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The Impact of Leader Identity on Leadership Development: the Role of Leader Future Work Self (LFWS), Implicit Self Theories (IST)/Implicit Leadership Theories (ILT) Congruence and Gender

by

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Declarations

This thesis is submitted to the University of Warwick in support of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. I confirm that this work is solely my work and I have not submitted the thesis for a degree at another university.

Abstract

Leadership development focused on leader identity has increased in popularity over the past decades. However, research on leader identity and leadership development has not fully captured the role of an individual's future identity, nor the gap between their self-views and ideal perceptions of leaders, have on their pursuit of leadership development. This thesis therefore fills the gap in our understanding and investigates the role of leader identity in individuals' pursuit of leadership development and leadership more broadly. In the first empirical chapter, I introduce the concept of the Leader Future Work Self (LFWS), which is adapted from the Future Work Self (FWS) literature (Strauss et al., 2012). LFWS is proposed to contain both people's hope and fears related to their future identity as a leader. This new model of LFWS illustrates the linkages between the hope and fear elements of LFWS and the related motivations and behavioural strategies for leadership development. In the second empirical chapter, I explore the impact of activating LFWS's hope and/or fear elements on intention for leadership development (LI) and leader self-efficacy (LSE). The findings highlight the potential utility of imaginative narrative writing for activating LFWS's hope elements. Moreover, I found that the strength of an individual's LFWS may influence their LI, when hope elements of LFWS are activated. Furthermore, this chapter shows the need to consider the role gender plays in an individual's LFWS. In the final empirical chapter, I extend my research on identity and leadership by empirically investigating the influence of congruence between Implicit self-theories (ISTs) and Implicit Leadership Theories (ILTs) on LSE. The findings highlight the importance of integrating the above congruence concept, as well as gender-related leadership characteristics, in the understanding of LSE. Overall, this thesis sheds light on the significance of both LFWS and IST/ILT congruence for our understanding of leadership development.

Key words: leader future work self, possible selves, future work self, Implicit self-theories,

Implicit Leadership Theories, leader self-efficacy, intention for leadership development,

gender

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1. Leadership Development

The development of leaders is a priority in most organisations and this topic has received increasing attention in both industry and academia in the past two decades (Crawford & Kelder, 2019; Ladegard & Gjerde, 2014). Leadership development aims to expand an individual's capacity to be effective in leadership responsibilities and processes (McCauley et al., 2010). This development of leadership capacity involves expanding skills and knowledge, a more complex perspective about oneself as a leader, and leadership processes and expectations (Orvis & Ratwani, 2010).

Most organisations adopt a competence-based leadership development approach, and they provide training to employees, based on the required knowledge, skills and competencies for effective leadership (Chan & Drasgow, 2001; Hollenbeck et al., 2006; Yukl, 2012). This approach can effectively enhance employees' leadership skills to fulfil the leadership roles' requirements (Mumford et al., 2007). The trainings, a common practice used in this approach, can also help transfer leadership knowledge, skills and abilities (KSAs) in organisations (Saks & Belcourt, 2006). With all these benefits, it is not surprising that organisations are committed to investing significantly in leadership development (Crawford & Kelder, 2019). While organisations aspire to produce more effective leaders via leadership development, there has been a growing shortage of leaders in organisations (DeRue & Myers, 2014; Luria et al., 2019). This highlights the need to understand individuals' leadership self-views and their development needs regarding leadership development (Kragt & Day, 2020). Notably, it is crucial to understand what makes them put themselves forward for taking up

leadership roles and developing themselves as leaders, so that organisations can manage their potential leader pool better (Day et al., 2021; Schyns et al., 2020).

1.2. Leader Identity's Role in Leadership Development

Given the need to integrate individuals' leadership self-views in leadership development, the leader identity development approach emerges to tackle this matter (Lord & Hall, 2005). This approach argues that the changes in leadership skills are inherently associated with the changes in one's leader identity (Miscenko et al., 2017). Leader identity is a sub-element of an individual's identity and it refers to an individual's self-view as a leader (Hiller, 2005). This is vital for leadership development because it sheds light on information about who they are, their goals, strengths and limitations associated with leadership roles (Day & Harrison, 2007).

The positive influence of leader identity in increasing individuals' interest in leadership and leadership development can be illustrated in several ways. The leader identity can trigger individuals' interest in leadership because it fuels people with motivation to take on leadership roles and lead others (Guillén et al., 2015). The leadership-related knowledge structure in the leader identity cues individuals' behaviours to act in congruence with this identity (Stryker & Burke, 2000), thus influencing their decisions to engage in leadership behaviours, or seek out leadership activities and related opportunities (Day et al., 2008; Miscenko et al., 2017; Wallace et al., 2021). It can also strengthen people's beliefs in their capabilities as leaders, thus increasing their perceived confidence about leading followers (Emery et al., 2011; Hall & Lord, 1995; Lord et al., 1999; Lord & Brown, 2004; Wallace et al., 2021). Furthermore, it can facilitate the integration of new KSAs and developmental experiences, thus ensuring leaders' development outcomes (Hannah & Avolio, 2010). Essentially, individuals who see themselves as leaders would behave in accordance to these

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leadership self-views consistently (Johnson et al., 2012). Therefore, the development of leader identity enables leaders to build commitment and sustain their interest in leadership over time (Vogel et al., 2020). In other words, the development of leader identity can increase individuals' interest in engaging in leadership and sustain their commitment during leadership development in the long-term (Day & Dragoni, 2015). Given that leadership responsibilities are associated with a wide range of challenges within and outside the organisation (Day & Dragoni, 2015; Vuori & Huy, 2016; Zhang et al., 2020), leader identity plays an important role in leadership development and leadership broadly.

1.3. Research Gaps in Identity-based Leadership Development Research

Given the benefits of developing leader identity to promote leadership development, one may overlook that individuals may also have concerns and struggles, which may make them feel reluctant to engage in leadership development and leadership more broadly (Zhang et al., 2020). For example, they may not want to put themselves forward to take up leadership responsibilities due to the future risks associated with the leadership role (such as fear of failure or disappointing others) (Heifetz & Linsky, 2017; Zhang et al., 2020). They may also feel uncomfortable to lead when they perceive a gap between their current leadership capabilities and ideal leaders' capabilities (Lord et al., 2020). In other words, individuals, even if they possess a leader identity, would still have worries when they envision themselves as leaders in the future. Moreover, when they compare their leadership skills against their ideal leaders' capabilities, they may also feel insecure about taking up leadership roles if the perceived gap is large. In the next sections, I will elaborate on the limitations of identity-based leadership development research by drawing on the literature of possible selves and congruence between leader self-views and perceptions of leader characteristics.

1.3.1. **Possible Selves and Leadership Roles**

Identity-based leadership development research typically focuses on an individual's current leader identity, meaning their current self-view of seeing themselves as a leader (Hiller, 2005). Thus, this research does not fully cover the impact of other forms of identity, such as the possible self. A possible self means the representation of the self in the future that is possible to realise, and it consists of hope, aspirations, fears and concerns related to the actualisation of this future self (Markus & Nurius, 1986; Oyserman & James, 2011). By integrating the concept of leader identity in a possible self, it would represent the future leader identity of an individual, and this image entails the required leadership attributes for this future leader role (Avolio & Vogelgesang, 2012). This image also represents the hopes, aspirations, fears and concerns associated with the realisation of this role (Markus & Nurius, 1986).

In the past decades, many publications were inspired by the possible selves literature and they studied different forms of possible selves in applied settings. For example, academic possible selves (e.g., Oyserman & Fryberg, 2006; Oyserman & Markus, 1990), occupational possible selves (e.g., Meara et al., 1995), health-related possible selves (e.g., Ouellette et al., 2005), school-focused possible selves (e.g., Oyserman et al., 2011) and Future Work Self (FWS) (e.g., Strauss et al., 2012).

In the past years, the concept of a possible self was also found in the field of leadership. For example, Lord et al. (1999) discussed in their theoretical paper about the role of possible selves (as a part of self-concept) in mediating the effect of self on information processing. They argued such an effect has an influence on the followers' self-concept in the leader-follower relationship. In Sosik's (2000) theoretical leadership article, he drew on the possible selves concept and discussed how people developed their personal meaning of

charismatic leaders. Moreover, Avolio and Vogelgesang (2012) discussed in their book chapter the benefits of developing leaders' possible selves earlier in their leadership development process.

From the perspective of empirical studies, Ibarra's (1999) qualitative research examined how team-leaders transitioned to new roles by trying out provisional selves, which were on the basis of a possible self-concept. Furthermore, Sessa et al. (2018) found that college students' previous leadership experience and the interactions between their psychological development and social environment predicted their leader possible selves and indeed this identity was associated with leadership development. While these previous works attempted to investigate the role of possible selves in leadership development, they were either theoretical articles, or the researchers did not measure the impact of leader possible selves on the basis of a possible self conceptualisation (including leader hope and fear elements). Additionally, these works align with most leadership scholars' viewpoints that the leader identity has a positive effect on leadership development engagement, without exploring the actual content of the leader identity (DeRue & Ashford, 2010). This highlights the need to understand the content (i.e., hope and fear elements) of the leader possible self concept.

Possible selves have been shown to relate to an individual's current self and they can influence the current motivation and behaviours towards the realisation of possible selves (Lord & Brown, 2004; Markus & Wurf, 1987). Along this vein, the hopes and fears elements in leader possible selves represent the individuals' aspirations and limitations to actualise their future selves as leaders (Sessa et al., 2018). This information is vital in leadership development because people can use it to evaluate their current situations (Liu et al., 2020). Compared to current leader selves (i.e., leader identity), leader possible selves can reflect how a leadership role may be part of the individuals' possible selves and this can better

reinforce their current motivations and behaviours to get involved in leadership activities (Sessa et al., 2018). Envisioning oneself as a leader can also promote one's self-confidence as a leader, when they have a clear sense of how they should respond to the positive and negative elements of these possible selves (e.g., hopes and fears) (Lord et al., 2011). In essence, exploring the impact of leader possible selves can unveil its future-oriented motivation on individuals' current motivations and actions, which is a topic not fully covered by the concept of current leader identity.

1.3.2. **IST/ILT Congruence**

According to Implicit Leadership Theories (ILTs), ILTs are the leadership perceptions people hold about the attributes leaders should have and they use these perceptions to distinguish leaders from non-leaders (Lord et al., 1984). They also represent people's expectations for leadership behaviours and capacities (Foti & McCusker, 2017). In particular, these perceptions typically include separate sub-dimensions such as sensitivity, dynamism, intelligence, dedication, tyranny and masculinity (Epitropaki & Martin, 2004; Leung & Sy, 2018). Past research has examined different leadership prototypes that are perceived as characteristics of ideal, effective or typical leaders (Li et al., 2020; Schyns & Schilling, 2011; Tavares et al., 2018). Moreover, these prototypes can differ according to context, culture and across time (Schyns & Schilling, 2011; Shondrick et al., 2010). Furthermore, scholars assert that ILTs are related to whether people see themselves as able to lead and willing to lead (Guillén et al., 2015) and that this can have an impact on individuals' leader self-efficacy (LSE) (i.e., their perceived confidence in their leadership capabilities) (Hannah et al., 2008; Schyns et al., 2020).

Individuals do not only use ILTs to shape their perceptions of leaders, they also use ILTs to interpret and generate their own leadership behaviours (Leung & Sy, 2018; Lord et al., 2020). This implies ILTs constitute one's self-views as leaders (Zaar et al., 2019). It is assumed that individuals would feel more confident to take up leadership roles when they perceive themselves as possessing similar characteristics to their ILTs (DeRue & Ashford, 2010). However, it is not clear how the relationship between people's self-views as leaders and their views about ideal leaders can impact their perceived confidence about leading. As such, scholars have recently investigated the role of (in)congruence between ILT and individuals' leadership perceptions about themselves (Implicit self-theories (ISTs) (Schyns et al., 2020).

By comparing self-views as leaders against perceptions of leaders more generically, one can accurately evaluate how far it is for him or her to reach the expected leadership capacities represented by leadership perceptions (Diel et al., 2021). Individuals may feel more comfortable leading when they perceive their own leadership capacities as being close to those they expect of leaders (Hoyland et al., 2021). They may also have higher perceived confidence about leading, if their self-perceived leadership capacities are more advanced than what they perceive leaders to have or need (Schyns et al., 2020). Contrarily, they may feel less confident about taking on leadership positions, when they perceive their leadership capacities as less advanced than what they consider as necessary for leadership (DeRue & Myers, 2014; Diel et al., 2021). In other words, the congruence between ISTs and ILTs can meaningfully interpret how the match between people's self-views as leaders and their perceptions of leaders can impact their confidence for taking up leadership responsibilities (DeRue & Ashford, 2010).

1.3.3. **The Role of Gender in IST/ILT Congruence and Possible Selves in Leadership Domain**

Individuals have different cognitive knowledge structures about gender, and they integrate this knowledge in their self-concepts and form different perceptions about their gender (Markus et al., 1982). People develop these views about their gender during childhood through interacting with others (such as with their teachers and parents), they learn about the definition of their gender and form perceptions (stereotypes) of gender-appropriate behaviours and characteristics that men and women should display (such as women should be feminine, whereas men should be masculine) (Bandura, 1977b; Eagly & Karau, 2002; Hoyt & Johnson, 2011).

This gender self-view plays a critical role in one's self-concept (Markus et al., 1982). Differing gender self-views affect individual's self-concepts, thus, self-concepts are thought to be gender-stereotypical in general (Eagly et al., 2004). With reference to these gender stereotypes, individuals form gender-based self-views, they judge a person (it can be themselves or others) and infer if this person displays masculine or feminine characteristics in accordance to their gender (Powell & Butterfield, 2017). For example, people expect men to display masculine characteristics of competitiveness and decisiveness, whereas women ought to demonstrate feminine characteristics, such as sensitivity and consideration for others (Abele, 2003; Diekman & Eagly, 2000; Heilman, 2012).

The internalised gender stereotypical self-concepts become benchmarks of individuals to judge their own behaviours (Bussey & Bandura, 2004). These gender self-concepts also govern people to display gender-related behaviours (Bussey & Bandura, 1999). Women with internalised gender self-views are inclined to see themselves as feminine, thus they behave according to these self-views, which makes them feel good about themselves (Eagly et al.,

2004). Nevertheless, these stereotypical gender self-views can be contradictory to the perceptions of leaders which are culturally masculine (Eagly & Karau, 2002).

This gender stereotypical view of leadership is expected to relate to people's possible selves in the leadership domain and IST/ILT congruence. I will further discuss these topics in Sections 1.3.3.1. and 1.3.3.2.

1.3.3.1.   Possible Self in Leadership Domain and Gender

Gender self-views are an integral component of individuals' self-concepts (Markus et al., 1982). These differing gender self-views can affect individuals' possible selves (Brown & Diekman, 2010). In this vein, the gender-stereotypical self-views mentioned earlier can also be reflected in women's possible selves. Women who have internalised feminine gender self-views in their self-concepts are likely to perceive themselves as feminine (Eagly & Karau, 2002). This feminine gender self-view can contradict with their perceptions of leaders, which are seen predominantly as masculine (Koenig et al., 2011). Women with a feminine self-view as a leader may perceive a lack of connection between their leader possible selves and their current gender self-view. Essentially, people do not perceive a possible self as possible to attain, when they cannot see the linkage between such possible self and their current self (Oyserman & James, 2011). As such, women would be more reluctant to realise the leader possible self, due to this perceived mismatch between their current selves and their possible leader selves and thus the difficulty in actualising the latter (Oyserman, 2009).

