TEK sent an e-mail invitation to each of its 1,168 members shown as living abroad on its member register. A total of 305 survey responses were returned. Four responses were excluded because the respondents no longer worked abroad, and an additional 11 because the respondents did not work while living abroad. The final number of eligible responses was 290 and the final response rate 24.8 percent. Of the respondents, 76.7 percent were men. The average age of respondents was 42.3 years. The three most common host countries for expatriates were Germany (16.2 percent), the USA (14.1 percent) and Switzerland (9.3 percent) and in total the respondents listed 51 host countries. A total of 61.4 percent of our respondents reported that they had sought work abroad on their own initiative and 35.9 percent reported they were sent by their employer (2.8 percent did not respond to that question).

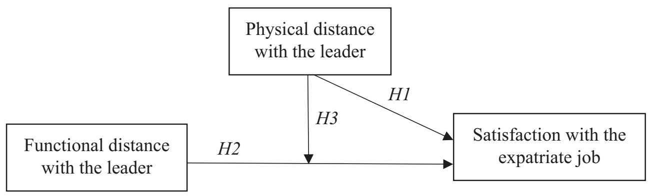

Figure 1. Study model and hypotheses of the study

Measures

Functional distance was measured by an eight-item LMX scale (Tanskanen *et al.*, 2018). Sample items include: "We trust each other" and "We can genuinely listen to each other's opinions." Responses were given on a five-point Likert scale anchored with strongly disagree (1) and strongly agree (5) and the Cronbach's α for the scale was 0.96.

Physical distance was measured with the question "Does your immediate supervisor mainly work with you [...] (select one of the following options): a) in the same country and in the same office, b) in the same country but in some other office, c) in Finland, d) in some other country." As the aim of this study is to explore whether the supervisor is located in the same country or in a different country to the expatriate, responses were recoded as a binary variable; the first two options as 1 = same country and last two as 0 = another country.

Satisfaction with expatriate job was measured through four items modified from the satisfaction scale used in the context of international business travel (Mäkelä *et al.*, 2015; Mäkelä and Kinnunen, 2016; Westman *et al.*, 2009). These items were modified to match the expatriate job context (sample item: "I like working as an expatriate"). The items were rated on a five-point Likert scale anchored with completely disagree (1) and completely agree (5) and the Cronbach's α for the scale was 0.754.

Controls

Gender (a binary variable, where 1 = male and 0 = female), age and length of stay in the current country (in full years) were controlled for. In addition, organizational position (1 for the lowest and 10 for the highest level in the hierarchy) was included as a control variable because it has been shown that the effects of leader distance may vary depending on organizational level (Antonakis and Jacquart, 2013). Expatriation type (a binary variable, where 1 = assigned expatriate and 0 = self-initiated expatriate) was also controlled for in the study model.

Results

The analysis started with an examination of the dimensionality and discriminant validity of the scales for satisfaction with expatriate job and functional distance. CFA showed support for measurement validity for both LMX and satisfaction with expatriate job measurement scales. The two-factor measurement model indicated measurement validity for LMX and satisfaction with expatriate job scales by having an adequate fit to the data [$\chi^2(62) = 168.84$; root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) = 0.077; Tucker Lewis index (TLI) = 0.943; comparative fit index (CFI) = 0.961]. With regard to standard goodness of fit cut-off values: RMSEA < 0.080 indicates acceptable fit, and TLI and CFI values over 0.900 indicate an acceptable fit while over 0.095 indicate a good fit (e.g. Hu and Bentler, 1999). In satisfaction with expatriate job scale the *post-hoc* correlated error-terms between "I am satisfied with my current work tasks as an expatriate" and "I especially like my job because it involves the possibility to live abroad" were estimated. All factor loadings were significant and standardized factor loadings generally high (> 0.800), though satisfaction with expatriate work had one relatively low loading (0.615).

Means, SD and correlations between study variables are presented in Table I. The intercorrelations showed, first, that functional distance related positively to satisfaction with the expatriate job, but physical distance did not. With regard to our control variables, the findings indicate that higher organizational position was positively related to satisfaction with the expatriate job. Gender, age or length of the stay in the company did not have a significant relationship with the satisfaction with the job.

A moderated linear hierarchical regression analysis was used with the following procedure: first, control variables were entered in step 1 to control for their effects; second, indicators of physical and functional distance were entered in step 2; and finally, the interaction terms of physical and functional distance were entered in step 3. In calculating the interaction terms, the variables were standardized to avoid multicollinearity (Cohen *et al.*, 2003).

We did not find a significant relationship between physical distance and satisfaction with the expatriate job. Positive relationship between functional distance (functional distance is measured as LMX quality, thus the higher the LMX, the lower the functional distance) and satisfaction with the expatriate job ($\beta = 0.22$, $p < 0.05$) was found, which shows that the lower the functional distance, the more satisfied expatriates are with their job (see Table II). Accordingly, if the expatriate had a low functional distance from his/her supervisor, s/he was more satisfied with the expatriate job. In turn, the physical distance between the expatriate and the supervisor did not increase or decrease our participants' satisfaction with their expatriate job. In addition, our interaction term made a significant contribution to the explained variance. The interaction term between physical and functional distance was significant ($\beta = 0.22$, $p < 0.05$), and is illustrated in Figure 2 (satisfaction with expatriate job presented in standardized values). Our findings show that those expatriates with low functional distance benefit from the situation of low physical distance: their satisfaction with their expatriate job is higher when physical distance is low. In contrast, those who have high functional distance from their supervisor are more satisfied with the expatriate job if they also have high physical distance from the supervisor compared to the situation in which physical distance is low.

Variables	*M*	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Age (in years)	42.35	9.3							
Gender (men/women)	76.7	–	0.25**						
Length of the stay in host country	4.94	5.6	0.45**	0.09					
Organizational position (1–10)	6.50	1.8	0.47**	0.08	0.26**				
Expatriation type (AE/SIE)	36.8	–	0.15*	0.17**	−0.23**	0.21**			
Physical distance (same country/another country)	0.70	–	−0.27**	−0.11	−0.08	0.12	−0.34**		
Functional distance	4.00	0.9	0.07	−0.02	0.06	0.06	−0.07	0.05	
Satisfaction with expatriate job	3.98	0.70	0.03	−0.04	0.03	0.22**	0.01	−0.10	0.39**

Notes: $n = 282–290$. $^{*}p < 0.05$; $^{**}p < 0.01$

Table I. Means, standard deviations and correlations of the study variables

Independent variables	Satisfaction with expatriate job ($n = 277$) Model 1 β	Model 2 β	Model 3 β	ΔR^2	R^2
Step 1: controls				0.06**	0.06**
Age (in years)	−0.09	−0.12	−0.12		
Gender (men/women)	−0.04	−0.03	−0.04		
Length of the stay in the host country	0.01	0.00	0.00		
Organizational position (1–10)	0.27***	0.22**	0.22***		
Expatriation type (AE/SIE)	−0.02	−0.02	−0.01		
Step 2: direct effects				0.16***	0.22***
Physical distance (same country/another country)		−0.09	−0.08		
Functional distance (LMX)		0.40***	0.22*		
Step 3: interaction				0.01*	0.23*
Physical distance×functional distance			0.22*		

Notes: β, standardized β-coefficient for each step; ΔR^2, change in explanation rate in each step; R^2, explanation rate. $^{*}p < 0.05$; $^{**}p < 0.01$; $^{***}p < 0.001$

Table II. Results of hierarchical regression analyses for satisfaction with expatriate job

In addition, among the control variables, a significant relationship was found between organizational position and satisfaction with the expatriate job; the higher the organizational level, the higher is the level of satisfaction with the expatriate job ($\beta = 0.22, p < 0.001$). This model explained 23 percent of the variance in satisfaction with an expatriate job.

Discussion and conclusion

The aim of this study was to examine the direct and interaction effects of physical distance and functional distance between an expatriate and his/her supervisor on the expatriate's job satisfaction.

Main findings and theoretical contribution

This study contributes to the current literature by addressing the understudied phenomenon of international work-specific job satisfaction, specifically satisfaction with an expatriate job. In general, we found that expatriates were very satisfied with their jobs, recording a mean value of 3.98 of a maximum score of 5.0.

This study contributes to current research by forging a theoretical link between leader distance and expatriation specific outcomes and empirically testing that link. *H1*, suggesting that the physical distance between expatriate and his/her leader is related to satisfaction with the expatriate job was not supported. This finding counters findings among geographically dispersed virtual teams suggesting that distance between the supervisor and the team members leads to lower satisfaction (Golden and Veiga, 2008). However, our knowledge of the effects of the location of an immediate supervisor is still relatively limited in the expatriate context, and thus the findings on global/virtual teams may not hold in the expatriation context. The circumstances typical of an expatriate position, including moving to a new location and settling into new work and living contexts (probably for a limited time span) is likely to make the situation different to that of people remaining in their domestic working environment. It is also possible that digging deeper into the effects of physical distance of supervisor and expatriate, for example, taking account of geographical location, time zone differences and the infrastructure of the society in which the expatriate works would lead to different findings.

Therefore, future studies should focus on different aspects of physical distance between leader and follower also taking account if the leader is located in the expatriate's host country, home country or some other country. However, in line with our findings, earlier

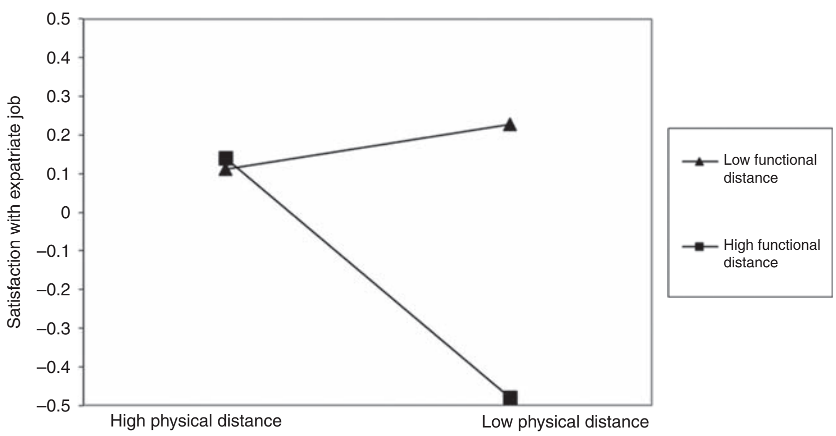

Figure 2.
The significant interaction effect between physical and functional distance between expatriate and the supervisor on satisfaction with expatriate job

studies on supervisor location and work-related experiences of expatriates have shown that the location of the primary supervisor was not related to the perceived efficiency of performance management either (Suutari and Tahvanainen, 2002). It is therefore possible that in the context of expatriation, the location of the supervisor does not have a similar effect on the employee's job-related experiences as it does in other kinds of jobs.

H2, suggesting a direct negative relationship between functional distance and satisfaction with the expatriate job was supported. The findings indicate that lower functional distance between relationship parties was related to higher satisfaction with the expatriate job. This finding is in line with previous studies conducted in the domestic context (Epitropaki and Martin, 2005; Golden and Veiga, 2008; Harris *et al.*, 2009). It also extends our understanding of the outcomes of high-quality leader–follower relationships in the context of expatriation as called for in prior research (Benson and Pattie, 2009; Pattie *et al.*, 2013). In addition, it is worth mentioning that there was no statistically significant difference in the functional distance between those whose supervisor worked in the same country (mean: 4.0) compared to those whose supervisor worked in a different country (mean: 3.9).

Reflecting the results above against COR theory indicates that functional distance between leader and the expatriate plays a more important role as a resource than the physical distance. In addition, since the studies underpinning COR theory were published (Grandey and Cropanzano, 1999; Hobfoll, 2002), communication technology has developed enormously and has improved the ease of communication over physical distance, which has inevitably affected leadership dynamics (e.g. Avolio *et al.*, 2014). The recent discussion around the changing nature of expatriation raises the question of how much the development of information technology has changed the nature of the expatriation experience given it facilitates social interaction (Bonache *et al.*, 2018; Kerri *et al.*, 2015). Therefore, the role of the utilization of modern communication channels and social media between expatriate and leader should be acknowledged. For instance, future studies should explore if intensity of social media usage can affect experiences of leader distance and through that, different outcomes, such as job satisfaction.

H3, suggesting that in a situation marked by low functional distance, low physical distance is more beneficial than high physical distance was supported. This finding is in line with COR theory (Hobfoll, 2001, 2002) that suggests wellbeing is related to the different kinds of resources available to people. Prevailing conditions, for instance, working with a person who provides social support (Hobfoll, 2002) can be seen as a resource that supports a person's wellbeing. It has also been shown that the more significant resources are available to someone, the greater are his/her opportunities to acquire additional ones. Aided by COR theory, we may assume that low functional distance together with low physical distance to the supervisor is a resource building situation. In particular, a low functional distance relationship based on trust and the dyad partners' willingness to interact, alongside physical closeness, especially if working in the same time zone and cultural context, is likely to be more beneficial for the expatriate and lead to greater satisfaction with expatriate job.

H3 anticipated also that high functional distance would relate to lower satisfaction with the expatriate job among those whose physical distance from the supervisor was high compared to those whose physical distance was low; that hypothesis was not supported.

Interestingly, for those relationships marked by high functional distance, working at a greater physical distance were more beneficial (i.e. they recorded higher satisfaction with the expatriate job) compared to the situation when physical distance was low. It seems that people who do not trust their supervisors and do not enjoy working with them enjoy the benefits of physical distance, probably because having to interact frequently with someone they do not have a good relationship with undermines job satisfaction. It is also very likely that expatriate jobs offer more autonomy than those in the home country (Jokinen, 2010) especially if the expatriate works in a different country to his/her supervisor. That may play an important role in the expatriate's experiences, such as job satisfaction, particularly for an employee with a high functional distance from his/her leader. In addition, our study contributes to leadership literature in general and highlights the importance of understanding the different boundary conditions under which leadership occurs. Our study might be especially interesting for LMX theory development as our findings partly contradict the basic assumptions of that theory that in certain conditions high functional distance (cf. low LMX quality) may lead to positive outcomes, such as greater satisfaction with the expatriate job when working in a situation characterized by high physical distance. More research is warranted in that field in both domestic and international contexts.

Limitations and future research

The current study has some limitations that should be acknowledged. Above all, the findings come from a study of cross-sectional design, meaning that we can draw no reliable conclusions on the causal direction of the effects. Longitudinal studies would be required to confirm the connections between leadership and satisfaction with the expatriate job. In addition, the data were based on self-reports, so common method variance may have affected our findings. However, it has been argued that it is an oversimplification to assume that common method variance automatically affects variables measured with the same method (Spector, 2006). In order to control for that, we compared two-factor and single-factor models for functional distance and satisfaction with expatriate job scales. A single-factor solution produced a poor fit with the data [$\chi^2(54) = 404.56$; RMSEA $= 0.150$; TLI $= 0.815$; CFI $= 0.872$] supporting the idea of two separate concepts and showing that common method bias was not a significant problem in our study.