Gender stereotypes refer to how people perceive the social roles of men and women (e.g., mother, father, follower and leader) (Eagly & Karau, 2002). People's expectations on men and women's characteristics and behaviours develop around these roles (Eagly et al., 2004). Moreover, people associate different social roles with men and women. For example,

they would associate families' main homemaker (feminine role) mostly with women and families' main provider (masculine role) with men (Brown & Diekman, 2010; Eagly et al., 2020). As such, women are inclined to assume women (including themselves) to hold the responsibilities of providing care, instead of being financial providers (Croft et al., 2019). Notably, these views can be embedded in women's possible selves and they are likely to foresee themselves as possessing family-related possible selves (Croft et al., 2019). In this case, women may interpret the realisation of their leader possible selves as not manageable, because of the difficulties involved (Oyserman & James, 2011). As a result, this can be a possible concern women have when thinking of their engagement in leadership.

In general, although there has been gradual evolvement of the traditional perceptions about what women and men ought to be, the gender stereotypes are still impacting men's and women's development in leadership field differently (Eagly et al., 2020). In this respect, it is necessary to consider the role of gender in the study of leader possible self.

1.3.3.2. IST/ILT Congruence and Gender

There is evidence to suggest that the gap between individuals' leader self-views and ILTs can impact men and women differently. Implicit views of leadership are predominately masculine, and this is described as the "think manager-think male" effect (Koenig et al., 2011; Rosette et al., 2016). This means the expectation of leadership capabilities relates to agentic abilities and traits that are not typically ascribed to women (Eagly & Karau, 2002). Instead, men are assumed to possess leadership characteristics (Eagly et al., 2004). As mentioned earlier, women are expected to display feminine qualities due to the gender stereotypes (Powell & Butterfield, 2017). This mismatch between women's gender and leader role emerges due to the feminine gender stereotypes, and women can be seen as inadequate, when

compared with the masculine characteristics associated with leaders (Eagly & Karau, 2002). This creates an unfavourable situation for women in the leadership area. Women can be perceived as not sufficiently agentic to occupy leadership roles (Rosette et al., 2016). They can also be penalised if they behave in a agentic way (e.g., being directive and decisive as a leader), which violates others' expectations about their behaviours as women (Brescoll & Uhlmann, 2008; Heilman, 2012).

Due to the gender perceptions people develop since childhood, women likely hold leader self-views as being feminine and communal because these views are in line with their gender self-views (Ellemers, 2018; Powell & Butterfield, 2017). They are less likely to see themselves as prototypical agentic leaders than men (Foti et al., 2012; Koenig et al., 2011; Mahon & Greenwald, 2018). This implies that if women perceive leadership behaviours as inappropriate for women, they would be less likely to step up and take over leadership responsibilities (Karelaia & Guillen, 2012).

Together with the mentioned unfavourable situation that does not support the emergence of female leaders, women may be compelled to conform to the expected feminine behaviours to minimise disapproval from others (Heilman, 2012). The incongruence between their internalised feminine self-view and the masculine perception of leaders can lead to their lower self-efficacy and lower interest in leadership roles (Bussey & Bandura, 2004; Chalk et al., 2005). Contrarily, men may have fewer concerns about the gap between their self-views as leaders and perception of leaders because they hold more agentic leader self-views (Koenig et al., 2011). These agentic self-views are more congruent to the masculine perception of leaders, thus they are more likely to associate themselves with leader roles and have a higher confidence in leading (Cuadrado et al., 2015). In other words, the gap between the self-views as leaders and leadership perceptions is likely different for women and men. This unfavourable situation for women can have a negative impact on women's self-views as

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leaders and women may feel less able to lead than men in general, because this gap is larger for women.

Given the complicated effect of gender on people's IST and ILT, it appears that gender-related leadership characteristics would impact men and women in the leadership domain differently (Gartzia & Baniandrés, 2019). They may feel able or unable to lead due to the gender-congruent or gender-incongruent leadership characteristics. As such, it is deemed necessary to explore the role of gender in IST/ILT congruence.

1.4. Addressing These Research Gaps

Given the importance of leader identity's role in leadership development, if we solely focus on examining the positive impact of leader identity, we may overlook varied individual development needs in leadership development (Lord & Hall, 2005). Without looking into individuals' aspirations and worries as future leaders, we may not understand the reasons that can strengthen or weaken leaders' confidence about leading and their interest in leadership development (Avolio & Vogelgesang, 2012; Zhang et al., 2020). Moreover, if we only focus on the current leader identity, we may miss out on the impact brought by future-oriented leader identity and specifically the gap between people's leader self-views versus their perceptions of leaders and leader possible selves. These elements can also help explain what makes individuals wanting, or not wanting to take up leadership roles and engage in leadership development (Diel et al., 2021; Sessa et al., 2018). Furthermore, without considering the role of gender in LFWS and IST/ILT congruence studies, we are likely to overlook what makes men and women want to pursue leadership development and feel able to lead. Practically, organisations may miss out the opportunities to develop bespoke

practices that can encourage men and women to engage in leadership based on their development needs (Kragt & Day, 2020; Lord & Hall, 2005).

To address these research limitations, I extend the understanding of leader identity's role in leadership development by integrating three concepts: Leader Future Work Self (LFWS), Implicit Self Theories (ISTs)/ILTs congruence and the role of gender in these concepts. LFWS is a concept based on possible selves (Markus & Nurius, 1986) and it is adapted from recent work on Future Work Selves (Strauss et al., 2012). This is a type of possible self in the leadership domain and it consists of hope and fear elements that are expected to cause differing positive impact (i.e., stronger or weaker) in leadership development intentions. LFWS can help us understand leaders' hopes, aspirations, concerns and fears related to the realisation of their future selves as leaders (Sessa et al., 2018). As a future facet of leader identity, the LFWS concept can clarify why some people feel more able to lead, or choose to engage in leadership development, while others do not.

IST/ILT congruence indicates the synergy or gap between a person's self-views as a leader and their ILTs (Lord et al., 2020). It is suggested that individuals tend to feel more able and willing to lead, when their ISTs closely relate to their ILTs (i.e., congruence) (DeRue & Ashford, 2010). The outcomes may vary if the perceived gap of IST/ILT is large (i.e., incongruence). Similar to the congruence situation, when people perceive themselves as more characteristic as leaders than their perception of leaders, their perceived confidence of leading would also be boosted (Diel et al., 2021). In contrast, if an individual views themselves as less characteristic as leaders, compared to their implicit leadership perceptions, they would feel less compelled to take on the leadership responsibilities, or they may be less inclined to engage in leadership-related activities (Carver & Scheier, 1982; Diel et al., 2021; Schyns et al., 2020).

Given the large body of research on gendered perceptions of leadership (e.g., Eagly et al., 2020; Foti et al., 2012; Gershenoff & Foti, 2003; Hoyland et al., 2021; Hoyt & Johnson, 2011; Koenig et al., 2011; Scott & Brown, 2006; Shen & Joseph, 2021), it is important to also examine LFWS and IST/ILT congruence in the context of gender differences. By applying the outlined situations to men and women and investigating leadership perceptions separately, we may understand the varied situations that may (or may not) make them show interest in leadership development and feel able to lead.

For example, from the LFWS's perspective, the incongruence between women who hold feminine self-views and the masculine LFWS may lower their confidence and interest in attaining this future role (i.e., as a feminine woman, she may perceive herself inadequate of taking up a future masculine leader role) (Koenig et al., 2011; Oyserman et al., 2011). The incongruence between the gendered family-related future roles associated with women (e.g. being a mother who has key responsibilities of taking care of her children compared to her husband) and masculine LFWS can also make them perceive LFWS as not attainable, thus weakening their interest in pursuing a future leadership role (Croft et al., 2019; Eagly et al., 2020; Oyserman & James, 2009).

Another example, from IST.ILT congruence perspective, is that dynamism is seen as an agentic characteristic aligned with the general masculine leadership perception (Rosette et al., 2016; Sy et al., 2010). However, women are more likely to hold feminine gender self-views and perceive themselves as possessing feminine qualities (Eagly et al., 2014). In this case, women may be less likely to view themselves as dynamic leaders, due to the mismatch between their gender role and the leadership role (Koenig et al., 2011). They may hold self-views that they are feminine and communal and thus that they are not sufficiently dynamic (agentic), compared to the masculine leader stereotypes (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Heilman,

1983; Rosette et al., 2016). Given this mismatch situation, women may feel less able to lead, due to the incongruence between IST and ILT regarding the characteristic of dynamism.

The situation for men may be different. They are more likely to view themselves as dynamic leaders, because this characteristic is aligned with their masculine self-views and leadership perceptions (Hoyland et al., 2021; Koenig et al., 2011). They may feel more comfortable leading, due to the congruence between IST and ILT regarding the dynamism characteristic. In essence, the IST/ILT congruence on different leadership characteristics can provide a more comprehensive view about why some people feel more able to take up leadership roles while others not, and furthermore gender roles may moderate these effects.

In view of the above, the research question underlying this thesis is: *what is the role of leader identity in individuals' pursuit of leadership development?*

In addressing this research question, this thesis has four essential objectives. First, I explore the concept of LFWS by examining two components, namely hope and fear, that may play different roles in an individual's leader future identity. Second, I shall examine the LFWS's impact on an individual's leadership self-efficacy and their intention to pursue leadership development. In so doing, I will specifically explore the role that the LFWS elements of hope and fear play in developing people's self-efficacy about leading and their interest in leadership development. Next, I will investigate the influence of IST/ILT congruence on people's LSE. Finally, I will explore the role of gender in the studies of LFWS and IST/ILT congruence.

1.5. Key Contributions

This thesis contributes to the field of leader identity (e.g., Hall, 2004; Hiller, 2005; Lord & Brown, 2004) and leadership development (e.g., Day, 2000; Day et al., 2008; Day &

Harrison, 2007) by shedding light on a future-oriented form of leader identity, LFWS, and by examining the impact of IST/ILT congruence (e.g., DeRue & Ashford, 2010; Epitropaki & Martin, 2004; Offermann et al., 1994).

Firstly, this thesis extends our understanding about what makes people pursue leadership development and feel able to lead. Thus, from the possible selves perspective, the newly adapted LFWS concept is expected to offer insights about the hope and fear elements encompassing individuals' future selves as leaders. LFWS can illustrate its linkage with people's motivations and behavioural strategies of attaining the hoped-for and avoiding the feared possible self. These insights are also expected to clarify the effect of a future-oriented leader identity on individuals' interest in leadership development and confidence in leading (Ashford & DeRue, 2012; Avolio & Vogelgesang, 2012).

The IST/ILT congruence can add additional insights on what makes individuals feel able to lead. Based on the match or mismatch scenarios reflected by the IST/ILT congruence, this concept can shed light on the specific reasons that cause changes in people's LSE (Schyns et al., 2020). It can add value to the ILT and leader identity literature because the concept of congruence meaningfully illustrates how IST relates to ILT (DeRue & Ashford, 2010). Furthermore, the measurement of match (or mismatch) between IST and ILT can unveil whether this match (or mismatch) may make individuals perceive themselves as more (or less) characteristic as leaders than their ILTs. In other words, this test of congruence between IST and ILT will reflect whether people see themselves as possessing more (or less) leadership skills than their ILTs. Thus, these scenarios can illuminate the specific reasons that affect people's LSE.

Secondly, this thesis aims to reveal the role of gender within the context of LFWS and IST/ILT congruence. Given the gendered perceptions of leadership, the investigation of

gender differences in LFWS can enrich our understanding about what affects men's and women's interest in leadership development. Particularly, the aspirations and concerns regarding attaining their LFWS can be related to the gender stereotypical self-views and perceptions of leaders (Croft et al., 2019). These differing views of men and women can add value to the possible selves literature, by revealing their different hopes and fears associated with realising their LFWS, which may impact their LI. Moreover, gender differences in IST/ILT congruence can illustrate how the gender (congruent or incongruent) leadership characteristics impact men's and women's LSE differently.

1.6. Thesis Overview

Given the three distinct objectives outlined earlier, the compilation of three research articles was deemed as the most appropriate thesis structure (Paltridge, 2002). In this vein, this thesis includes three chapters (which reflect the three research articles), followed by an overall discussion and conclusion.

The first and second research articles (Chapter 2 and Chapter 3) are related to LFWS, with each of them focusing on a different aspect of LFWS, and they apply a blending of online surveys (for qualitative data collection) and online experimental designs (for quantitative data collection).

The first empirical paper adopts a qualitative approach to investigate the LFWS elements of hope and fear and their linkage to the participants' motivations and behaviours in leadership development. I conduct an analysis based on 192 narratives related to the participants' envisioned future work lives and their hopes and/or fears regarding their future work lives as leaders. The results clarify the structure of LFWS and the elements included in it. I illuminate that LFWS contains specific hope and fear elements related to leadership. It

also encompasses the categories of leadership work, personal life, motivations and people's behavioural strategies in their attempts to realise the hopes and avoid fears in their LFWS. Moreover, the results of this chapter reveal that attaining LFWS is not a choice for everyone and that some people do not possess a LFWS. By demonstrating the connection between LFWS hope/fear elements and the LFWS categories, this chapter sets the stage for the further examination of LFWS's impact on leadership development.

Building on the conceptualisation of LFWS in the Chapter 2, Chapter 3 adopts a quantitative approach to investigate the differential impact of the LFWS hope and fear elements (when the elements are activated) in making participants confident to lead and wanting to engage in leadership development. In general, when the hope element in LFWS is activated, the results show that it can strengthen people's LFWS. LFWS is also found to make people more confident to lead and to engage in leadership development and it also increases their interest in leadership development (especially when the hope element is activated). However, women's LFWS become weaker when the fear element is activated, while this does not apply to men.

These elements are brought together in a model that confirms the generally positive impact of LFWS (Avolio & Vogelgesang, 2012) on people's perceived confidence in leading and their interest in leadership development. In line with the possible selves literature (Markus & Nurius, 1986), the findings also demonstrate that individuals' hopes embedded in their possible selves (LFWS) can predict a positive impact in LFWS, when activated. Additionally, the results show that the activated fear elements have a different impact on women and men's LFWS. In general, this research validates LFWS's value and develops a richer understanding of the role of activated hope and fear in leadership development.

Finally, the final empirical chapter (Chapter 4) contributes to the ILT literature (e.g., Epitropaki & Martin, 2004; Offermann et al., 1994) and to the research on IST/ILT congruence (e.g., DeRue & Ashford, 2010; Schyns et al., 2020) in the following ways.

Firstly, the concept of IST/ILT congruence sheds light on the meaningful relationship between IST and ILT in explaining a leadership-related outcome (i.e., LSE) (DeRue & Ashford, 2010). Based on the concept of social comparison, the IST/ILT congruence illustrates the connection between individuals' leader identity and their ILTs (Rus et al., 2010). The IST/ILT congruence (i.e., low IST/low ILT, high IST/high ILT) and incongruence (i.e., high IST/low ILT and low IST/high ILT) scenarios reveal their differentiated effects on people's LSE.

Secondly, this chapter unveils the role of gender in the relationship between IST/ILT congruence and LSE. Whereas the ILT literature claims that ILTs do not differ across gender groups (e.g., Deal & Stevenson, 1998; Nye & Forsyth, 1991; Offermann et al., 1994) and that gender appears to be a irrelevant ILT leadership characteristic (Offermann & Coats, 2018), results from this chapter suggest that the LSE of men and women is affected differently by the IST/ILT congruence pattern on different dimensions.