Nevertheless, future studies should acknowledge this in their research design and, for instance, use several sources for data collection, perhaps involving questioning supervisors too. In addition, earlier literature has pointed out that expatriates (and their supervisors) can face challenges posed by a complex set of relationships with leaders in both the home and host countries (Benson and Pattie, 2009). Therefore, the effects of dual leadership (i.e. having one supervisor in the home country and another in the host country) (Vidyarthi *et al.*, 2014) and perhaps of e-leadership (Avolio *et al.*, 2014) merit further study in the future. The focus of our study was not on the quality of the supervisor–subordinate relationship *per se*, and therefore we suggest that future studies might scrutinize that phenomenon, and for instance, study how the quality of the relationship evolves during the expatriation. In addition, the physical distance between the expatriate and supervisor should be studied in more detail, perhaps involving studying how the geographical location of dyad partners is linked to individual and organizational outcomes.

Practical implications

The results of the study yield several practical implications to support job satisfaction among expatriates. This knowledge has practical implications for human resource management experts working in the field of global mobility, supervisors of expatriates and expatriates themselves. By understanding the determinants of, and boundary conditions for, satisfaction with an expatriate job, organizational policies and practices, and also supervisors' and expatriates' behavior can be shaped to ensure the success of expatriation assignments.

First, expatriates and their supervisors should pay attention to their functional distance, especially in the form of LMX relationships. This could be supported on an organizational level by developing training and coaching initiatives to support the development and maintenance of high-quality LMX relationships. For example, leaders, regardless of physical location, should be trained to lead expatriates, and to understand the challenges associated with expatriation and international assignments, such as coping with a foreign culture or other issues around expatriate adjustment.

Moreover, although the role of the leader is focal, the leadership process should be seen as reciprocal; one in which also the subordinate is an active participant. Therefore, expatriates should actively involve themselves in the different kinds of exchanges with their supervisor, for instance, using communication channels to keep the supervisor updated on work-related issues, giving feedback to the supervisor, and volunteering for new projects or tasks. Based on our finding revealing the fact that in a situation of high functional distance, high physical distance is beneficial for expatriate job satisfaction, we suggest that taking organizations should encourage leaders to recognize subordinates willing to develop their work role, tasks and task autonomy.

In addition, organizations (and especially human resource management experts) should pay greater attention to developing virtual and technologically driven working models (Pellegrini, 2015) to enable the leaders and subordinates to interact regularly, especially if the physical distance between them is high. Conference calls, e-mail and other communication channels should be utilized regularly to enable virtual interaction. Through these virtual working models, the expatriate and their leader can more effectively participate in exchange and interaction processes, even when the expatriate is on an assignment. Also meeting each other physically during the expatriation, perhaps by scheduling international business trips to the same locations or visiting each other's working locations could be helpful. Such kinds of efforts can mitigate 'out of sight, out of mind' effects between parties and, in turn, may lead to lower functional distance and accordingly, increase resource exchange and expatriate job satisfaction.

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Effects of short-haul and long-haul business travel on international business travelers' job exhaustion - does Leader-Member Exchange relationship quality have a role in that relationship?

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Effects of short-haul and long-haul business travel on international business travelers' job exhaustion - does Leader-Member Exchange relationship quality have a role in that relationship?

Abstract

The present study examines the psychological well-being of international business travelers (IBTs) through the lens of general and travel specific job exhaustion. The study employs a JD-R model to explain well-being through international business travel as demand, and leadership (LMX) as a resource, also buffering the demands of international business travel. The data (N=569) were analyzed with curvilinear and linear regression methodology. The results suggest that long-duration business travel is related to higher level of job exhaustion, especially the exhaustion related to international business travel. Moreover, the high-quality LMX was found to be linked to lower levels of both types of exhaustion. Interestingly, for those IBTs' with a low-quality LMX, the more time they spent apart far away from the supervisor, the less international-business-travel-related exhaustion was experienced. The contribution of our study is threefold. First, it adopts a novel approach to context-specific work well-being by studying international-business-travel-related job exhaustion. Second, by studying separately short- and long-haul travel duration and utilizing curvilinear study methods, this study sheds light on the effects different types of business travel can occasion among IBTs. Third, our study contributes on the leadership literature in reinforcing the importance of the context in which the LMX occurs.

Keywords: International Business Travelers; Long-haul business trips; Short-haul business trips; Job exhaustion; leader-member exchange; Job Demands-Resources model

Introduction

The internationalization of business has increased enormously in recent decades due to advances in communication technology, falling trade barriers, and highly developed transportation (Economist Intelligence Unit 2015; Economist 2015). Organizations are operating in a global business environment, hence global geographical mobility among employees has grown (Kesselring 2015; Haynes 2010; Gustafson 2014). One important group of such employees are international business travelers (IBTs), who should be seen as an important resource for companies, and whose role in organizations will become even more important in the future (De Cieri, Cox, and Fenwick 2007; Collings, Scullion, and Dowling 2009). Therefore, increasing the understanding of how business travel affects IBTs' work well-being – which, in turn has been linked to many important organizational outcomes in domestic studies such as performance (Bakker and Demerouti 2007; Demerouti et al. 2001) - is needed.

International business travel typically involves long working hours, time spent in airports and airplanes and operating in stressful and risk-laden work environments (Mäkelä and Kinnunen 2016; Gustafson 2014). It is therefore unsurprising that reports indicate that the more time IBTs spend traveling, the more they suffer from physiological and psychological problems (see for a review Patel 2011; Bergström 2010). The intensity of business travel thus seems to be one critical factor affecting the well-being of such IBTs, which can manifest, for example, as exhaustion. Studies focusing on business travel intensity have typically addressed either the number of business trips (Bergbom et al. 2011a; Espino et al. 2002; Dimberg et al. 2002; Jensen 2013; Westman, Etzion, and Chen 2009) or the total number of international business travel days (Mäkelä et al. 2014; Bergström 2010; Espino et al. 2002) but the aspect of how far they need to travel and how long they need to stay to have an effect on outcomes has rarely been studied. Geographical distance has been shown to play an important role in tourism travel and different characteristics (e.g., in terms of motivation and consumer behavior) to affect travel to more distant destinations (long-haul travel) and travel to closer destinations (short-haul travel) (see e.g., Bianchi, Milberg, and Cúneo 2017), but the findings are not directly applicable in the context of business travel because the reasons for traveling are very different and, for instance, IBTs have little say in whether to travel to a particular destination (Rezaei et al. 2018).

We found only one study exploring the issues affecting short-haul and long-haul business travelers (Ho and McKercher 2014). That study focused on business travelers as consumers and the characteristics (e.g., gender and age) of short-haul and long-haul business travelers, it does not therefore enhance the understanding of IBTs' work well-being. However, it has been suggested that long-haul business trips may have stronger effects on IBTs health and well-being than short-haul trips (Burkholder et al. 2010) but empirical evidence is lacking. Therefore, the current research aims to contribute by studying the effects of duration of short-haul and long-haul business trips on IBTs' work well-being.

Earlier studies concerning IBTs' work well-being have reported that intensive international business travel (Striker, Dimberg, and Liese 2000; Bergbom et al. 2011a; Patel 2011; Burkholder et al. 2010; Mäkelä et al. 2014) or travel-related psychological demands (Mäkelä and Kinnunen 2016) are job demands that increase the risk of travel stress and job exhaustion as a core component of burnout. However, these studies have focused mainly on general indicators of IBTs' work well-being, but it has been suggested that directly travel-related well-being indicators may be more relevant when studying this kind of specific group of employees (Mäkelä and Kinnunen 2016). For instance, international-business-travel-related job demands and resources have been found to predict the variance of the IBT specific indicator of work well-being (travel-related job satisfaction) far better than general ones (exhaustion and vigor) (Mäkelä and Kinnunen 2016). Therefore, in this study, we focus not only on general job exhaustion, referring to feelings of strain and fatigue that occur due to a person's work (Maslach, Schaufeli, and Leiter 2001; Salmela-Aro et al. 2011), but also on international-business-travel-related exhaustion (IBTExh), by which we refer to feelings of strain and fatigue that occur during (or due to) international business travel. In order to provide new insights onto the effects of international business travel, this research will study the association of the short-haul and long-haul travel duration (travel days/past 12 months) and the total travel duration on IBTExh and general exhaustion. Moreover, in order to reveal if there is a threshold indicating when business travel duration starts to cause exhaustion, we utilize curvilinear methods to study the above-mentioned relationships.

Furthermore, the way in which people are led in organizations has been found to be one important job resource (Schaufeli and Taris 2014; Harms et al. 2017). Leadership in the context of international business travel is an understudied phenomenon although it relates to many topical questions in modern working life. Leadership increasingly happens in the context of distant working (Antonakis and Atwater 2002; Bligh and Riggio 2013), or virtual teams (Zander, Mockaitis, and Butler 2012; Nurmi and Hinds 2016) in which supervisor and subordinate are not physically working at the same place. Being on an international business trip is time spent in different and changing locations which might be very far away (e.g., on a long-haul trip) thus IBTs and their supervisors are very often working at a physical distance from one another. In particular, the longer the duration of trips and the further away the destination, the greater is the distance between supervisor and the subordinate.

Only one study was found considering the role of supervisory and family support on satisfaction with work-related travel (Mäkelä, De Cieri, and Mockaitis 2015). It reported that family support was a more important predictor of satisfaction with work-related travel than supervisory support was. However, that study takes quite a narrow view of leadership and therefore further studies are merited. One very recent study showed that functional distance - operationalized with the quality of the dyadic leader-member exchange relationship (LMX) (e.g., G. Graen and Uhl-Bien 1995) is an important predictor on the expatriates' satisfaction with their job abroad (Mäkelä, Kangas, and Suutari 2019). It is therefore possible that LMX, a concept taking account of mutual trust, loyalty, and the reciprocal contribution to work (Liden and Graen 1980; Uhl-bien and Maslyn 2003), might offer a relevant route to studying leadership in the context of international employees who typically work quite autonomously with responsibilities around the globe.

The current research explores if LMX quality affects IBTs' work well-being (in terms of exhaustion and IBTExh). Moreover, in light of job demands-resources (JD-R) theory (Bakker and Demerouti 2007; Demerouti et al. 2001) that holds that job demands and job resources exert individual effects on work well-being, but job resources can potentially buffer the negative effects of job demands, we also study if LMX is a job resource with potential to buffer the negative effects of the duration of short-haul and long-haul business travel.

The contribution of the current research is threefold; first, it adopts a novel approach to both general job exhaustion and also to the context-specific work well-being of IBTs by studying IBTExh. Second, by studying the effects of short- and long-haul travel duration and utilizing curvilinear study methods, this study sheds light on the potential effects of different types of business travel on IBTs. Third, our study contributes to the leadership literature and the importance of acknowledging the context in which LMX occurs. Next, the relevant literature is reviewed, and hypotheses built.

Short-haul and long-haul business travel duration and exhaustion among IBTs

International business traveling as a job demand

In the JD-R model there are specific demands in each form of work, defined as physical, emotional, or cognitive strain involved with that work (Bakker, Demerouti, and Sanz-Vergel 2014; Bakker and Demerouti 2007; Demerouti et al. 2001). High job demands lead to reduced well-being, in the form of, for instance, burnout through ill-health process (Salmela-Aro et al. 2011; Demerouti et al. 2001). In this study, we investigate the primary symptom of burnout—exhaustion (Maslach, Schaufeli, and Leiter 2001)—because it is often a result of over- demanding work circumstances and the intense strain caused by specific working conditions (Demerouti et al. 2002, 2001). In addition, as a job specific well-being indicator, we also study IBTExh, defined feelings of strain and fatigue that occur during (or due to) international business travel (Salmela-Aro et al. 2011).

In general, international business trips have been associated with various job demands (Rezaei et al. 2018; Gustafson 2014; Mäkelä and Kinnunen 2016). International-business-travel-related job demands are linked to traveling itself, such as, problems with travel logistics, unexpected travel delays, and actual air travel such as the physical discomfort involved (Bergbom et al. 2011b; Ivancevich, Konopaske, and Defrank 2003). Furthermore, there are demands related to travel destinations, that is, change of time zone, cultural and climatic differences between home and host countries, and risks related to health and safety (DeFrank, Konopaske, and Ivancevich 2000; Bergbom et al. 2011b; Ivancevich, Konopaske, and DeFrank 2003; Patel 2011; Gustafson 2014; Rezaei et al.

2018). Moreover, when on business trip, work itself can be very demanding as mobile employees work long hours (Hyrkkänen and Vartiainen 2005; Hyrkkänen et al. 2011) and suffer from excessive time pressure, and workload (Gustafson 2014).

Objective features of the trips, such as the duration (number of travel days) and frequency of trips (number of business trips) have also been studied as an indicator of the demands caused by travel (Liese et al. 1997; Mäkelä, Kinnunen, and Suutari 2015; Westman and Etzion 2002; Jensen 2013; Mäkelä et al. 2014). It has been reported that the more intensive is IBTs' travel (as measured by frequency and duration), the more common are problems such as increased alcohol consumption, sleep deprivation, and feelings of insecurity about the ability to keep pace with their workload (Burkholder et al. 2010). Increased trip frequency has been associated with dissatisfaction with traveling, greater stress, problems maintaining social networks, and work-family conflict (Bergbom et al. 2011b; Jensen 2013; Westman, Etzion, and Chen 2009).

Moreover, the duration of business travel has been suggested to be an even more important job demand for IBTs than is the frequency of trips (Mäkelä et al. 2013). Studies have reported that an increase in travel days causes a deterioration of social relations (Bergström 2010) and a high number of travel days affects travelers' stress and family issues (Espino et al. 2002; Mäkelä, Kinnunen, and Suutari 2015; Mäkelä et al. 2013). One study showed that long-duration business trips increase the risk of job exhaustion among IBTs (Mäkelä and Kinnunen 2016).

In light of the above, the time a person has to spend on business trips seems to be an essential job demand for a job involving international business travel and is therefore likely to contribute to the exhaustion experienced during business trips. In addition, time spent traveling is time away from the office base; which can cause a backlog of work tasks, important decision-making events and information-sharing opportunities being missed, limited opportunities to communicate with peers and supervisors, and also to build and maintain social relationships at work (Bergström 2010). In the domestic work context, a lack of social support, lack of feedback, and not being able to participate in decision-making increase the risk of burnout (Maslach, Schaufeli, and Leiter 2001). Therefore, the duration of business trips could contribute to IBTs' general job exhaustion too. Thus, we hypothesize:

H1a: The high duration of international business trips is related to higher level of international-business-travel-related exhaustion (IBTExh) and general job exhaustion.