The general results, theoretical and practical contributions and the limitations are discussed in Chapter 5, as a conclusion of this thesis. This section also provides a final reflection on the value of studying leader identity and it specifically discusses the concepts of LFWS and IST/ILT congruence in leadership development, while suggesting future research directions.

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Chapter 2

The Conceptualisation of Leader Future Work Self (LFWS) for

Understanding Leadership Development

Abstract

Leadership development continues to garner attention from the leadership research field, yet important questions still remain in regard to a more robust approach for securing the supply of effective leaders. This study aims to address this matter by proposing a new concept - Leader Future Work Self (LFWS) adapted from Future Work Self (FWS). By adopting a qualitative approach, this study explores the content of LFWS and its linkages to motivations and behavioural strategies in leadership development. The results illustrate that FWS and LFWS share similar structure where FWS focuses on a general work level and LFWS focuses on a specific leadership level. Notably, LFWS demonstrates four types of contents: leadership work, personal life, motivations, and behavioural strategies. These contents interact with the hope and fear dimensions embedded across all these categories. Moreover, it is also found that leadership is not a choice for everyone and that some people do not possess a LFWS. This chapter concludes that people have their hopes and fears regarding becoming leaders in the future, and these elements have linkages with their positive and negative motivations and behavioural strategies for realising hope and avoiding fear elements in LFWS.

2.1. Introduction

Leadership development is undoubtedly a critical priority for organisations. According to a recent survey of 10,000 respondents in 119 countries, 80% of respondents expressed that leadership was an important or very important issue (Deloitte Insights, 2019). Likewise, another survey also found that leadership was the second most important priority in C-suites. However, only 13% of organisations reported that they were excellent at building leaders despite nearly US$31 billion being spent on leadership development (Deloitte University Press, 2016). These data allude to an urgent need for effective leadership development. In the area of leadership development research, scholars have also urged for a more robust approach to tackle the lack of supply of effective leaders (DeRue & Myers, 2014; O'Connell, 2014).

However, there are limitations in the current approaches to studying leadership development, which primarily focuses on the study of traits and behaviours (Day et al., 2014). These approaches are not sufficient for effectively developing leaders because the trait approach predisposes that leaders are born, and the behavioural approach relies heavily on the development of leadership behaviours through short-term training (Day et al., 2014; House et al., 1996; Lord & Hall, 2005). These approaches neglect the importance of 'self' willingness and motivation at an individual level (DeRue & Myers, 2014). Another stream focuses on the development of leader identity as the core element of leadership development and argues that this approach can accelerate and sustain the development outcomes, such as sustaining the leaders' motivation to develop and producing effective leaders (Day & Harrison, 2007; Lord & Hall, 2005). However, leader identity is treated as a single entity in the research. There is a general lack of understanding about the content of this identity, particularly the future leader identity, to explain leaders' motivations and behaviours in their development (Sessa et al., 2018).

Because of the limitations mentioned, the study of future leader identity becomes important. If future leader identities are neglected in leadership development research, we are missing the key drivers for the future-oriented motivations and behaviours of leadership development, as well as leadership outcomes (emergence and effectiveness) (Avolio & Hannah, 2008; Markus & Nurius, 1986; Sessa et al., 2018). Moreover, the contents of a future leader identity are related to leadership development motivations and outcomes. This future identity content can explain why leaders are motivated or demotivated to approach or avoid leadership responsibilities and development (Higgins, 1997; Oyserman & James, 2011). If we do not investigate the content, we will not understand the core reasons for leaders' motivations and behaviours in leadership development.

To address the complications and concerns mentioned above, in this thesis, we define and investigate a concept, Leader Future Work Self (LFWS), to examine how this future-oriented possible self guides individuals' interest in the pursuit of leadership development. The concept of LFWS will contribute to the possible selves and FWS literature with a more specific focus on future leader identities. This approach explores the hope (i.e. desired future self) and fear (i.e. undesired future self) contents and the impact of LFWS on predicting leadership development motivations and behavioural outcomes. In terms of leadership development motivations, this research is expected to provide additional explanations of why people are motivated to lead. It will also investigate the reasons why some people choose to engage in leadership development, and some do not. To conclude, this concept of LFWS provides a richer understanding of leader future identities contents, together with their twofold impacts, it presents a renewed view of leader identity's influence on leadership development through the future identity lens.

2.2. Literature Review

The purpose of this chapter is twofold. First, it presents the academic bases used to develop the research questions. Second, it provides a critical analysis of how this research might theoretically contribute to and advance academic research. This research joins the bodies of literature on identity, possible selves, FWS, and leadership development, and yields insights into the relationship between future leader identity and its impact on leadership development. In the following sections, we will first discuss leadership development research and the factors that can influence leadership development participation. It will be followed by a discussion of main leadership outcomes: leader emergence and leader effectiveness. The second section will focus on identity and its different characteristics. The last section will zoom in on the possible selves and FWS research – the origins of LFWS. This part will also cover the conceptualisation of LFWS. Lastly, the research questions are presented based on the review of the literature.

2.2.1. **Leadership Development**

Leadership development refers to the increase in one's capacity for mastering leadership roles and processes effectively (Orvis & Ratwani, 2010). This process also involves the individual drawing on his or her learning experiences and evolving through the process of making sense of self experiences (Van Velsor & Drath, 2004). These premises suggest that leadership development involves the factor of 'self' to evolve and position the formation of effective leadership as an outcome.

Owing to the importance of the self factor, traits, and leadership knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs), studies have been two long-standing mainstreams in leadership development research (Day et al., 2014). Traits are typically seen as stable factors rather than

skills that require development (Lord & Hall, 2005). Of all the traits, four out of five of the Big Five traits (i.e. extraversion, conscientiousness, emotional stability, and openness to experience), along with intelligence and charisma, are found to be associated with leader emergence and effectiveness (Judge, Erez, et al., 2002; Judge et al., 2009). On the other hand, the KSAs approach focuses on the development of knowledge, skills, and abilities that are necessary for effective leadership (DeRue & Myers, 2014). Out of different types of KSAs, cognitive skills, interpersonal skills, business skills, and strategic skills are seen as the required leadership skills. Strategic skills are particularly important for senior leaders in organisations (Mumford et al., 2007). Nevertheless, these approaches have received criticism due to their lack of new insights contributing to the theory and research (Day et al., 2014). If traits are regarded as enduring dispositional tendencies, this implies that leaders are born, and the relevance of this idea for studying leadership development is questionable (Day et al., 2014; House et al., 1996). Furthermore, as the behavioural approach focuses on leadership behaviours learning, it prefers training as intervention, the impact of which is relatively short-term (Lord & Hall, 2005). Lastly, people who have developed the effective KSAs required for leadership may choose not to become leader due to the worries and risks associated with the role (Aycan & Shelia, 2019; Heifetz & Linsky, 2017).

2.2.2. Antecedents of Leadership Development

In this section, I will discuss the key antecedents of leadership development which can have an impact on people's interest in leadership development.

2.2.2.1. Leader Identity

Due to the lack of new insights found in the traits and KSAs approaches of studying leadership development, scholars have started to look into alternative predictors and propose the importance of leader identity in leadership development (DeRue & Myers, 2014). Leader identity refers to the sub-element of one's identity that is related to taking a leadership role or how one considers oneself as a leader (Day & Harrison, 2007). Leadership development research that takes the leader identity approach has different research directions. These include but are not limited to leader role identity development at multilevel and across domains, leader identity claiming and granting, leader identity trajectories, and conditions that impact the leader identity development, such as social network, congruence with the context, group identity, and leadership structure schema (Ashford & DeRue, 2012; Cullen-Lester et al., 2017; Day & Harrison, 2007; Day & Sin, 2011; Hammond et al., 2017; Lord et al., 1999; Maurer & London, 2018; Miscenko et al., 2017; Offermann et al., 2019; Zaar et al., 2019). These approaches have drawn on identity theories about roles, social identities, and identity construction processes (Ibarra et al., 2014).

As Hall (2004) asserted, "identity is probably the most important aspect of leader…development" (p. 154). This leadership domain and role-specific identity are pivotal to leadership development because it is a source of motivational and directional forces, and it can influence the willingness of people to put effort into developing themselves as leaders (Lord & Hall, 2005). Leadership development is thus a leader identity development process (Ibarra et al., 2014). Throughout the leadership development process, individuals make sense of the leadership learning experiences and construct their leader identities, and this identity construction process can sustain their motivation and determination for further complex leadership skills development (DeRue & Ashford, 2010; Lord & Hall, 2005). In other words, the development of leadership skills is inherently related to leader identity changes (Miscenko et al., 2017).

The premises mentioned seem to suggest that leader identity is a single entity with only a positive impact, and there is a lack of understanding of the identity content and the impact of future leader identities. The leader identity content and possible negative impact are crucial for leadership development studies. In reality, leaders often experience fears, and these fears can originate from and affect their leader identities (Aycan & Shelia, 2019; Cropanzano et al., 2017). Further, because leader identities can be developed prior to taking on leadership roles, similar worries associated with leadership can also be found in students' leader identities (Aycan & Shelia, 2019; Sessa et al., 2018). Without knowledge of the contents and negative impact of these leadership worries, it would be difficult to understand why some people (i.e. both leaders and non-leaders) are not interested in leadership roles and opt-out of leadership development opportunities. Furthermore, leadership development is future-oriented because it concerns the continuous expansion of peoples' leadership capacities (Day & Sin, 2011). While leader identity is crucial for creating a positive impact in leadership development, a future leader identity can enhance this impact because it can create a future-oriented motivation aims at realising a possible future self (Hannah et al., 2013).

2.2.2.2.   Intention for Leadership Development

Intention is proposed to be a reliable precursor to perform a behaviour (Ajzen, 1991). It is not just a prediction of future behaviours but a commitment: it represents future actions to be performed (Bandura, 2001). Because of this influence on actions, the relevance of intention as a precursor of development is well established in the literature on development (Maurer & Palmer, 1999; Maurer & Tarulli, 1994). It is reported that the intention for development participation leads to actual participation in the development activities (Maurer

et al., 2003). Following this logic, the intention for leadership development would predict the participation in leadership development activities.

Although the intention to act can be influenced by motivation (Ajzen, 1991), motivation does not necessarily lead to actions (Locke, 2000). People who are motivated to be leaders may not necessarily take actions to seek out leadership development opportunities (Pitichat et al., 2018). As such, two conditions need to be considered regarding the impact of intention on leadership development participation: leader development needs and leader self-efficacy (LSE). The intention of leadership development is developed based on development needs (Maurer et al., 2003). Leaders' development needs stem from the gap between their needs to fulfil leadership role requirements and their current level of leadership skills and experience (Maurer & London, 2018). These skills and experience gaps are also related to LSE. LSE refers to people's perceived belief regarding their leadership capabilities and personal characteristics that help them to lead (Guillén et al., 2015). While people with strong self-efficacy are more likely to sustain efforts for achieving the best performance, they would also see themselves as being supremely self-efficacious and have little need to exert greater effort towards further learning (Bandura, 1982). This means that some leaders who have high LSE may have a positive impact on their motivations to take on leadership roles, but they may not have a high intention to participate in leadership development (Pitichat et al., 2018).

2.2.3. Behavioural Outcomes of Leadership Development

The purpose of leadership development is to produce leaders, and that the leaders will have the required leadership skills and experience to lead the team towards effectively achieving its goals (Orvis & Ratwani, 2010; Yukl, 2012). However, the creation of leadership and leadership skills are not just leadership development outcomes – they are also outcomes

led by a self factor: leader identity (Ibarra et al., 2014). Therefore, it is necessary to understand leader emergence and leader effectiveness from the perspective of self.

2.2.3.1.   Leader Emergence

Leader emergence refers to a phenomenon where an individual emerges as the leader in a leaderless group (Spark et al., 2018). The nomination is based on limited actual performance information of that emergent leader because the followers select the leader based on perceived effectiveness (Hogan et al., 1994). Because people have generalised perceptions about leadership, they would identify someone as an emergent leader when his or her characteristics match their perceptions (DeRue et al., 2015; Hogan et al., 1994; Lord et al., 1984). These leaderlike and prototypical leadership characteristics typically include intelligence, competence, honesty, sociability, understanding, aggressiveness, verbal skills, determination, and industriousness (Hogan et al., 1994).

Because perceived leadership characteristics can determine leader emergence, traditionally, research examining leader emergence has taken a personal characteristics approach. These research approaches assert that traits (e.g. extroversion, openness to new experiences, conscientiousness, and lack of neuroticism) and attributes (e.g. need for power, need for achievement, and a positive orientation towards authority) can predict a group member's emergence as a leader (Judge, Bono, et al., 2002; Zaccaro et al., 2018). However, other scholars argue that personality itself is a relatively poor correlate of leadership (Albright & Forziati, 1995; Hogg, 2001; Yukl, 2010). In particular, identity scholars propose that identity plays a vital role in shaping and guiding individuals' choices and behaviours (Markus & Wurf, 1987). An individual's desire and choice to claim the leader role are the first steps in leader emergence (Aycan & Shelia, 2019; Chan & Drasgow, 2001; Zaar et al.,

2019). Therefore, it is not surprising that leader identity is suggested as a crucial requirement for individuals to demonstrate leaderlike behaviours, because it regulates the leader identity-related motivations and actions (Kwok et al., 2018; Oyserman & James, 2009). Notably, leader identity can be developed before taking on official leadership roles (Sessa et al., 2018). This means that leader identity can facilitate the emergence of individuals as leaders even without possessing a formal leadership position (Kwok et al., 2018). Moreover, holding a self-view as a leader could also affect the number of leadership nominations an individual receives over time (Emery et al., 2011).

2.2.3.2.   Leader Effectiveness

Leadership effectiveness is defined as the leader's effective influence in mobilising and motivating followers towards achieving goals (Rego et al., 2019; Van Knippenberg et al., 2005). It typically involves leadership behaviours such as consideration, initiating structure, participation, and change management behaviours (Hunt, 2004; Marta et al., 2005; Mumford et al., 2008; Yukl et al., 2002). Essentially, a combination of these task, relationship and change-oriented leadership behaviours can facilitate successful leadership (Hunt, 2004; Yukl, 2010).

Similar to leader emergence, perceived leadership attributes such as charisma, need for power, and intelligence, can explain leader effectiveness (DeGroot et al., 2011; Judge et al., 2004). This is because followers' perceptions of the degree to which the leader possesses the characteristics required to lead can predict leader effectiveness (DeGroot et al., 2011). However, leadership effectiveness implies additional standards compared to leader emergence, because it involves the evaluation of leader's performance in influencing his or her followers towards the achievement of the team's goals (Judge et al., 2002). It is an

evaluation result based on more comprehensive and objective measures of group performance (Hogan et al., 1994). Therefore, it further emphasises the necessity of possessing effective leadership skills and knowledge to drive team results (Yukl, 2012).

While leader identity is important for predicting both leader emergence and leader effectiveness (Kwok et al., 2018), the differentiated representation of leader identity would lead to different impacts. In general, leader identity is related to taking on leadership roles and thinking of oneself as a leader (Day & Harrison, 2007). However, identity is multidimensional and includes different elements (Greenwald & Pratkanis, 1984; Markus & Wurf, 1987). A leader identity that focuses on being an effective leader would be different from one that only aims at becoming a leader. The former type of leader identity would likely predict motivations and behaviours that are related to leadership skills development (Day et al., 2012). The later type of leader identity would be related to motivation to lead (Chan & Drasgow, 2001) but would not necessarily imply one's interest in leadership development opportunities. Based on these discussions, identity can be an effective factor for explaining different outcomes of leadership development. The characteristics and impacts of identity will be covered in the next section.