Furthermore, we did not find empirical evidence on the different effects of short-haul and long-haul business trips on IBTs' well-being, particularly on exhaustion. However, it has been stated that the job demands may accumulate and that might increase the probability of job exhaustion (Woerkom, Bakker, and Nishii 2016). Long-haul business trips involve long flights, large time differences, and may also be linked to greater cultural distance compared to short-haul business trips (Rezaei et al. 2018; Bergbom et al. 2011a). Therefore, it might be assumed that the accumulation of job demands, that is, trips longer in duration and distance, also intensifies job exhaustion among IBTs and therefore we hypothesize:

H1b: *The high duration of long-haul international business trips is related to higher levels of job exhaustion (international-business-travel-related exhaustion (IBTExh) and general job exhaustion) compared to short-haul trips.*

Some research asserts that a couple of international business trips with a low number of international business travel days per year is not too overwhelming (Gustafson 2014; Westman and Etzion 2002) but is accepted as part of normal working life in the modern work market. However, an increasing number of international business travel days can be exhausting (Mäkelä and Kinnunen 2016) and as the JD-R model states, job demands do not necessarily have a negative effect on employee well-being, but in large quantities, when employee cannot adequately recover, such demands can cause strain, leading to job exhaustion (Bakker and Demerouti 2007).

There are no previous studies examining if the effects of international business travel duration on job exhaustion (or any other outcome) could take a curvilinear form. However, general job demands have been curvilinearly connected with emotional exhaustion such that the adverse effect has mainly manifested only after a certain level of demands (de Jonge et al. 2000; Teuchmann, Totterdell, and Parker 1999), but the study of de Jonge and Schaufeli (1998) did not find a significant curvilinear relationship. Moreover, there is empirical evidence indicating a threshold effect of job demands on anxiety, for example (de Jonge and Schaufeli 1998) and work engagement (Tanskanen, Taipale, and Anttila 2016). It is plausible that a low number of international business travel days is not harmful, but beyond a certain threshold they become exhausting. Therefore, we hypothesize:

H1c: *An adverse effect of international business travel duration on job exhaustion and international-business-travel-related exhaustion (IBTExh) is manifested only after a certain number of travel days per year.*

Moreover, when studying specific work contexts, here international business travel, it might be relevant to focus not only on general indicators of job demands, job resources, and related outcomes but also on concepts focusing specifically on that context; for example, international-business-travel-related job demands (risks associated with travel destinations and general travel-related demands) and resources (HR support for international business travel) have been found to be a far better predictor of the variance of the IBT specific indicator of work well-being (travel-related job satisfaction) than general ones (exhaustion and vigor) (Mäkelä and Kinnunen 2016). Therefore, it is possible that job demands directly focusing on travel are better predictors of travel-related exhaustion than general exhaustion and thus we also test the following hypothesis:

H1d: International business travel duration has a stronger association with international-business-travel-related job exhaustion (IBTExh) than general job exhaustion does.

Leader-Member Exchange as a job resource in the context of international business travel

According to the JD-R model, all jobs also involve resources that are instrumental to achieving work goals (Schaufeli and Taris 2014). Job resources are linked to the positive sides of work well-being, and the possession of high levels of resources is linked to, for example, lower levels of perceived exhaustion (Bakker and Demerouti 2007; Bakker, Demerouti, and Sanz-Vergel 2014). One important job resource is the way in which people are led in organizations (Breevaart et al. 2015; Schaufeli and Taris 2014) and the essential role of leadership has also been recognized in the context of work that forces supervisors and subordinates to work at a physical distance from each other (Mäkelä, Kangas, and Suutari 2019; Zander, Mockaitis, and Butler 2012; Antonakis and Atwater 2002; Bligh and Riggio 2013), that is also the case for international business travel.

A fundamental aspect of leadership is the dyadic relationship between employee and leader, which is examined through LMX theory (Dienesch and Liden 1986; Liden and Graen 1980). The LMX concept originates from the idea that leaders develop exchange relationships with their subordinates, which are unique and varying in quality (e.g., Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). High-quality LMX is characterized by higher levels of mutual trust, liking, respect, interaction, and support (Liden and Maslyn 1998; Gertner and Day 1997; Graen and Uhl-Bien 1995; Dienesch and Liden 1986). The quality of LMX has been linked to positive outcomes for the subordinate, such as obtaining information on job or organizational issues (Feldman 1986; Graen et al. 1990; Kacmar et al. 2003). The relationship quality within an LMX has been linked to subordinate burnout (exhaustion being a core component of it), with low-quality relationships increasing the risk (Huang et al. 2010; Thomas and Lankau 2009). Moreover, LMX has been seen as an important job resource in the context of international work, as the functional closeness between supervisor and expatriate (i.e., a high-quality LMX) increases the satisfaction with an expatriate job (Mäkelä, Kangas, and Suutari 2019).

The literature offers little on the role of leadership in the context of international business travel. Only one study explores the effect of supervisory support during business trips alongside family support during business trips on satisfaction with work-related travel (Mäkelä, De Cieri, and Mockaitis 2015). That study reported a statisically significant positive correlation between supervisor support and satisfaction with work-related travel. However, in the regression analysis supervisory support was not found to contribute to IBTs' satisfaction with work-related travel, whereas family support was. Even though that particular study did not find supervisor support during business trips to be as important as family support, we may assume that more a comprehensive approach to leadership—reflected in the quality of the LMX—might act as an important job resource for IBTs and be linked to both their exhaustion in general and that felt during their business trips. Therefore, a high-quality LMX may have an impact on the level of exhaustion experienced by IBTs, and we hypothesize:

H2: High-quality LMX is related to lower levels of exhaustion and international-business-travel-related exhaustion (IBTExh).

Leader-Member Exchange buffering the effects of the duration of business trips

According to JD-R model the interaction between job resources and job demands influence the development of well-being at work (Bakker and Demerouti 2007) and job resources are likely to buffer the effect of job demands on negative well-being, for instance, burnout (Bakker, Demerouti, and Sanz-Vergel 2014; Demerouti et al. 2001). One essential situational variable to buffer job demands is the social support (Schaufeli and Taris 2014), and for the individual, one of the important sources of organizational-related social support is the immediate supervisor (Rousseau and Aubé 2010).

A high-quality LMX will incorporate a more comprehensive view of leadership than just social support and has the potential to buffer the negative effects of the duration of trips on exhaustion among IBTs; for example, longer the periods that IBTs are away from the home office, the greater the risk that they miss out on information and that they are less involved to the decision-making (Ivancevich, Konopaske, and Defrank 2003; DeFrank, Konopaske, and Ivancevich 2000), which is likely to increase the risk of negative outcomes, for instance, exhaustion. However, people in a high-quality LMX are usually provided with more information (Sias 2005), instrumental help, and emotional support (Hsu et al. 2010) by their immediate supervisor, which might buffer the negative effects of the long duration of trips, especially on general job exhaustion. Furthermore, the more time IBTs spend abroad, the more they also risk facing challenging work situations while abroad (Hyrkkänen and Vartiainen 2005). They may also experience loneliness and isolation from their work community (Rezaei et al. 2018; Burkholder et al. 2010) as studies of virtual teams have revealed that remote team members feel isolated (Breu and Hemingway 2004; Cramton 2001). Having a high-quality LMX may reduce the threshold of asking for help in problematic situations or contacting a supervisor to strengthen social ties at work. Such situations might buffer the negative effects of long-duration business trips on IBTExh. Therefore, we hypothesize that:

H3a: The adverse association of international business travel duration on job exhaustion and international-business-travel-related job exhaustion (IBTExh) is stronger among employees with a low-quality LMX than among those with a high-quality LMX.