2.3. Identity Theory and Characteristics

Scholars regard identity as a stable concept, consisting of a collection of dynamic and multifaceted individual identities (Markus & Wurf, 1987). Identity represents a set of images, concepts, prototypes, or goals that are connected, like a network (Greenwald & Pratkanis, 1984; Markus & Wurf, 1987). It is the way we perceive ourselves, and our identity can have profound effects on the way we feel, think, and act, and thus direct us towards achieving the things we want in life (James, 1984; Leary & Tangney, 2011). From the cognitive

psychology perspective, theorists define identities as cognitive schemas that store information and meanings that function as bases for how we experience situations. It is suggested that they have a crucial impact on people's motivations and behaviours (Markus, 1977; Stryker & Burke, 2000). While different scholars define identity with varied models, the common feature is that identity is just one node among all the associated elements, and it is relatively stable unless drastic changes take place that alter the whole identity structure (Ibarra, 1999; Markus & Wurf, 1987).

These basic definitions of identity illustrate the dynamic nature of identity and how it covers different aspects of people's lives. The following sections will explain in detail the characteristics of identity under the categories of multidimensional forms of identity, importance, impact on motivations, and behaviours.

2.3.1. **Multidimensional Nature of Identity**

An identity is not unidimensional, and it can be understood from its connection with role, domain and temporal distance. Identities are associated with personal and social positions that people hold in a particular social context (Van Knippenberg et al., 2004). Through self-definitions, the self can be defined according to an individual's characteristics (e.g. smart), gender, race, occupational roles (e.g. leader), family roles (e.g. mother), and organisational membership (e.g. Apple employee) (Higgins, 1987). The identity content is also dependent on specific domains (such as work domain, academic domain, or leadership domain) and it can be viewed as self-related information (self-schemas) elicited from different contexts (Lord et al., 1999). For example, being a leader in an organisation is an identity, and the same person could also hold a personal identity as a leader, where he or she

takes initiatives and is good at completing tasks through influencing others, in his or her personal life.

Self-comparisons are another way to understand different forms of identities from a temporal distance perspective. Within the temporal distance framework, identities can be categorised in the forms of past, present, and potential future selves (Obodaru, 2012). Self-comparisons further define these selves by comparing them against the current selves. Research has so far addressed four types of self-comparisons against the current selves: past selves (Albert, 1977), possible selves (i.e. who an individual may become in the future) (Markus & Nurius, 1986), ideal selves (i.e. who an individual would ideally like to be) (Higgins, 1987), and ought selves (i.e. who an individual thinks s/he should be (Higgins, 1987). The key connection between the current and future identities is that future-oriented representations of the self are thought to be derived from the interpretation of current and past selves and can motivate future behaviours (Hoyle & Sherrill, 2006). In this sense, the identity contents are dynamic because they do not only include facets of the roles people take and the domains in which they are involved – the temporal distance also adds complexity to the implications attached to these identities.

2.3.2. Salience of Identity

Salience represents the subjective importance of an identity, and a salient identity refers to a self-concept that is central to an individual (Markus & Wurf, 1987). This is because a salient identity is highly relevant to one's goals and values (Ashforth & Johnson, 2001). The concept of salience is important to identity studies due to the multidimensional nature of identity. Among these dimensions, some are more important and impactful than others (Markus & Wurf, 1987). People can hold multiple stable core identities and aspects of

self that are only specific to particular contexts (Priest & Middleton, 2016). The varying strength of different self-identities is dependent on the context (such as taking up different social roles), group membership and relationships (such as being a leader of a group), and time (such as having a future aspect of the identity of being a leader after graduation from the university) (Van Knippenberg et al., 2004). People can shift between these sub-identities relatively easily, but it is not possible to have more than one active identity at any given point of time due to humans' relatively limited attentional capacity (Day & Harrison, 2007; Lord & Brown, 2004). Individuals tend to adopt an identity with a higher strength of identification to define themselves (Aquino et al., 2009). The more important a particular identity is to someone, the more crystallised and clear this self-concept is (Van Knippenberg et al., 2004). In conclusion, the level of an identity's salience determines whether an identity is a core one (Stryker, 1980) or a peripheral one (Markus & Wurf, 1987).

2.3.3. Linkage of Identity to Motivations and Behaviours

Identities can be effective regulators of peoples' motivations and behaviours (Markus & Nurius, 1986). This relationship can be understood based on why and how identities matter to these outcomes. Identities can be an important source of motivations and behaviours because they are not only people's core goals, but they also represent their self-definitions and provide them motivational incentives for behaviours (Markus & Wurf, 1987). Self-definitions form the current self and describe who the person is. They are related to personal characteristics, roles, and memberships (Obodaru, 2012). The meanings that stem from self-definitions provide people with the motivation to engage in certain behaviours (Markus & Nurius, 1986). Moreover, social psychologists argue for this impact by presenting identities as cognitive schemas, which can store information and meanings as frameworks for the

interpretation of experiences (Markus, 1977). These cognitive schemas enhance sensitivity in recognising related cues, and this increased responsiveness to identity-related cues also increases the likelihood of that identity-relevant behaviour being enacted (Stryker & Burke, 2000). The concept of identity salience is also relevant to identity-related motivations and behaviours. A salient identity represents the most important concept and goal of an individual, and it motivates behaviours to confirm its existence (Murnieks et al., 2014). A salient identity also implies an increased readiness of an individual to act out a core identity (Stryker, 1987; Stryker & Serpe, 1994).

A self-regulation mechanism controls the dynamics mentioned above between identities, motivations, and behaviours. Drawing on self-regulation and self-discrepancy theories, self-regulation can drive the movement towards the desired end-states with approach or avoidance behaviours (Higgins, 1987, 1997, 1998). These two sets of behaviours are aimed at achieving two different desired selves: the ideal self, which is associated with hopes and aspirations, and the ought self, which is associated with duties, obligations, and responsibilities (Higgins, 1997). People attempt to attain their ideal selves by matching them exactly, and they are primarily concerned with development, hopes, and aspirations (Avolio & Vogelgesang, 2012; Higgins, 1997). In contrast, people who opt for attaining ought selves only aim at minimum goals to avoid a mismatch with these selves and focus on avoiding errors and negative outcomes (Brendl & Higgins, 1996; Higgins, 1997). Whereas self-discrepancy theory placed a focus on ought selves, possible selves scholars place the emphasis on the feared self – the future people do not want to become, but they are concerned about possibly becoming (Carver et al., 1999). Mode details about possible selves will be covered next.

2.4. Possible Selves Research

Possible selves are one form of identity, and they are theorised as a cognitive manifestation of goals, motives, fears, and threats (Markus & Nurius, 1986). They share several similar characteristics with the identities discussed above, in that they are also multidimensional and role and domain-specific (Markus & Nurius, 1986). Moreover, they are also regarded as a cognition inherent in motivation and are claimed to affect individuals' choices of goals and behavioural strategies (Latham & Pinder, 2005; Locke & Henne, 1986). However, possible selves have unique characteristics that are crucial for driving future-oriented motivational and behavioural outcomes (Markus & Wurf, 1987).

Possible selves are future-oriented facets of identity and include the hoped-for and feared selves that people wish to become or avoid becoming (Oyserman & James, 2009). They are representations of selves in the future state (Cross & Markus, 1991). They are different from the current selves but are, at the same time, closely connected to them (Leondari et al., 1998). This means that possible selves, as components of future identity, represent the self one may become. They function as an evaluative context for making sense of the current self and further motivate future-oriented behaviours (Oyserman & James, 2009). The hope elements in possible selves represent the expected and hoped-for selves, or the selves someone believes he or she can be; and the fear elements represent the selves people try to avoid realising or fear becoming (Cross & Markus, 1991). Examples of hoped-for selves could include the future successful self or future powerful leader self that are possible to attain. In contrast, the feared self could be the future failed self or future undervalued self that are possible to become, and people want to avoid these feared selves from being realised.

Possible selves can be effective regulators of people's motivations and behaviours (Markus & Nurius, 1986). In addition to providing individuals with information about people's desired futures, the hope and fear elements embedded in possible selves may also motivate people to realise the hoped-for possible selves or avoid realising the feared possible selves (Hamman et al., 2013). This means that the hoped-for possible selves involve approach motivation, whereas the feared ones involve avoidance motivation (Carver & Scheier, 1990; Higgins, 1998). As such, hoped-for possible selves would imply discrepancy-reducing processes that aim to reduce the distance between current selves and desired selves. In contrast, feared possible selves would engage discrepancy-enlarging processes to increase the distance from undesired selves (vanDellen & Hoyle, 2008). Nevertheless, the impact of feared possible selves on peoples' motivation and behaviours is not unidirectional. While the feared possible selves could prompt the undesired state to be rejected or avoided (Oyserman & Markus, 1990), it could also cause approach attempts to change the current situations to keep the feared selves from being realised (Markus & Nurius, 1986). In essence, different possible selves would make people behave differently to put efforts into approaching or avoiding their hoped-for and feared possible selves (Cross & Markus, 1991).

Furthermore, salience also matters when maximising the motivational and behavioural impact of possible selves (vanDellen & Hoyle, 2008). This is because, when a possible self is salient and vivid to an individual, he/she interprets his/her subjective experience that there is a gap between the current self and possible self, and efforts are needed to approach or avoid that possible self (Oyserman & James, 2011). However, people do not always take actions to attain their future selves (Oyserman & Destin, 2010). Three identity-based motivations are critical to cue the necessary self-regulatory behaviours. First, the possible selves need to feel connected to the current self. Second, the actions required for realising the possible selves must be congruent with other salient facets of the current self. Third, the subjective

interpretation of the difficulty and uncertainty of achieving a possible self must seem manageable. In others words, the more people interpret the realisation of their possible selves as possible to their current selves, the more likely they are to take actions to achieve them (Oyserman & James, 2011). For example, an individual would be more inclined to engage in self-regulatory behaviours to realise his or her possible self as a future leader when he or she feels this possible self is connected to his or her current self. This possible self is also congruent with his or her other salient aspects of selves, such as a family role as a husband or wife, where he or she can balance work and life and spare enough time for their partners. Moreover, considering the conditions mentioned above, when people interpret the difficulty and uncertainty of attaining this future leadership role as manageable, they are more likely to take future-oriented actions to achieve this possible self.

2.4.1. **Future Work Selves (FWS) Research and Leader Future Work Selves (LFWS)**

Future Work Selves (FWS) research is a line of possible selves research that has emerged in the past decade. The present research proposes a concept, Leader Future Work Selves (LFWS), based on the possible selves and FWS research. Our research suggests FWS and LFWS are related concepts, and they share the characteristics of being future-oriented and domain-specific. Although both FWS and LFWS can impact motivational and behavioural outcomes through self-regulation, they have different focuses and lead to different outcomes. FWS focuses on the general work domain, and this line of research has explored proactive work behaviours, which refer to self-initiated behaviours that are future-oriented and aimed towards initiating changes to the *status quo* (Strauss & Kelly, 2016). Moreover, these behaviours are led by the hope elements in FWS (Strauss et al., 2012).

LFWS, on the other hand, focuses on a more specific leadership domain. According to the research questions, our research is to examine the impact of LFWS on differentiated motivations and behavioural outcomes in leadership development. These similarities and differences will be further discussed below.

2.4.1.1.　FWS Research and Its Characteristics

In line with the possible selves research, FWS is theorised as a future-oriented possible self that can be attained, and it can drive future-oriented behaviours (Markus & Nurius, 1986; Strauss et al., 2012). The second characteristic of FWS is its work domain-specific nature (Strauss et al., 2012). FWS is related to social roles and context that are part of the life domains to which people are linked, and it can affect people's behaviours in the relevant domains (Strauss & Kelly, 2016; Van Knippenberg et al., 2004). Consequently, FWS is conceptualised to create behaviours that are relevant to people's work and career (Strauss & Parker, 2018).

Thirdly, Strauss et al. (2012) use salience and elaboration to define the strength of FWS in driving proactive behaviours at work. The salience of FWS refers to the extent to which the FWS is clear and easy to imagine, and elaboration is defined as the extent to which the FWS includes a complex collection of diverse features (Strauss & Kelly, 2016). As Strauss et al. (2012) state, salience is generally regarded as an important feature that determines the impact of possible selves on behaviours, and elaboration represents the richness of one's FWS. People with more elaborated future works selves are suggested to be more open to receiving negative feedback, and they are more able to be adaptive about changes in their plans and to persist in their future-oriented behaviours (Anseel et al., 2017).

However, elaboration can enhance the impact of FWS on proactive behaviours at work only when the salience of an activated FWS is high (Strauss et al., 2012).

The fourth characteristic of FWS is, while it has hope and fear elements as any other possible selves, FWS focuses on its hope element and the associated outcome of proactive behaviours at work. FWS represents people's hopes about themselves in their future work lives (Strauss & Kelly, 2016). Strauss et al. (2012) present FWS as a hoped-for instead of a feared FWS because feared selves can be less effective in regulating behaviours. As such, FWS has positive valence embedded in it, and it concerns a self to be hoped for but not a self to be avoided (Strauss et al., 2012). Hoped-for possible selves typically represent people's desirable goals and aspirations that can inspire proactive behaviours (Bindl & Parker, 2011). Therefore, the hope element theorised in FWS can invoke proactive motivations and behaviours to reduce the discrepancy between the current self and the hoped-for self (Carver & Scheier, 1990; Higgins, 1987; Strauss et al., 2012). Essentially, the main impact of FWS on motivation and behaviours is positive (Strauss et al., 2012). Research shows that FWS predicts enhanced job performance (Lin et al., 2016), career adaptability (Cai et al., 2015), career exploration (Guan et al., 2014, 2017), feedback-seeking (Anseel et al., 2017), newcomers' proactive socialisation (Zhang et al., 2014), and proactive career behaviours (Taber & Blankemeyer, 2015).

2.4.1.2. Conceptualisation of LFWS

Leader Future Work Selves (LFWS) are conceptualised as possible selves related to the leadership role. Same as FWS, it is a future-oriented identity. They are also domain-specific. However, FWS focuses on a broader work domain, while LFWS is a leadership domain-specific concept associated with leadership roles at work. This part of identity can be

activated by social context (e.g. organisational context, organisational climate, or leadership), and is based on a clear referent (such as a leadership role) (Brickson, 2007; DeRue et al., 2009; Parker et al., 2010). Essentially, our research zooms in on LFWS to investigate the relevant impact of this construct on leadership development outcomes.

The strength of LFWS is determined by salience and centrality. Like FWS, salience in LFWS means accessibility (ease of imagination and clarity of a future image), as it is a proven predictor of the strength of a possible self (Strauss et al., 2012). In line with identity theory, not all possible selves are active simultaneously, and only a core self would be active and play a crucial role in regulating people's behaviours (Lord & Brown, 2004). The core possible self is more powerful than the peripheral ones in affecting the identity-related behaviours (Markus & Wurf, 1987). The strength of a core identity can be defined by centrality, and it typically means the relative importance of a core identity compared to other identities (McCall & Simmons, 1966; Rosenberg, 1979). For the demonstration of LFWS's relative importance compared to the other possible selves of individuals, this research also adopts the concept of centrality.