In addition, based on JD-R model job resources offer their full potential particularly when employees are facing very intense job demands (Bakker and Demerouti 2007). In addition, it has been found that HR support from a person's employer during business trips is especially beneficial if the risks associated with travel destinations are great (Mäkelä and Kinnunen 2016). As suggested above, long-haul business trips are likely to involve even more demanding elements than short-haul trips. It is possible that the benefits of a high-quality LMX may be important especially in situations in which an IBT is working in a long-haul destination where the cultural distance is great and they are also physically far away from home office, for example. Therefore, a high-quality LMX, typified by experiences of trust, loyalty, and open communication, might be especially important in the context of long-haul business travel, and we therefore hypothesize:

H3b: LMX buffers the effects of trip duration more strongly for long-haul international business travel than it does for short-haul international business travel.

Method and data

Sample

The sample (N=570) was collected in 2015 from a Finnish software and service company operating in several countries and employing over 13,000. The web-based questionnaire was sent only those employees who had taken at least one international business trip during the previous year. The sample comprises employees of 21 nationalities living in 19 countries. Most of the participants were men (77%) and the mean age was 42.45 (SD=9.50). Among the sample, 80% were married or cohabiting and 65% had children. A majority of respondents had worked in a role requiring travel for some time (10.16 years, SD=8.18). Almost half (40%) were in the middle of the hierarchy in their organization and lower-level positions were a little more common than higher-level positions. One outlier was excluded from the sample on the grounds of reporting 150 short-haul and 150 long-haul international business travel days in the previous year, which left 569 respondents in the final sample. The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author, L.M. The data are not publicly available due to containing information that could compromise the privacy of research participants.

Measures

The duration of international business travel was evaluated based on the informants' answers to the questions: "How many international short-haul business travel days have you had during the past 12 months?" and "How many international long-haul business travel days have you had during the past 12 months?" The answers to both questions were round numbers and the total number of international business travel days was calculated by adding the two numbers together.

Leader-Member Exchange quality was measured with an eight-item LMX scale based on the LMX-UVA scale (Tanskanen, Mäkelä, and Viitala 2019). Sample items include: "*We trust each other"* and *"We can genuinely listen to each other's opinions*." Responses were given on a 5-point Likert scale anchored with *strongly disagree* (1) and *strongly agree* (5) and the Cronbach's alpha for the scale was .95.

We measured *job exhaustion* using three items from the scale from the Bergen Burnout Inventory (BBI–15) (Näätänen et al. 2003; Salmela-Aro et al. 2011). Respondents were instructed to think about their work in general while assessing the items: *"I am snowed under with work*", "*I often sleep poorly because of the circumstances at work*" and "*I constantly have a bad conscience because my work forces me to neglect my close friends and relatives*" that were scored on a 6-point scale anchored with *never* (1) and *all the time* (6). The Cronbach's alpha for job exhaustion was .77.

In order to specifically capture the perceptions concerning *international-business-travel-related job exhaustion (IBTExh)*, respondents were instructed to think specifically about their international business trips while addressing the above-mentioned three items with similar scoring (1–6). The Cronbach's alpha for IBTExh was .67, which is slightly below the recommended .70 value. However, inter-item correlation values varied between .346 and .464 which fit the recommendations made by Briggs and Cheek (1986).

A confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted with Mplus 8.0 (Muthén & Muthén, 1998–2017) with robust maximum likelihood estimation to examine the validity of the measurement model. The CFA model included measurements of LMX, job exhaustion and IBTExh. The error variances between matching job exhaustion and IBTExh items were freed to be estimated as well as between the items “*Our cooperation advances both of us in performing at work*” and “*We can openly handle even challenging issues with each other*” from the LMX scale. The modified measurement model produced satisfactory model fit regarding the standard fit indices ($\chi^2(70)=267.50$, $p<.001$; RMSEA=.074; SRMR=.037; CFI=.934; TLI=.914) and their cut off values, where RMSEA and SRMR <.080 and CFI and TLI >.900 indicate a satisfactory fit (Hu and Bentler 1999).

Control variables

The background variables gender (women/men), age (in years), children (no/yes), marital status (married/cohabiting; living separately; single), organizational position (1–10, high to low), experience of work requiring business travel (in years) and domestic business travel duration during the past 12 months were controlled for because there is evidence that they are related to the outcome measures used in this study and could be possible confounding factors (Feldt et al. 2009; Purvanova and Muros 2010; Jensen 2013; Mäkelä and Kinnunen 2016; Ho and McKercher 2014; Salmela-Aro et al. 2011).

Analysis strategy

The analysis was conducted in three phases. First, descriptive statistics were analyzed. Second, functional forms (e.g., threshold effect) of the studied relationships were examined with the generalized additive model (GAM) by estimating nonparametric regression splines from the data (Wood 2006). Four main effect models were estimated where job exhaustion and IBTExh were examined in separate models and, in addition, total international business travel duration was studied separately from short-haul and long-haul international business travel duration. The control variables were adjusted in all models. Moreover, the interactions between international business travel duration and LMX were examined by adding interaction terms to the main effect models. Third, linear connections were parametrized, and their effects were presented as regression coefficients.

The GAM was implemented with the *R package mgcv* (Wood 2006) in R 3.6.0 (R Core Team 2019). The GAM applied thin plate regression splines, and their smoothness was estimated with generalized crossvalidation. The upper limit for the effective degrees of freedom for the splines was set to four and model degrees of freedom were inflated with a constant multiplier (gamma=1.4) to avoid overfitting (Wood 2006). Descriptive analysis and linear models were estimated with IBM SPSS (IBM Corp. 2016) and multiple imputation for missing data was utilized in the regression analysis. With regard to the examination of moderation effects, the terms were centered prior to forming interaction terms.

Results

Participants reported slightly more IBTExh (M=3.35) than general job exhaustion (M=3.14). Short-haul international business trips were clearly more common as respondents reported more than double the amount of short-haul international business travel days (M=15.70, range 0–150) as long-haul international business travel days (M=7.22, range 0–120). In total, the mean of international business travel days in the previous year was 22.92 days. The amount of short- and long-haul international business travel days did not correlate (r=.00), indicating they are completely independent. Men (r=.13) and those at the top of organization hierarchy (r=-.12) logged more short-haul international business travel days compared to women and those at the bottom of organization hierarchy. Furthermore, younger (r=-.13) and less experienced business travelers (r=-.10) reported more long-haul travel days than older and more experienced respondents. international business travel duration correlated more strongly with IBTExh than general job exhaustion.

[Table 1. around here]

Nonparametric modeling with the GAM indicated that the connections of international business travel duration and LMX to job exhaustion and IBTExh had linear functional forms; thus, there were no threshold or other curvilinear effects and Hypothesis 1c did not gain support. The main effect models were parametrized as standard linear regression analysis and the results of the analyses are presented in Tables 2 and 3.

[Table 2. around here]

The examination of total international business travel duration (see Table 2) revealed positive relationships between total international business travel duration and both general job exhaustion (b=0.05) and IBTExh (b=0.09) supporting Hypothesis 1a. A ten-day increase in international business travel duration was connected with a 0.09 point increase in IBTExh. More detailed analysis separating short-haul and long-haul international business travel durations (see Table 3) indicated that only short-haul international business travel duration (b=0.06) was significantly connected with general job exhaustion while short-haul (b=0.08) and long-haul (b=0.09) international business travel durations were both almost equally associated with IBTExh. Thus, Hypothesis 1b stating that long-haul international business travel duration has a stronger effect on general and IBTExh was not supported. Regression models clearly better explained IBTExh (R^2=.13) than general job exhaustion (R^2=.08) supporting Hypothesis 1d.