Next, LFWS is a concept with both hope and fear elements to examine the positive or negative motivations and behavioural outcomes in leadership development. The hoped-for LFWS refers to the future leader self an individual wants to become, such as the successful self, the innovative self, or the loved and admired self (Markus & Nurius, 1986). In contrast, the feared LFWS refers to the future leader self an individual wants to avoid because it represents the undesired, sad, or tragic future self (Markus & Nurius, 1986). In this case, the hoped-for LFWS provides individuals with the approach motivation to become leaders in the future. They are inspired to strive to reduce the discrepancies between the current selves and the hoped-for LFWS by adopting future-oriented behaviours that target the ideal future selves (Lord & Brown, 2004). This would also mean that they are more likely to seek out

opportunities to take on leadership responsibilities or participate in leadership development programs to reduce the discrepancy between the current selves and the LFWS (Sessa et al., 2018).

In contrast, people with a feared LFWS could have approach or avoidance motivations to increase the discrepancy between their current selves and undesired future selves (Bandura, 1989, 2001; Higgins, 1997). While the feared LFWS could mean the undesired state to be rejected or avoided (Oyserman & Markus, 1990), it could also mean attempts to improve the current state to keep the feared LFWS from being realised (Markus & Nurius, 1986). As a result of the avoidance motivation, this could mean that individuals with the feared LFWS are likely to avoid taking on leadership responsibilities. Alternatively, the approach motivation stemming from the feared-LFWS could make people proactive in improving their leadership skills to avoid realising the feared-LFWS.

2.4.2. **Conclusion**

In conclusion, LFWS is theorised as a type of possible selves representing the future leader selves people may want to attain or avoid from realising. It can produce a positive or negative impact due to the hope and fear element included in it. Therefore, it has a critical impact on leadership development because it can motivate or demotivate individuals take on leadership development opportunities and/or become leaders.

This review from the literature led to three research questions:

- What is LFWS? Is it a related concept of FWS?
- What are the contents included in LFWS?

- What are the linkages between the contents and the identity-related motivations and behavioural strategies for realising the hoped-for and avoiding the feared LFWS?

2.5. Methodology

This research rests on both subjective and objective ontological assumptions and takes a postpositivist stance. This consists of two parts: a qualitative study (described here in Chapter 2) and a quantitative study (described in Chapter 3). As such, qualitative and quantitative approaches are adopted concurrently for data collection (Kelle, 2006), using surveys in the form of narrative writing and quantitative questionnaires adopting an experiment design. For the current chapter, thematic analysis was applied to the qualitative data.

In this chapter, the overarching philosophical underpinnings of the research, and the overall research strategy and sampling strategy for data collection are explained. Details of the procedure in the pilot and main survey study are illustrated next. Instruments used in the qualitative study (pilot and part 1 and 2 of survey study) are then presented, with an explanation of the thematic analysis process.

2.5.1. **Philosophical Underpinnings**

The philosophical ontological and epistemological assumptions are critical in framing the process used to address the research questions (Klenke et al., 2016). Ontology concerns the nature of reality and the essence of phenomena under investigation, which impact on one's beliefs about the nature of knowledge (Burrell & Morgan, 1979). Epistemology, which

is closely related to ontology, addresses the paradigmatic question of how one comes to know reality according to one's belief about knowledge (Klenke et al., 2016).

Based on the theoretical underpinnings discussed in the literature review and the phenomenon under investigation, this study has a pluralistic research interest. The research questions developed can be categorised into two broad categories: the content of LFWS, and the linkages between LFWS and the motivation and behavioural strategies for attaining the hopes and avoiding the fears in LFWS. In other words, this research takes both subjective and objective ontological stances. The research subject will only be fully understood if both interests are addressed. Therefore, this study adopts a postpositivist position to deal with ways of knowing reality and the researcher's belief about the research subject, LFWS. A postpositivist assumption accepts the limits of objectivity and concerns about probability (Crotty, 1998). It rejects the notion of absolute truth and assumes that knowledge is continuously accumulated (Benozzo, 2018). Given the complexity of identity, a methodology drawing on multiple sources of data relating to its meaning and impact will contribute to a richer understanding of this subject (Brown, 2015). These philosophical underpinnings affect decisions on the research strategy of Chapter 2 (current chapter) and Chapter 3. I will explain the overall research strategy covering both chapters, particularly the current chapter, in the next section, and the one for Chapter 3 in Section 3.3.

2.5.2. **Research Strategy**

The current chapter focuses on exploring the content and structure of LFWS while Chapter 3 focuses on LFWS's explanatory power to predict individuals' interests in leadership development and confidence in leading, so this is a mixed-methods study. This necessitates the adoption of both qualitative and quantitative methods. It is appropriate for

this study because qualitative data will enable a contextualised understanding of LFWS content, and quantitative data will aid analysis of the relationship between LFWS and individuals' intention for leadership development and perceived confidence in leading (Greene et al., 1989). Therefore, these two chapters' research design maximises the strengths of both qualitative and quantitative approaches, and is beneficial to a more comprehensive and complementary understanding of the topics investigated (Stentz et al., 2012).

For the current qualitative study, narrative writing was employed to develop a better understanding of LFWS content and structure. The narrative writing was used to help understand and interpret the content of LFWS and its linkage with FWS (Molina-Azorín & Cameron, 2015). Written narrative was adopted as a qualitative method because scholars regard self-narratives as expressions and representations of identities (Ibarra & Barbulescu, 2010; Josselson, 2004; McAdams, 2008; Pentland, 1999). It also allows respondents to provide more input and generate a larger number of possible selves to enrich the meaning of their content (Packard & Conway, 2006).

Research Questions	What is Leader Future Work Self (LFWS)? Is LFWS a realted concept of Future Work Self (FWS)? What are the contents included in it? What are the linkages between the contents and the LFWS-related motivations and behavioural strategies?		What is the role of LFWS for identity-based leadership development?
Research Strategy	Qualitative	Qualitative	Quantitative

Studies	- Pilot: Qualitative survey
	- Main study (Part 1): Qualitative survey with narrative writing design (FWS)
		- Main study (Part 2): Qualitative survey with narrative writing design (LFWS and FWS)	- Main study (Part 1&2):
			  * Qualitative survey with narrative writing design: capturing qualitative data
			  * Quantitative survey with experiment design: function as experiment interventions to collect quantitative data

Figure 1 Leader Future Work Self (LFWS) Research Methodology Structure

2.6. Data Collection

In this section, I will elaborate the sampling and ethical considerations which are applicable to both Chapter 2 and Chapter 3. After this, I will explain the current chapter's research implementation procedure and measures adopted specifically.

2.6.1. **Sample**

Chapter 2 and Chapter 3 adopt a concurrent mixed-methods sampling strategy to align with the mixed-methods research strategy (Teddlie & Yu, 2007), and they focus on the student population. Probability and purposive sampling were used jointly to collect quantitative and qualitative data simultaneously. Probability sampling serves the aim of achieving representativeness with a large volume of data, and purposive sampling allows greater depth of information to be drawn from the selected cases, in this case students (Patton, 2002).

Students were chosen as the sample owing to the nature of LFWS. It is argued that leader identity may be formed prior to taking on a formal leadership position in the workplace (Van Knippenberg, 2012). Moreover, Miscenko et al. (2017) and Zaar et al. (2019) assert that some people have already somewhat developed their leader identities whilst still students. However, concerns have been expressed about the use of student samples in research, because students' working and leadership experiences are likely to differ from those of leaders (Rietzschel et al., 2017). Nevertheless, recent reviews have found no systematic differences in managers' and students' decision-making behaviour (Fréchette, 2011, 2016). When differences are found the studies reviewed, it is either because the managers assume their work environment features are present in the laboratory, or they make decisions according to their own understanding of the subject but not the information provided by the experiment. As a result, their behaviours are more relevant to their work but not the theory

and particular setting being tested (Fréchette, 2016). Given the aim of this research is to understand the impact of leader identity and the existence of leader identity in students, student samples were deemed appropriate for this research.

2.6.2. **Ethical Considerations: Pilot and Main Survey Study (Part 1-2)**

Following the Data Protection Act (DPA) 2018, General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and Warwick Business School (WBS) research ethical guidelines, the following practices were applied in this research.

Only research-related data were collected. Confidentiality and privacy of participants were maintained by measures such as the use of anonymous and aggregated data and data encryption. Participants' agreements on their voluntary participation, data collection and use of data were handled with the use of consent forms and background briefings at the beginning of the two surveys. No names or identifying information were collected. The data are stored online in the Qualtrics system which is password protected and accessible by the researcher and her two supervisors only. The data will be kept secure by the researcher as instructed by the University of Warwick data retention policy.

2.6.3. **Procedure: Pilot and Main Survey Study (Part 1-2)**

Qualitative research was conducted in three parts of this study: the pilot, part one and part two of the main study (Figure 2). The research questions of this qualitative study are related to the content of LFWS and its linkage to FWS. The pilot study was conducted four months prior to the main study. With relevance to the research questions of 'What is LFWS? Is it a related concept of FWS?', the pilot aims to collect a first batch of narratives to develop

an initial FWS framework for further development and comparison with the LFWS framework. It is also used to help determine an appropriate way to adapt Strauss et al.'s (2012) narrative writing tool which focused on FWS. Because LFWS is theorised as a concept including both hope and fear dimensions, the key criterion for adopting this method was its effectiveness in priming participants to more easily imagine their hoped and feared future work lives. Therefore, two versions of narrative priming were included in the pilot for comparison. A neutral version simply instructed participants to imagine their FWS with no information relating to their hopes and worries. A primed version asked participants to imagine their hopes and worries specifically about their FWS.

Thirty-four (full-time and part-time) students were recruited for the pilot study through Prolific Academic, an online research data collection platform. The participants were randomly assigned to one of two open questions in their narrative writing. After completing their writing, they were asked to provide feedback on the priming methods (Table 1). Both groups of participants found it similarly easy to imagine their hopes, but more participants in the primed group found it easy to imagine their worries. An additional factor also supported the final adoption decision: from a questionnaire item result, the same number of participants from both groups indicated that leader identities were included in their future images. Comparing this result with the content of their narratives, the narrative of one more participant from the primed group than from the neutral group included future leader image. In essence, the primed version of narrative writing made it easier to stimulate FWS imagination (hope and fear), and generated slightly more LFWS imagination. Consequently, the primed narrative writing was adopted for qualitative data collection in this research.

The main survey study (part 1-2) were launched in April and May 2020 to collect qualitative and quantitative data concurrently. Each survey lasted for 20 minutes. At Time 1 data collection, 200 participants were recruited. The first survey used FWS narrative writing

Research Questions	What is Leader Future Work Self (LFWS)? What are the contents included in it? What are the linkages between the contents and the identity-related motivations and behavioural strategies?		
Studies	Pilot: Qualitative survey with experiment design	Main study (Part 1): Qualitative survey with experiment design Note	Main study (Part 2): Qualitative survey with experiment design
Duration	20 mins	20 mins	20 mins
Number of participants	34	200	175
Procedure and measures	Students are randomly assigned to one of the following groups: - Primed version of narrative writing with separate FWS hope and fear open questions (minimum 100 words for each question) - Neutral version of narrative writing with only 1 FWS open question, hope and fear are not mentioned (mimimum 200 words for one question)	All students are required to answer the following question: - Primed version of narrative writing with separate FWS hope and fear open questions (minimum 100 words for each question)	Students are randomly assigned to one of the following groups: - "LFWS (Hope and Fear)" group: Primed version of narrative writing with separate LFWS hope and fear open questions (minimum 100 words for each question) - "LFWS (Hope)" group: Primed version of narrative writing with only 1 LFWS hope open question (minimum 200 words for one question) - "LFWS (Fear)": Primed version of narrative writing with only 1 LFWS fear open question (minimum 200 words for one question) - "FWS (control)" group: Primed version of narrative writing with separate FWS hope and fear open questions (minimum 100 words for each question)
Note	This study aims to compare and decide which version of narrative writing to be adopted. The primed version was adopted for subsequent studies. More details can be found from Chapter 2.		

Figure 2 Leader Future Work Self (LFWS) Pilot, Main Study (Part 1 & 2) Design Summary

Table 1 Pilot Study: Comparison of Primed and Neutral Methods

Method evalutation items	Primed Narrative Writing (N = 17)	Neutral Narrative Writing (N=17)
Ease of imagining hopes in FWS	41.18%	44.12%
Ease of imagining worries in FWS	44.12%	23.53%
Inclusion of future leader identity in FWS	94.12%	94.12%
Inclusion of future leader identity descriptions in narratives	35.29%	29.41%

as an intervention to activate the FWS through imagination and writing. It was to explore the qualitative content of FWS and its linkage to LFWS. The survey also used quantitative questionnaires to collect the baseline data, and they will be used for further analysis of LFWS's impact on intention for leadership development.

After two weeks, the same 200 participants were invited to participate in a follow-up survey. With a response rate of 87.5%, 175 participants participated in this study. Similar to the first survey, narrative writings were used as interventions to activate participants' FWS or LFWS through imaginations and writings. For the qualitative part, this intervention aims at exploring the LFWS content further. For the quantitative part, it was designed to include four groups: control group, hope activation group, fear activation group, and hope and fear activation group. This design aims to investigate LFWS's impact through the activation of hope and/or fear elements. Different interventions were used in these groups to activate FWS and different element(s) in LFWS. The participants were randomly assigned to one of these groups with different tasks. The control group completed the same measures as at Time 1. The hope activation group was assigned with the LFWS hope narrative writing. The fear activation group got the LFWS fear narrative writing. The hope and fear activation group had the LFWS hope and fear narrative writing. The narrative writings were followed by other quantitative questionnaires to capture the impact of LFWS on leadership development motivations.

At the end of each survey, all participants were offered monetary incentives according to Prolific's minimum standard (£5 per hour) on completion of the survey and approval of their responses.

2.6.4. Measure: Qualitative study (Pilot and Main Survey Study (Part 1-2)

Narrative writing was the key measure used for qualitative data collection. The written narrative used in possible selves research is both a measure and a type of intervention used to elicit participants' imaginations about their possible selves, and the descriptions collected are argued to provide relevant context for further analysis (Packard & Conway, 2006). These descriptions provoked by mental stimulation may reveal participants' future plans and behaviours relating to their envisioned hopes and worries in their future lives (Hoyle & Sherrill, 2006; Suddendorf & Corballis, 2007). In this qualitative research, these data aimed to provide a richer understanding of LFWS and FWS content and unveil the relationship between them.

The narrative writing measure was adapted from Strauss et al. (2012). Two different versions were tested in the pilot study to decide on the appropriate measure for adoption. The participants were asked to mentally travel into the future. In the neutral version, they were instructed to imagine their future selves in their future work lives, and to write a narrative of at least 200 words. In the primed version, they were instructed to imagine what they hoped for and were worried about in their future work lives by answering two randomised open questions, and to write a narrative of at least 100 words for each question. As discussed in Section 3.4.3, the primed version was ultimately adopted in this research.

2.7. Data analysis: Qualitative Study (Pilot and Main Survey Study (Part 1-2)

Thematic analysis is a technique for organising and analysing textual data, resulting in the production of a list of codes that represent themes identified in the data (King, 2004). It is a flexible approach not bounded by any pre-existing theoretical framework (King & Brooks, 2018), which helps to unveil rich detail beneath the surface of reality (Braun & Clarke, 2006). It is particularly suitable for identity content analysis because identity is dynamic and includes multidimensional elements (Markus & Wurf, 1987). Therefore, the qualitative data in this study were analysed primarily through thematic analysis to explore the content of FWS and LFWS and the linkage between these two types of identities.

The stages of thematic analysis suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006) were followed iteratively, which involved revisiting, recoding and regrouping the data several times. The first step in this process was familiarisation with the dataset. This was conducted through repeated readings of a smaller set of data from the pilot study to identify meanings and patterns. Because the primed narrative writing measure was adopted, only 17 narratives collected using this method were used. Next, initial codes were generated using NVivo 12 Pro software. These codes were developed according to basic features and meanings of the FWS narratives collected (Boyatzis, 1998). Forty-eight open codes were produced from the pilot data. The next stage involved further searching for themes, resulting in the identification of first- and second-level themes. Cross-coding and reviews were conducted by the researchers using the same narratives to ensure intercoder reliability (Campbell et al., 2013). Mind maps were also used as visual representations in reviewing and refining the themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). With reference to the initial template, the coherence of code patterns under each theme and the relevance of the themes to the dataset were reviewed. At this stage, 175 more FWS narratives from the main survey study (part 1) were added to the dataset, and the previous steps were repeated iteratively. The same process was repeated when 130 LFWS

narratives from main survey study (part 2) were integrated. The names and definitions of the themes were further elaborated simultaneously with producing reports.

As a result, five key themes emerged. The first covers all FWS content, including participants' envisioned hopes and worries about their future work lives. The second covers LFWS content, encompassing participants' envisioned hopes and worries about their future work lives as leaders. The third covers all FWS and LFWS content related to personal lives, including participants' hopes and worries about their personal goals, wealth, health, family and marriage. The fourth and fifth are motivation and behavioural strategies stem from the FWS and LFWS.

2.8. Findings: Qualitative Part (Pilot, Main Study (Part 1 & 2)

The purpose of this chapter is to develop an analytical account of the narratives related to LFWS and FWS. Research suggests that possible selves encompass multifaceted hope and fear components. These elements represent people's hoped-for or feared future and regulate the motivations and behaviours used to realise or avoid these futures (Markus & Wurf, 1987). FWS is defined as people's hoped-for future selves at work (Strauss et al., 2012), and, in this research, LFWS refers to the future leader selves at work and they include both hope and fear dimensions. The findings in the current study are aligned with the possible selves research premise. Moreover, this research presents the content of LFWS and its connection to FWS based on the envisioned future work and leadership lives of the student samples (Table 2).

The results show that FWS and LFWS have encompassed both hope and fear elements and they share similar structure of linking contents, motivations and behavioural strategies. Specifically, the themes that emerged from this study illustrated the possible self

structure using four themes at two levels (Figure 3). The four themes are FWS and LFWS
work (including company environment, compensation and benefits, development, job
performance and work relationship), personal life, motivations, and behavioural strategies.
The two levels are the broader work level and specific leadership level. Detail themes and
definitions can be found from Appendix 1 and Appendix 2.

Table 2 Demographics

	Pilot and Main Survey Study (Part 1 & 2)
N	192
Gender	
Male	77.60%
Female	31.25%
Average age	
Current age	22.42
Envisioned age in their future work lives	34.17
Average years of leadership experience	1.98
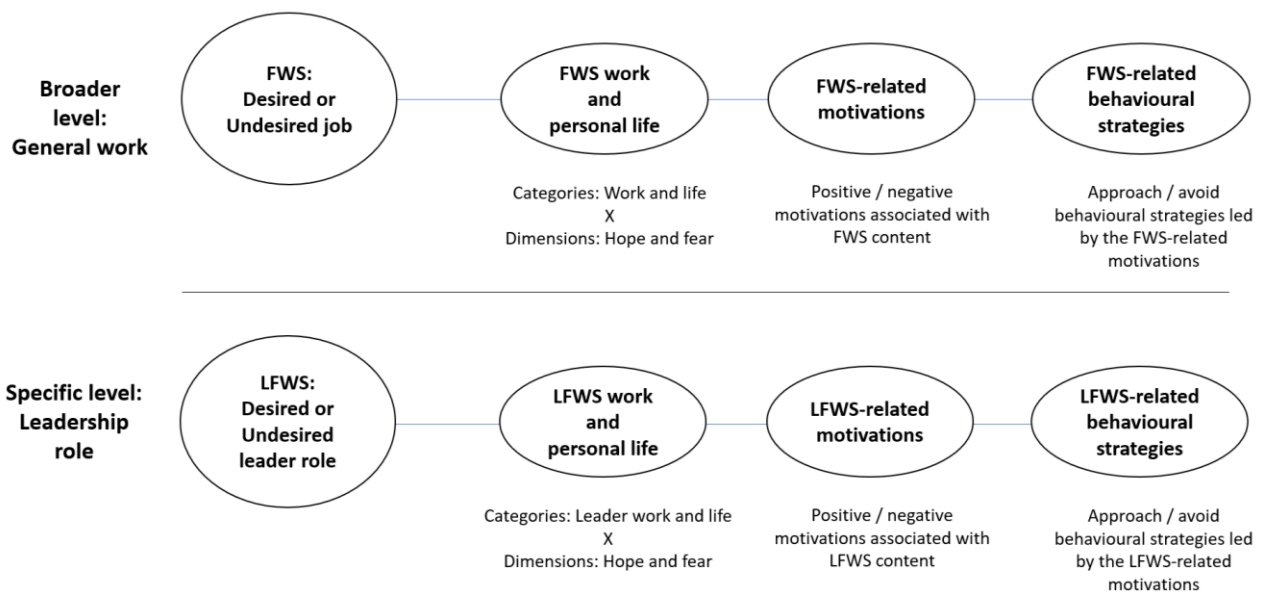
Figure 3 Structure of FWS and LFWS

This chapter will first cover the hopes and fears in work and personal life contents of FWS and LFWS. After that, I will illustrate the linkage between these contents and motivations. Finally, I will articulate the relationship between these contents and their associated behavioural strategies to show the comprehensive landscape of FWS and LFWS.

2.8.1. FWS and LFWS: Work and Personal Life Content

The contents of FWS and LFWS are grouped into work and personal life categories, and both encompass hope and fear dimensions. The intersections of these two categories and two dimensions illustrated the participants' desired and undesired jobs and leadership roles.

2.8.1.1. Work Content (Company Environment, Compensation and Benefits, Development, Job Performance and Work Relationship)

The work content category contains information related to company environment, compensation and benefits, development, job performance and work relationship. Within this work content category, participants had similar hope and fear elements, but the levels of importance for these elements were different in FWS and LFWS. It is because FWS focuses on a broader work level, while LFWS focuses on a more specific leadership level. At the broader work level, participants often mentioned their incomes, job roles, development, performance, personal success, and work relationships. At the specific leadership level, participants talked about these same elements but with a more specific focus on the leadership role. The most prominent themes that emerged from the LFWS dataset were leadership as a choice and desired/undesired leadership performance. The FWS work content and its linkage to the personal life will be covered first, followed by the LFWS work ones.

2.8.1.2.   FWS Work Content

Having a decent income, a dream job, personal success, and positive work relationships are the most frequently mentioned hopes in FWS. Most participants expected to have a decent income to finance themselves. A dream job means a job they enjoy and are passionate about: *'What I hope for my future self work is to basically do what she likes.' (P31)* This dream job is preferably offered by a reputable company. It is one that provides them with a stable financial source, job stability, and reasonable working hours. Of all the career choices, being an entrepreneur is the most sought-after option. This may be related to the most preferable working pattern: flexibility. Work flexibility provides the autonomy of being able to choose when and where to work (Sewell & Taskin, 2015).

Furthermore, work is not a static concept – it is a continuous journey where people can realise their personal success with continuous development. Participants wanted to be competent in their fields and ultimately aspired to have great personal success in their careers: *'Long term, I will be a knowledgeable and experienced employee with over ten years under my belt. My experience and education will combine to create a highly competent worker fit for leadership roles.' (P46)* Personal success means making a positive contribution to the work results in general, but this ranges from successful completion of work tasks to promotions, becoming famous, and inspiring contributions to their fields and society. To achieve all these accomplishments, they expect continuous skills improvement and career progression so that they can continuously have new and diverse experiences: *'My future work self is confident in her skills, nevertheless always open and looking to improve, and to make better and more efficient use of her time, skills, and other resources.' (P58)*

Work inevitably involves collaborations and work relationships are a core element in the workplace. Participants wanted to have harmonious working relationships with peers and

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to be treated with respect: *'Having a positive work group who respects and are friends with each other.' (P215)* Ideally, everyone would be willing to help each other and demonstrate a team spirit for achieving common goals: *'A job were all the people working with me, are like friends. We all understand each other, we all help each other. We work like a human body. Someone is the mind, someone is the heart, someone is the arms and legs, but all together make wonders.' (P51)* Further, participants said they wanted to maintain a positive relationship with external clients by offering help and support to them.

Future work life may not always be as positive and bright as expected, and participants also had their worries about their FWS. Their biggest worries were about their income, having to take feared jobs, and work failure. Corresponding to their top hope, their biggest worry was low and unstable income. Low income could cause them financial stress, as it would mean that they would struggle to achieve financial independence. Furthermore, an undesirable job that is not of their passion also worried them: *'It worries me that…I might not be in the correct 'division' of the field, making me miserable along the way.' (P59)* If their hoped-for jobs were not realised, they might have to take jobs they do not enjoy, and struggle if they are unable to change this situation. This feared job has long working hours and a heavy workload that causes work exhaustion (Van der Hulst & Geurts, 2001). It is either too repetitive or too challenging, making it difficult to handle well.

In addition to all the unfavourable elements regarding the nature of the job, participants were also worried about work failures. They were concerned that they would not be able to make positive contributions to the results, that they would make mistakes, and that they would fail at the tasks. They might even lose their jobs because of their failures. Their fears about being incompetent could explain this situation. They worried that they were not competent enough to do well, and competence is a key factor leading to work success.

Without a high level of competence at work, they also worried about the competition and that internal or external competitors might replace them.

2.8.1.3. FWS Work Content and Its Linkage to Personal Life

Work and life are not separable, as is reflected in participants' hopes and worries about their personal lives. With the realisation of their hoped-for jobs, they expected to have financial stability and live a financially sufficient life. This job would allow them to have enough personal time and to strike their ideal work-life balance. They would have time for their friends and families and to develop their hoped-for relationships. In addition, they would have their own personal dreams and goals as well. With the finical independence offered by their hoped-for jobs, they could devote time to their personal plans and interests, such as travelling around the world and planning for retirement.

On the other hand, the realisation of participants' feared jobs would cause them to worry about their personal lives. A job with long working hours and low salary could lead to a work-life imbalance with financial stress. Financial stress here means that they would be incapable of financing themselves independently. In addition, they might lack the time for their friends, families, and personal goals, and it could worsen personal relationships, such as marriage. In the end, this could negatively impact their work: *'All of this leads to a lack of personal life and hobbies other than work. Marital issues stemming from my absorption into my work results in an abundance of stress and causes me to take even longer to finish projects.'(P33)*

With all the stress stemming from the feared jobs, there is also the threat of health issues, such as burnout and depression: *'The thing I will be worried about the most would be burning out. Job burnout is a really frightening thing to me. By continuously doing repetitive*

tasks at work, it is very easy to become burnt out. If it happens, it is going to greatly impact both my mental and physical health.'(P83)

2.8.1.4.   LFWS Leadership Work Content

FWS work content included a vast amount of information about personal hopes and worries regarding participants' future work lives, such as income, personal success or failure, and how much they like or dislike the future work. Compared to FWS, the result that emerged from the LFWS dataset showed a more focused and vivid picture of participants' future work lives as leaders. There were more and varied elements related to the leadership-related hopes and fears and less information that were irrelevant to leadership work. Participants' LFWS focused on two themes: leadership as a choice, and hoped-for or feared leadership performance. These two key themes demonstrate that LFWS is not just about their own work hopes and worries anymore: participant's future leader lives also heavily involve work relationships especially the relationship with their followers.

Leadership is not just a role, but a choice (Aycan & Shelia, 2019). This statement precisely represents the new theme that emerged in the LFWS data: Leadership as a choice where people may choose to take leadership roles or not. As mentioned earlier, FWS is embedded in all participants' imaginations of their future work lives. This is not the case when it comes to LFWS. Leadership is not a choice for everyone. Some of the participants explicitly expressed that leadership roles were not their choices at all: *'I never wanted to be a leader because I always thought I wouldn't be good at it. And now that I am a supervisor my fears have become true.'(P135)* A similar fear is even found from some of their hope narratives: *'My future leader self is annoyed that he is the leader. It's something my future leader self never wanted.' (P98)* Regardless, all participants still shared similar hopes and

fears, which were predominantly about leadership performance and results. These findings

show that the concept of LFWS does not have a positive impact only, it also has a negative

impact due to the fear element. Most importantly, some chose to reject the futures as leaders

because taking on leadership roles was not a preferred option for them, and their LFWS were

full of intensive worries about the feared futures.

Regarding participants' future leadership, they wanted to manage group performance

well and provide sufficient support to their followers. Performance management means their

abilities to facilitate the achievement of group tasks successfully. The result is related to the

group's success, and this is the hope which they desired most. This does not mean that they

no longer cared about personal success. Being a great leader (i.e. representing the group's

success) and a competent expert in their fields (i.e. representing personal success) were both

important to them. However, group success became relatively more important when it came

to imagining being a future leader. They expected themselves to set expectations, monitor

performance, and demonstrate decision making and problem-solving skills to make positive

work contributions. Additionally, supporting their followers was as important as performance

management. They wanted to offer support and help to their followers when needed. The

development of a positive team culture with open communication among all was crucial.

They also hoped to be fair and reasonable to their followers. Further, being a good leader also

meant continuously facilitating followers' learning and development. In return, they expected

to have the respect of their followers and a positive work relationship with colleagues.

The most prominent fears found were participants' leadership failures, lack of respect

and acceptance from their followers, and the challenging nature of a leadership job. They

feared that their teams would fail the tasks due to their poor management and decisions.

These failures would cause significant negative impacts and will be visible to others: *'My*

superiors find it to be my fault that my team isn't competent and working as efficiently as it

should be.' (P189) They also worried their followers would not respect or like them because they were incompetent and imposing the performance pressure on them. The situation could be made even worse if they did not have the right skills to engage their followers effectively. All these worries reflected that a leadership job is an incredibly challenging and stressful one because it has substantial responsibility and a heavy workload.

2.8.1.5. LFWS Leadership Work Content and Its Linkage to Personal Life

There is much less discussion about personal lives in LFWS when compared with FWS. Work-life balance is still the most prominent theme, but the finance- and status-related topics are no longer as important. For the small proportion of participants who mentioned the connection between LFWS and their personal lives, they hoped to strike a balance between work and life. They expected to have enough personal time for family and friends, and for self-care as well. A small fraction of them did mention they expected to live richer lives in the future. On the other hand, they worried that their health would be adversely impacted due to a work-life imbalance.

2.8.2. Motivations Stemmed from FWS and LFWS

The hoped-for and feared FWS and LFWS represent different futures of participants' work lives and leader lives, and they lead to different types of positive and negative motivations.

2.8.2.1. FWS-related Motivations

Participants' most hoped-for motivation is work passion. Work passion here means that they love their jobs, they find them meaningful and rewarding, they have self-recognition, and are willing to put in extra effort to improve: *'In my work itself, I imagine myself having a lot of fulfilment from my job and career and being excited to go to work in the morning.' (P22)* This finding has highlighted the importance of this intrinsic motivation in the FWS.