Hypothesis 2 was also supported by the analysis because LMX had significant negative connection with job exhaustion (b=-0.16) and IBTExh (b=-0.14).

[Table 3. around here]

The analysis revealed that in terms of general job exhaustion there were no significant interactions between total international business travel duration and LMX; thus, Hypothesis 3a was not supported. However, there was one significant interaction effect (p=.040) where LMX and long-haul international business travel duration showed an interaction effect with IBTExh, but the interaction was opposed to Hypothesis 3b. The results indicate that for those with a high-quality LMX the long-haul international business travel duration was positively connected with IBTExh, but for those having a low-quality LMX the relationship with long-haul international business travel duration and IBTExh was negative (see Figure 1). Consequently, the lowest level of IBTExh was found among those who had a high number of long-haul international business travel days within the last 12 months and had a low-quality LMX. Those reporting a high-quality LMX and high number of long-haul international business travel days suffered from the highest level of IBTExh. A high-quality LMX (LMX>3) was beneficial for employees having low a level of long-haul international business travel days (around fewer than 30 days), but those having more long-haul travel days had a lower level of IBTExh if they had a low-quality LMX (LMX<3).

[Figure 1. around here]

Discussion

The aim of the present study was to study work well-being among IBTs. The theoretical framework is built on the job demands-resources (JD-R) model (Bakker and Demerouti 2007; Demerouti et al. 2001). The study examined both job exhaustion and international-business-travel-related exhaustion (IBTExh) as indicators of IBTs' well-being. As a travel specific job demand, the duration of short-haul and long-haul business travel and their combination, was studied. As a job resource, LMX was examined, as well as its possible buffering effect on the relationship between travel durations on IBTs' job exhaustion and travel-related exhaustion.

Hypothesis 1a suggesting that long-duration international business travel is related to a higher level of job exhaustion and IBTExh was supported. That finding is aligned with earlier studies reporting negative effects of intensive business travel (Burkholder et al. 2010; Jensen 2013; Bergbom et al. 2011a; Mäkelä et al. 2014) and confirms that one important job demand related on international business travel is the total number of travel days. Our study contributed to the current literature by exploring the effects of the geographical distance to travel destinations. Hypothesis 1b, suggesting that the effects of the duration of long-haul international business trips on both types of exhaustion is stronger than the effects of the duration of short-haul trips, did not gain support as the positive effect of the duration of long-haul international business trips on IBTExh was only marginally stronger than the effect of short-haul international business travel duration, thus it seems that geographical distance does not play an important role in how exhausted IBTs are during their business trips.

In addition, in contrast to our expectations (H1b), the effect of the duration of long-haul business trips on general job exhaustion was not statistically significant, but the duration of short-haul trips increased the risk of such exhaustion. That finding indicates that short-haul trips may cause more strain on everyday work requirements than do long-haul trips, thus increasing the risk of general job exhaustion. This finding might also be linked with the studies reporting positive aspects of business trips, including their being a source of professional learning and career advancement (Gustafson 2014). Perhaps long-haul trips to more distant cultural contexts and challenging environments involve even more developmental elements and thus help IBTs to cope with work in general. Future studies should therefore explore some underlying mechanisms, for instance, the development of career capital (Jokinen, Brewster, and Suutari 2008; see e.g., Dickmann et al. 2018) owing to business trips, that may function differently in the context of the effects of short-haul and long-haul international business trips.

Hypothesis 1c did not gain support as the nonparametric analysis revealed that the effects of total, long-haul, and short-haul international-business-travel duration on general and IBTExh had linear rather than curvilinear forms. Consequently, there is no threshold for the adverse effect of international business travel duration on job exhaustion and even a few international business travel days are connected with increased levels of general and IBTExh. Every additional international business travel day is connected with higher level of job exhaustion. This finding is in line with the study of de Jonge and Schaufeli (1998) that tested curvilinear relationships and found that job demands had a linear association with exhaustion. It therefore seems that the number of international business travel days is a job demand and it should be acknowledged that every international business travel day counts.

Hypothesis 1d gained support as the results indicate that the duration of international business trips has a greater effect on increasing IBTExh than general job exhaustion among IBTs. This finding supports the idea of the matching principle (Chrisopoulos et al. 2010) and the importance of studying context-specific antecedent and outcome variables too (Mäkelä and Kinnunen 2016). One important contribution of our study is therefore to introduce a novel context-relevant concept of IBTs' work well-being: international-business-travel-related exhaustion (IBTExh). In addition, we suggest that future studies of IBTs should also explore travel-related indicators of work well-being, for instance, travel-related work engagement or its dimensions such as vigor (Bakker and Demerouti 2007).

In addition to the demands related to IBTs work, the resources of their job were also examined and our study contributed by focusing on the role of leadership that remains an understudied phenomenon in IBT literature. Hypothesis 2, suggesting that the high quality of the LMX was related to lower job exhaustion, as well as IBTExh, was supported. This finding aligns with those of previous studies conducted in a domestic context, in which the level of LMX is directly connected to the well-being of the employee (Li, Sanders, and Frenkel 2012; Agarwal et al. 2012; Dulebohn et al. 2012; Tanskanen, Mäkelä, and Viitala 2019). The concept of the LMX also seems to be relevant to the study of leadership in the context of international work, which often entails there being a physical distance between supervisor and subordinate (Golden and Veiga 2008; Mäkelä, Kangas, and Suutari 2019; Nurmi and Hinds 2016). Therefore, future studies should pay more attention to aspects related to LMX, such as relationship development and related organizational outcomes among IBTs.

Hypothesis 3a suggested that a high-quality LMX buffers the negative effects of total travel duration on both types of exhaustion. That hypothesis did not obtain support because the interaction term did not contribute statistically significantly to either IBTExh or general exhaustion. Hypothesis 3b suggested that a high-quality LMX would buffer the negative effect of travel days on both types of exhaustion but more strongly for long-haul than for short-haul travel. Our results did not support that hypothesis. However, the interaction was statistically significant for the relationship between long-haul duration and IBTExh but the effect was opposite to that expected; IBTExh was at its lowest level among those in low-quality LMXs and highest for those with the highest-quality LMX when the employee reported a high number of long-haul international business travel days. In other words, for IBTs in a low-quality LMX, long lasting long-haul trips were beneficial: those IBTs experienced less IBTExh the more time they spent far away from their supervisors. This finding is in a line with a recent study on expatriates, in which the physical distance, in particular, working in a different country than the supervisor, increased the expatriate job satisfaction of those expatriates experiencing a low-quality LMX (Mäkelä, Kangas, and Suutari 2019). An extreme interpretation could be to suggest that IBTs who do not get along well with their supervisor often travel to long-haul destinations because doing so provides an opportunity to be away from the supervisor. However, it is important to note that a majority of employees reported fewer than 30 long-haul international business travel days per year (94%) and among them, those who had a high-quality LMX suffered less from IBTExh compared to those with a low-quality LMX. Our study also contributed to leadership literature by revealing that the geographical context in which LMX occur may play a crucial role in determining the effects of leadership. Therefore, more research should be undertaken to reveal the contextual factors in which the LMX might act as a buffering job resource and in which the effect might even be the opposite.

It is important to note some limitations of the current study. The main limitation is that the findings come from a cross-sectional design, meaning that we can draw no reliable conclusions on the causal direction of the effects. Longitudinal studies would be required to confirm the connections between the job demands and job resources in the context of IBTs' work and their work well-being. Second, our measures were based on self-reports, so common method variance may have affected our findings. However, it has been argued that it is an oversimplification to assume that common method variance automatically affects variables measured with the same method (Spector 2006). In addition, it has been argued that the employee is the most important source of information on his or her own work situation (e.g., Mostert 2011). Nevertheless, future studies might use more varied sources of primary data such as an organization's data register on the number of travel days or business trip destinations. Moreover, including the geographical distance and the context of international mobility is still rare among the research on LMX, and therefore the effects of the location difference between supervisors and subordinates should be studied more extensively.