Their hoped-for jobs would provide them with meaning because they could contribute to the greater good of their fields or society. Self-recognition was more important to them than recognition from others: *'I hope that my future work life will involve my working in a sector that benefits humanity and the community.'(P20); 'My work and efforts are appreciated, and I feel like I am making a small but fulfilling positive change in the world, hopefully making life better for others with what I do.' (P45)*

Participants envisioned themselves as being dedicated and hardworking because they would have the jobs they truly wanted. They would also have the autonomy to make their own decisions in this job. These decisions ranged from choosing projects they liked, to working abroad, to choosing with whom they liked to work. They work lives would be in their control, and they would have a rewarding job that brought them happiness and enjoyment. They would be confident and proud of what they do. The pressure would be a motivator rather than a cause of stress, and they would be ambitious and to push their boundaries further.

Because of the feared FWS, participants mentioned their negative motivations associated with these contents. A large proportion of their fear-related motivations were about being dispassionate, unhappy, and unfulfilled. They worried about the overwhelming work stress caused by a demanding or unpreferable job. Working in a feared job would be

disappointing because they would feel that they had wasted all their previous education and effort.

2.8.2.2. LFWS-related Motivations

The key hope and fear-related motivations in FWS are related to work passion and participants talked about their hope-related motivations far more than the fear-related ones. While work passion was still an important hope-related motivation in LFWS, participants' confidence level was the most prominent element affecting their motivations. They also described their fear-related motivations more frequently than their hope-related ones, which may be because leadership roles are full of stressful responsibilities and they cause them job stresses (Harms et al., 2017).

Regarding the hopes in LFWS motivations, what participants wanted most was to be confident. They hoped to be confident of their competence as leaders and experts in their fields. Having a meaningful job that they would be passionate about was still important, and they could make it even more meaningful as leaders: *'They want to be more than just a manager. They have a vision of the future, an idea that they want to pursue in other words, they want to be leaders, to pull others behind, to shape the future with them.' (P78)* Compared to their FWS, they hoped to receive more recognition from their superiors and followers. Their sources of motivation were no longer just from within – they also depended on others for motivation. On the other hand, a low confidence level was their biggest worry. They worried about feeling stressed and that they would become undesirable, incompetent leaders. The leadership performance and decision-making pressures became their fear-related motivations and caused them stress: *'Everyone demands a lot from me and most of the time I can't stand all of it.' (P113)*

2.8.3. **Behavioural Strategy**

Behavioural strategies were found in both FWS and LFWS. They are the suggested actions that participants used to approach or avoid the hoped-for or feared futures (Oyserman & James, 2011). When comparing FWS and LFWS, there were three common patterns of behavioural strategies found in them. First, strategies were rarely found in hope narratives but were frequently found in the fear narratives. Second, hopes and fears were found to be within the same narrative, especially in the fear narratives. Importantly, these narratives with mixed hopes and fears can provide a fuller explanation to the participants' behavioural strategies. When participants mentioned their hopes in their fear narratives, their hopes were their reasons to take actions for avoiding the feared future. The aim of avoiding the feared future is to attain the hoped-for future. Third, the amount of information related to behavioural strategies was much smaller compared to the work content, personal life, and motivations elements. However, more strategies were found in LFWS comparing to FWS.

Participants' behavioural strategies reflected the analytical forecasts of their futures. Their hopes inspired them because these were their ultimate goals. However, they knew it would not be easy to realise their hopes. With the analyses of their feared future work lives, their worries emerged because of the obstacles or concerning conditions they envisioned. The majority of the participants were hopeful about their future work lives regardless of the possible negative motivations brought about by the feared future: *'I also fear that I may not be motivated enough to get to where I want to be…it's difficult to get into in the beginning as I may get put off. However, as it is something I am deeply passionate about I would hope this wouldn't happen.'(P176)*

'I see my future job as a satisfying…job…I am concerned with the requirement of both positions since I think that both require a great deal of effort and availability since it is an increasingly affluent and in-demand sector.' (P143)

Because of this attitude, participants formed their behavioural strategies according to FWS or LFWS content. In response to these different futures, different strategies were found in FWS and LFWS. In the FWS work content, one of their biggest worries was about dealing with their feared jobs. This prominent theme was reflected in their behavioural strategies. They preferred to take a practical approach, in which they settled for less and worked a less ideal job instead. Some proactive individuals wanted to avoid their feared FWS by trying their best. This approach included engaging in skills development, self and work improvement, and planning for their futures: *'I would like my future work self to get better at dealing with people and showing her skills. Even with therapy, if it's necessary.' (P31)*

In LFWS, participants' most preferred behavioural strategy also reflected their greatest worry in the LFWS was leadership failure: *'My main concerns would be; if I were sufficiently qualified for that position, since leading a group involves making decisions that may sometimes not be right therefore damaging both my professional career and the group I lead as well as the company I work.' (P107)* To avoid this feared future, they adopted approach strategies to improve their leadership skills by training or learning from others. Another option was to set goals and stay determined to change the adverse situation. As a future leader, engaging his/her employees was also a possible solution to ease the stressful situation: *'There's always chance that stress could take me over, and decrease my efficiency, as well as my co-workers. I'm worried that a loss of control in the work environment is quite possible… While this is a risk, I believe that such an issue could potentially be managed with … help by my co-workers.' (P126)*

In general, the amount of information about participants' behavioural strategies was relatively small compared to the work and motivation identity content. Fewer behavioural strategies being found might be related to the envisioned age of the participants. Their average envisioned age was 34 years old approximately, and it could be difficult for them to form concrete approach or avoidance strategies within the 12-year gap between their current and envisioned ages. This was particularly true for the leadership role because they worried about their lack of leadership knowledge. Moreover, their lack of leadership experience (1.98 years on average) might have been another reason that contributed to this result. Another point worth noting is that there were more behavioural strategies found in LFWS compared to FWS, and they had more detail and more concrete actions.

2.9. Discussion: Qualitative Part (Pilot, Main Study (Part 1 & 2)

The previous chapter presented the FWS and LFWS findings according to the categories of work/leadership, personal life, motivation, and behavioural strategies. The hope and fear dimensions were also embedded in all these categories. Various structures of FWS and LFWS emerge owing to these dynamics. These structures show that LFWS and FWS are related concepts and that they function with similar structures. Nevertheless, LFWS is a more specific possible self associated with the future leadership role, as the contents that emerged included much less non work/leadership-related information. This higher level of identity content specificity also leads to a higher number of behavioural strategies in response to the most prominent elements in LFWS. As a result, this study contributes to the possible selves and FWS literature in two key ways. First, it develops a new concept of LFWS, which includes four categories of contents (i.e. leadership work, personal life, motivation, and

behavioural strategies) and two dimensions (i.e. hope and fear). It highlights the importance of studying possible selves with increased specificity.

Second, this study proposes a new model of the LFWS mechanism, illustrating the dynamics of the LFWS content. It emphasises the necessity of including hope and fear dimensions in identity studies. With the inclusion of hope and fear elements and high specificity of LFWS content, it will help to develop LFWS identity clarity (Campbell et al., 1996). Without a clearly defined and internally consistent LFWS, people would be less certain about their future leader identities and less inclined to guide their LFWS-related behaviours accordingly (Campbell et al., 1996; Shamir & Eilam, 2005). LFWS extends the understanding of leader identity development by providing clarifications to the ambiguous leader identity content (DeRue et al., 2009). It also explains how this future-oriented mechanism can regulate people's motivations, behaviours and their choices for attaining future leader roles (Day et al., 2012; Oyserman & Fryberg, 2006).

2.9.1. **Theoretical Implications**

In this section, I will discuss the theoretical implications of this chapter. The themes are about LFWS's hope and fear content, its overall mechanism and the linkage to people's choice for leadership.

2.9.1.1. **LFWS Hope and Fear Content and Specificity**

In line with possible selves and leader identity research (Day & Harrison, 2007; Markus & Wurf, 1987), the findings show that LFWS is a type of possible self and its contents are associated with different facets of future leadership roles. Moreover, LFWS

provides additional insights into the content specificity of different elements in this identity. Cross and Markus (1991) argue that specific possible selves are associated with personalised motivation, and actions are governed more by a personalised motivation, not a generalised one. More, a clearly defined identity implies a stable sense of self-knowledge, thus it can help to predict future events and guide identity-related behaviours (Shamir & Eilam, 2005). The findings in the present study support these statements. Compared to FWS, the contents of LFWS are more specific to leadership. They are more purposeful, contain more comprehensive elements related to the future leader role, and have much less non work/leadership-related information. The most important elements in the LFWS work content are related to leadership performance. These elements include achievement, team culture development, and follower management. Participants also mention other elements, such as work-life balance, income, working hours, and workload, but they are far less important than the leadership performance element. Most importantly, more behavioural strategies are found in LFWS than in FWS, and they are all related to the most important LFWS element: leadership performance.

In sum, the findings suggest that it is necessary to understand the LFWS as a whole and consider how different elements impact each other. Nevertheless, the most important elements to the participants have the greatest impact on the associated behavioural strategies. The more specific an identity is, the more behavioural strategies are found (Cross & Markus, 1991).

2.9.1.2. Model of LFWS Structure: Dynamics of Contents

Oyserman et al. (2015) assert that it is not clear how future identities matter to people's behaviours due to the complicated dynamics between hoped-for and feared identities.

This statement highlights the importance of including both hope and fear elements in understanding future identities. To address this, the model of LFWS structure used in this study illustrates the dynamics of LFWS contents and the dimensions of hope and fear. These dynamics facilitate the formation of participants' future leader selves, along with the associated motivations and behavioural strategies. Because possible selves contain both hopes and fears, they produce the motivation to pursue or avoid specific behaviours (Hoyle & Sherrill, 2006). LFWS, as a type of possible self, also reflects this mechanism. The hope and fear elements are embedded in the leadership work and personal life categories, and they represent different hoped-for and feared LFWS facets. These facets produce hope and fear-related motivations and consequently lead to approach or avoidance behaviours.

In particular, mixed hopes and fears are found across different content categories, especially in the fear narratives. Additionally, behavioural strategies are often found in the fear narratives, but not in the hope ones. It may be because feared self is less abstract and is a preferred reference point for judging present satisfaction (Ogilvie, 1987). Therefore, more attempts are found in the fear narratives to avoid the feared LFWS to be realised. In a similar vein, a hoped possible self could also provide outlines of what one can do to avoid the feared self (Oyserman & Markus, 1990). The findings illustrate the claim that participants tend to mention their hopes when they imagine their feared LFWS. Moreover, most of the behavioural strategy information is from this group of participants. These behavioural strategies are mostly related to their most hoped-for LFWS: being effective at managing team performance. Most of these strategies are proactive activities that aim to drive changes and development (Strauss & Kelly, 2016). This means they tend to opt for approach behaviours to avoid the feared selves to realise the hoped-for ones.

However, it is worth noting that there are not many behavioural strategies found in FWS and LFWS in general, especially in the hope narratives. In other words, possible

positive identities do not necessarily create positive actions (Oyserman et al., 2015).

According to the findings, this situation can be related to participants' interpreted uncertainty about their LFWS and the perceived connection of LFWS to their current selves (Oyserman & James, 2009). With the detailed leadership features found from the narratives, participants seem to perceive themselves as knowing what a leader should do and should not do. Although many of them are not confident and feel stressed about their feared LFWS, they appear to know where the skills and experience gaps are. When the interpreted certainty indicates that attaining a possible self is a certain outcome, current action is less likely (Oyserman & James, 2011). This means that those who imagine positive LFWS may think they do not need to think of the actions or to put effort into them right now and that these actions can always be delayed. This result further emphasises the importance of including both hope and fear elements for future identity studies.

2.9.1.3. Implications on Leader Identity Development: Linkage between LFWS and 'Leadership as a Choice.'

DeRue et al. (2009) remark that leader identity is not a clear identity because there is no objective measurement to decide whether one has a leader identity. The LFWS content found in this study can provide further clarity regarding the ambiguity of leader identity. The findings show clearly that a leadership role is not a choice for everyone. The LFWS findings are in contrast to the FWS findings, as no FWS data illustrates the rejection of a future work identity. The implication for the topic of leader identity development is that we should not assume that everyone possesses a possible leader self. This further emphasises the importance of LFWS because of its relationship to leadership choice.

The connection between LFWS and leadership choice can be explained from a possible selves perspective. Oyserman and James (2009) contend that people are more likely to take self-regulatory actions to attain their future selves according to four identity-based motivations. The possible selves need to feel connected to the current self, the realisation of the possible selves must be congruent with other salient facets of their current selves, and the perceived difficulty and uncertainty of attaining the possible selves must be manageable.

The findings show that some participants explicitly express their unwillingness to become future leaders, even when they are asked to write about their hopes. While they have similar types of worries to the other participants, they have more detailed descriptions about their negative motivations (such as being unconfident and unhappy, feeling meaningless and stressed). Moreover, they imagine that leadership failure could damage their health and personal relationships with friends and family. This indicates that they cannot see the connection between LFWS and their current selves. The high degree of perceived difficulty and uncertainty is reflected by their worries of being unconfident and stressful of taking on leadership roles. To add, they think that LFWS could negatively impact their other identities in their personal lives. Therefore, their corresponding behavioural strategy is one of avoidance: they choose to change their jobs. From this viewpoint, they are unlikely to take actions to attain LFWS in the future unless drastic changes induced by external shocks or events which force them to revise their LFWS (Miscenko et al., 2017). These findings are not just a simple yes or no answer to the leadership choice question – they provide a 'leadership is not for me' answer within the LFWS details.

To extend this idea further, the connection between LFWS and leadership choice has a practical implication for the development of leader identity. Scholars have remarked that leadership development is a leader identity development process, the aim of which is to go beyond mere leadership skills and knowledge development (Day & Harrison, 2007;

Miscenko et al., 2017). This concept reflects the importance of leader identity to wider development because thinking of oneself as a leader is associated with seeking out leadership roles (Offermann et al., 2020).

These premises seem to treat leader identity as a single entity with only positive impacts and suggest that anybody can develop a leader identity. The findings from this study suggest the opposite. The hope elements in LFWS can inspire motivations and induce actions for development that aim to realise the hoped-for possible self (Hannah et al., 2013). However, the fear elements represent an individual's concerns about taking on future leadership roles. Most importantly, some participants reject the LFWS and express genuine unwillingness to take on leadership roles. As discussed earlier, this type of leadership choice is related to how the hopes and fears in possible selves regulate motivations and behaviours (Oyserman & James, 2011). Because the feared possible self can produce either approach or avoidance motivations and behaviours (Markus & Kunda, 1986), this impact adds complexity to the outcome. This means that LFWS does not simply produce a positive impact – it can have a negative impact and further influence peoples' decisions about taking on leadership roles. By integrating LFWS into leader identity development, decision-makers for organisations will have more comprehensive views about LFWS development based on these hope and fear elements. The development of LFWS using these elements can also help to produce more behavioural strategies for continuous improvement. However, it is worth noting that not all fears and worries in LFWS can be resolved. Those who do not have a LFWS and express unwillingness to take on leadership roles may not be the right candidates for leadership development.