From the practical viewpoint, organizations should monitor the intensity of the travel of each of their mobile employees, as long-duration trips seem to involve a risk of exhaustion during the trips. In general, organizations should help supervisors and IBTs to establish high-quality LMX and both parties of these dyads should contribute to developing and maintaining high-quality relationships. We suggest that supervisors and IBTs should maintain regular contact when an IBT is traveling and organizations should therefore facilitate that contact, for example, by using virtual communication platforms that are easy to access globally. However, it is noteworthy that IBTs who had a low-quality LMX and who were undertaking long-haul trips of long duration experienced less travel-related exhaustion compared to their peers whose LMX quality was high. Based on that finding we suggest that organizations should acknowledge the importance of versatile job resources that may function differently in different kinds of work situations.

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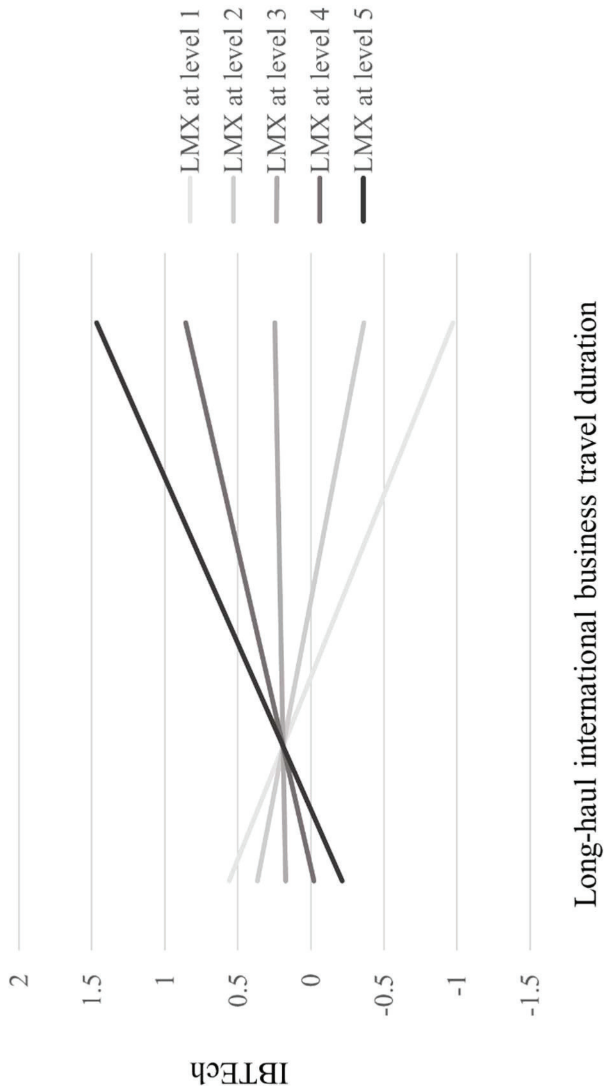
LMX at level 1
LMX at level 2
LMX at level 3
LMX at level 4
LMX at level 5
2
1.5
1
0.5
0
-0.5
-1
-1.5
IBTEch
Long-haul international business travel duration

Table 1. Descriptive statistics

	Mean (SD)	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.
1. Job exhaustion	3.14 (1.05)	-					
2. IBTExh	3.35 (1.00)	.62 ***	-				
3. Total int. business travel duration	22.92 (26.41)	.13 **	.22 ***	-			
4. Short-haul int. business travel duration	15.70 (21.61)	.15 **	.19 ***	.82 ***	-		
5. Long-haul in. business travel duration	7.22 (15.28)	.02	.11 **	.58 ***	.00	-	
6. LMX	4.22 (0.71)	-.10 *	-.08	.01	.01	.00	-
Men	0.77 (0.42)	.00	.01	.12 **	.13 **	.03	-.05
Age	42.45 (9.50)	.10 *	.15 ***	-.08	-.01	-.13 **	.01
Has children	0.65 (0.48)	.14 **	.18 ***	.02	.06	-.04	.04
Married/cohabiting	0.80 (0.40)	.03	.08	.02	.02	.00	.07
Living separately	0.05 (0.21)	.02	.03	.00	.00	.01	-.03
Single	0.15 (0.36)	-.04	-.11 *	-.02	-.02	.00	-.06
Organizational position	5.91 (2.09)	-.14 **	-.13 **	-.11 *	-.12 **	-.02	-.04
Experience of work requiring business travel	10.16 (8.18)	.09 *	.13 **	-.06	.00	-.10 *	-.01
Domestic business travel duration	12.58 (24.43)	.12 **	.16 ***	-.04	.00	-.08	.01

Note. Table presents mean and standard deviations (SD) and correlations of main study variables.
* p<.050, ** p<.010, *** p<.001.

Table 2. The connection of total IBT duration on job exhaustion and IBT job exhaustion

	Job exhaustion		IBTExh	
	Step 1	Step2	Step 1	Step2
Intercept	3.20 ***	3.20 ***	3.17 ***	3.17 ***
Male	-0.07	-0.07	-0.11	-0.12
Age	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Has children	0.29 *	0.28 *	0.31 **	0.30 **
Married/cohabiting	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.
Living separately	0.14	0.14	0.20	0.19
Single	0.13	0.13	-0.03	-0.03
Organizational position	-0.05 *	-0.05 *	-0.03	-0.03
Experience of work requiring business travel	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01
Domestic business travel duration /10 days	0.05 **	0.05 **	0.06 **	0.06 **
Total int. business travel duration (/10 days)	0.05 **	0.05 **	0.09 ***	0.08 ***
LMX	-0.16 *	-0.16 *	-0.14 *	-0.14 *
LMX*Total int. business travel duration (/10 days)		0.00		0.02
R^2	.08	.08	.13	.13

Note. Table presents regression coefficients and their significance levels.
* p<.050, ** p<.010, *** p<.001.

Table 3. The connection of short-haul and long-haul IBT duration on job exhaustion and IBT job exhaustion

	Job exhaustion		IBTExh	
	Step 1	Step2	Step 1	Step2
Intercept	3.22 ***	3.21 ***	3.16 ***	3.15 ***
Male	-0.07	-0.07	-0.11	-0.12
Age	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Has children	0.28 *	0.29 *	0.31 **	0.31 **
Married/cohabiting	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.
Living separately	0.14	0.13	0.20	0.18
Single	0.13	0.13	-0.03	-0.03
Organizational position	-0.05 *	-0.05 *	-0.03	-0.03
Experience of work requiring business travel	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01
Domestic business travel duration (/10 days)	0.05 *	0.05 *	0.06 **	0.06 **
Short-haul int. business travel duration (/10 days)	0.06 **	0.07 **	0.08 ***	0.09 ***
Long-haul int. business travel duration (/10 days)	0.03	0.03	0.09 **	0.09 **
LMX	-0.16 *	-0.16 *	-0.14 *	-0.14 *
LMX*Short-haul int. business travel duration (/10 days)		-0.02		-0.02
LMX*Long-haul int. business travel duration (/10 days)		0.03		0.07 *
R^2	.08	.08	.13	.14

Note. Table presents regression coefficients and their significance levels.
* p<.050, ** p<.010, *** p<.001.