2.9.2. Practical Implications

The findings of this study also have practical implications for leader identity development in organisations. LFWS can clarify the ambiguity of leader identity content (DeRue et al., 2009) with all the detail it contains. The connection between LFWS and leadership choice shows that leadership is not for everyone, and LFWS can provide explanations for this choice. LFWS, as a possible self, can regulate people's motivations and actions (Oyserman & James, 2011). The findings reflect how this self-regulation mechanism functions and also provides answers about why some of the participants do not choose to become future leaders. With the level of detail LFWS can offer, there are substantial benefits for organisations that adopt LFWS in their leader identity development approach to selecting the right candidates. The incorporation of hopes and fears in LFWS can also help create an understanding of leaders' aspirations and concerns and produce a larger number of behavioural strategies for continuous improvement.

2.10.   *Limitations and Future Research*

This study is not without limitations. While the narratives can provide rich details of LFWS and how its contents influence motivations and behavioural strategies, the lack of face-to-face interactions with the participants has limited the opportunity for clarifications (Patton, 2002). Furthermore, increased specificity is important for possible selves studies (Oyserman & Markus, 1990). The work and personal life contents of LFWS have a larger amount of information and a higher level of specificity than previous approaches. However, the information on motivations and behavioural strategies is still very general. Therefore, future research is suggested to examine the specific impact of LFWS on motivations and behaviours for leadership development.

2.11. *Conclusion*

This chapter presented the contributions of this study to the theory and practice of possible selves and FWS literature by proposing an LFWS mechanism with illustrations of the LFWS contents. LFWS is a concept related to FWS with similar structure. However, they operate at different levels since FWS operates at a general work level, and LFWS operates at a specific leadership level. Furthermore, LFWS contains four types of contents: leadership work, personal life, motivations, and behavioural strategies. These contents interact with the hope and fear dimensions embedded across all these categories.

The contributions can be viewed from the perspective of LFWS contents and the dynamics between the contents. Compared to FWS, LFWS's contents are more specific and purposeful to leadership work. They have more comprehensive and focused information about future leader roles, and contain less information that are irrelevant to leadership. Leadership performance (including performance management and team management) is the most important element in LFWS. The positive and negative motivations and behavioural strategies are mainly related to this element. The highly specific nature of LFWS results in more behavioural strategies than FWS, and the relative importance of leadership performance content also leads to additional behavioural strategies directly related to this element. Furthermore, the dynamics of the LFWS contents and hope and fear elements illustrate how these behavioural strategies are formed. Mixed hopes and fears and behavioural strategies are both often found in fear narratives. This indicates that hopes serve to outline ways to avoid the feared LFWS and to achieve the hoped-for one. It also shows that hope narratives regarding LFWS produce far fewer behavioural strategies than the fear ones because they do not anticipate solutions to problems. These findings demonstrate the importance of incorporating both hope and fears into the comprehensive study of LFWS.

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Chapter 3

The Role of Leader Future Work Self (LFWS) in Leader Identity-based Leadership Development: Leader Self Efficacy (LSE) and Intention for Leadership Development (LI)

Abstract

The compelling impact of a leader's identity on leadership development has long been recognised (Day & Harrison, 2007; Lord & Hall, 2005). However, the effect of the future-oriented form of leader identity in leadership development is understudied. This research proposes the Leader Future Work Self (LFWS) to help clarify these aspects. The results show that imaginative narrative writing is effective in activating individuals' hopes for their future self as leaders and increasing their LFWS strength. Moreover, LFWS strength mediates the positive relationship between activating LFWS hopes and intention for leadership development (LI). Conversely, writing about LFWS fears is found to weaken LFWS strength, but only for women. This chapter concludes the value of including an understanding of LFWS in identity-based leadership development and suggests integrating imaginative narrative writing to facilitate leader identity development.

3.1. Introduction

Identity-based leadership development theory advocates that the development of leaders is associated with cognitive changes in individuals' self-views of their own identity as leaders (Vogel et al., 2020). The concept of identity has received growing attention in leadership development studies (Hammond et al., 2017). Identity is a collection of one's self-perceptions, experiences and values (Baltes & Carstensen, 1991). It is multidimensional and people can hold multiple sub-identities simultaneously (Day & Harrison, 2007). Moreover, identities are associated with various social roles, such as a leader of a team, a follower of a leader, and an employee in an organisation (Cross & Markus, 1991). In a similar vein, a leader identity refers to one's sub-identity specific to leadership (Day et al., 2008). Individuals who hold leader identities see themselves as leaders and are confident in their leadership capabilities (Kwok et al., 2020). Leader identities can be independent of formal leadership roles, meaning individuals can hold these identities before becoming formal leaders (Carter et al., 2015).

Leader identity is crucial for leadership development because it can increase people's interest in leadership development and enhance their confidence in leading (Avolio & Vogelgesang, 2012; Day & Harrison, 2007). Leadership development is concerned with expanding one's capacity to be effective in leadership responsibilities and processes (McCauley et al., 2010). Such development is associated with developing leadership skills, knowledge, a more complex self-perception as a leader, leadership processes and expectations (Orvis & Ratwani, 2010). The leader self-perceptions developed in leadership development are people's cognitive models and knowledge structures that guide them to behave like leaders (DeRue & Myers, 2014). Moreover, these mental models can also be a source of people's motivations and directions to determine if they want to put themselves in developmental situations (Lord & Hall, 2005). Individuals who hold strong self-views as

leaders are more likely to seek out developmental opportunities to strengthen their foundations as leaders (Day & Harrison, 2007). Furthermore, this development happens as leader identity evolves, making individuals feel more comfortable applying leadership skills and enacting leadership behaviours (Liu et al., 2020). Therefore, leader self-views are thought to effectively empower individuals to develop themselves as leaders and take up leadership positions (Day et al., 2008; Hall, 2004).

Leader identity is a current identity and it is distinct from a future identity (Hannah et al., 2013). The current identity is concerned with how an individual currently is, including their knowledge of their current skills, capabilities and values (Niedenthal et al., 1992). Applying this notion of current identity to leadership, a current leader identity represents the current self-perceptions of one's leadership abilities and characteristics (Lord & Brown, 2004).

Future identity refers to what could be, hence possible selves, rather than current self (Markus & Wurf, 1987). A possible self refers to the self in the future that includes people's hopes, aspirations, fears and worries associated with realising this future self (Markus & Nurius, 1986; Oyserman & James, 2011). Compared to the current leader identity, the possible self as a leader in the future includes elements related to the desire (or not) and belief of an individual that they can become a leader (Cross & Markus, 1991). Such hopes and fears can become activated by situational cues (such as taking on a role related to leadership), making the possible self a part of the individual's core identity which they would pay more attention to, and it can effectively influence their motivations and leadership behaviours in the present (Forehand et al., 2002; Kenny & Briner, 2013; Markus & Wurf, 1987). Possible selves can also be activated by envisioning images of future selves (de Place & Brunot, 2020; Strauss et al., 2012; Suddendorf & Corballis, 2007). Envisioning oneself as a future leader

can fuel one's motivation for development in order to realise this possible leader self (Hannah et al., 2013).

Much of previous leadership development literature has focused on the positive aspects of leader identity development, emphasising practices that can effectively construct leader identity (Lanka et al., 2020). Previous theory and research has not taken into account the frequent worries and fears that come with possible selves as future leaders (Sessa et al., 2018). In this vein, research could enhance our understanding of future leader identity, by investigating important elements of a possible future self, such as hope and fear (Markus & Nurius, 1986). Hopes and fears related to possible future selves can effectively regulate people's motivations and behaviours (Markus & Wurf, 1987). The hope elements represent individuals' goals and aspirations of becoming the leaders they want to be in the future (Avolio & Vogelgesang, 2012; Markus & Nurius, 1986). Such hopes can also motivate people to pursue leadership development (Maurer & London, 2018).

Individuals may also have worries and fears related to their future possible selves, reminding them about the undesired leader they do not want to become in the future (Ruvolo & Markus, 1992; Sessa et al., 2018). Individuals may have worries about changing their job content when taking on leadership roles (Aycan & Shelia, 2019). Having a possible future leader self may involve different types of worries, such as fears of failure (Zhang et al., 2020), loss of credibility (Ferris, 1998), feeling uncertain of taking up leadership roles that involve more responsibilities and challenges (Aycan & Shelia, 2019) and internal and external competition (Vuori & Huy, 2016). While previous studies show that both worries and fears are associated with leadership roles, there is a lack of studies showing the role of fear in leadership development (Cropanzano et al., 2017). As such, it is deemed necessary to investigate the hope and fear elements in a possible leader self and differentiate their impacts on leadership development.

Given this, it is necessary to investigate two critical limitations related to leader identity in leadership development. First, leader identity does not fully cover the future-oriented motivations created by envisioning the future self as a leader, which is critical to promote one's confidence in leadership and sustain their interest in leadership development in the longer-term (Hannah et al., 2013; Lord et al., 2011). Second, it mainly focuses on the positive aspect of leader identity (Dutton et al., 2010; Klenke, 2007), and it does not fully reflect the multidimensional nature of identity, including people's hopes and fears in the future (Markus & Nurius, 1986).

In view of the limitations related to the role of leader identity in leadership development, if we only study the current form of leader identity, we may overlook the future-oriented effects predicted by the leader's possible self (Avolio & Vogelgesang, 2012). This concept can better demonstrate how a possible self as leader can influence individuals' present motivations and actions to realise their future identity (Sessa et al., 2018). Moreover, if we only focus on the positive aspect of leader identity, we are likely to neglect the unclear positive or negative impact of worries and fears associated with leadership roles (Aycan & Shelia, 2019).

This research enriches the understanding of the role of leader identity in leadership development by introducing a concept called Leader Future Work Self (LFWS). LFWS is a concept based on possible selves (Markus & Nurius, 1986) and adapted from recent research on Future Work Selves (FWS) (Strauss et al., 2012). Future work selves are proposed as hoped-for future selves related to work, and they capture individuals' hopes and aspirations relevant to their career and work (Parker et al., 2010; Strauss & Kelly, 2016). With a key focus on the leadership context, LFWS is conceptualised as a possible self that is relevant to leadership roles and includes both hope and fear elements. When activated, the hope and/or fear elements are expected to increase the strength of LFWS. LFWS strength is defined by

salience and centrality (Strauss et al., 2012; Stryker & Serpe, 1994), suggesting the level of importance of an individual's LFWS compared to their other possible selves. Furthermore, an activated LFWS with increased LFWS strength is expected to enhance individuals' interest in leadership development and perceived confidence in leading.

This research contributes to the literature on leader identity (e.g., Hall, 2004; Hiller, 2005; Lord & Brown, 2004) and leadership development (e.g., Day, 2000; Day et al., 2008; Day & Harrison, 2007) by casting light on a future-oriented form of leader identity, LFWS. LFWS, a future form of leader identity, is connected with the current leader self, and can reinforce one's leadership development by affecting his or her current motivations and behaviours (Lord & Brown, 2004; Markus & Wurf, 1987). When individuals envision LFWS, this future image illustrates the positive and negative elements (i.e., hopes and fears), which represents their aspirations and limitations related to the realisation of possible selves as leaders in the future (Liu et al., 2020). In particular, when the hope elements are activated, the strength of individuals' LFWS increases. As such, individuals use this future-oriented information to evaluate their current situations and have a clear sense about how to realise their hopes and avoid the fears, thus promoting their self-confidence in leading and interest in leadership development (Hannah et al., 2013; Liu et al., 2020; Lord et al., 2011).

In essence, the concept of LFWS is aligned with leader identity, in that they are both identities that can have a positive impact on leadership development. LFWS takes the concept a step further and clarifies how hopes and/or fears enhance individuals' willingness to engage in leadership development and their confidence in leading.

3.2. Hypotheses Development

The role of LFWS in leadership development is investigated by drawing on the possible self and FWS literature to illustrate LFWS's conceptualisation. Following this, the theoretical role of LFWS strength within the LFWS concept and how it relates to the activation of LFWS elements and intention for leadership development (LI) and leader self-efficacy (LSE) is discussed.

3.2.1. The Origins of Leader Future Work Self (LFWS): Possible selves and Future Work Selves (FWS)

The conceptualisation of LFWS is related to possible self and FWS literature. This section will cover the background information and key characteristics of these two lines of research.

3.2.1.1. Possible Selves

Based on possible selves research (Markus & Nurius, 1986) and adapted from recent work on Future Work Selves (FWS) (Strauss et al., 2012), LFWS is a future-oriented possible self that is related to leadership roles. Possible selves represent how people think about their future potential, and contain elements of hopes, aspirations, fears and threats that they may have about the future (Markus & Nurius, 1986). Specifically, they represent hoped and feared selves that individuals wish to become or avoid becoming (Oyserman & James, 2009). Moreover, they are social roles and domain-specific, such as a leader in the leadership domain or an employee in the work domain (Markus & Nurius, 1986). From this perspective, possible selves are multidimensional and people can hold multiple positive and negative possible selves related to social roles and domains: for example, a successful leader possible self who can drive team performance effectively; an unpopular leader possible self who is

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seen as too demanding; and a lonely possible self in personal life, who overworks as a leader (Oyserman & James, 2009).

In addition to these elements associated with possible selves, possible selves have unique features that can drive future-oriented motivations and behaviours to realise the hoped-for selves and avoid the feared selves (Markus & Wurf, 1987). Possible selves represent the selves in the future (Cross & Markus, 1991). They are not the same as their current selves, but at the same time they are linked to their current selves (Leondari et al., 1998). These possible selves that individuals wish - or do not wish - to become in the future serve as an evaluative context to make sense of their current selves (Oyserman & James, 2009). As such, these possible selves can orient individuals' current motivations and choices of plans, therefore driving future-oriented behaviours to realise the hoped-for or avoid becoming the feared selves (Oyserman & James, 2009; Ruvolo & Markus, 1992).

The hope and fear elements of possible selves can effectively regulate people's motivations and behaviours (Markus & Nurius, 1986). The positive and negative valence of the hoped-for and feared possible selves provide reference values in their degree of "possibleness" (Quinlan et al., 2006, p. 603). Notably, the possible selves need to be perceived as possible according to three conditions. First, there is a connection between the possible self and the current self as perceived by individuals. Second, the efforts needed for realisation of the possible self need to be congruent with other salient aspects of the current self. Finally, individuals need to perceive the difficulty and uncertainty of achieving the possible self as manageable (Oyserman & James, 2009). In other words, the hope and fear components of possible selves function as self-relevant information for individuals to evaluate the possibility of realising their possible selves (Markus & Nurius, 1986).

The hope elements of possible selves refer to the expected and hoped-for selves, or the selves individuals desire to be and believe and they can become, while the feared selves represent the selves they would avoid becoming (Cross & Markus, 1991). For example, a hoped-for possible self can be a future powerful leader self that is possible to realise. In contrast, a feared possible self can be a future failed leader self, which is possible for an individual to become, and this person wants to avoid realising this feared self. The hope and fear elements can motivate individuals to attain their hoped-for possible selves or avoid attaining the feared possible selves (Hamman et al., 2013). In this vein, the hope elements involve approach motivations, while the fear elements involve avoidance motivation (Carver & Scheier, 1990; Higgins, 1998). That means that the hoped-for possible selves may lead to discrepancy-reducing strategies to reduce the distance between current selves and desired selves.

Conversely, feared possible selves might involve discrepancy-enlarging strategies to increase the distance between current selves and the undesired selves (vanDellen & Hoyle, 2008). In any case, the effect of feared elements on individuals' motivations and behaviours is not unidirectional. Whereas feared possible selves could prompt individuals to reject or avoid the undesired state (Oyserman & Markus, 1990), they can also trigger approach attempts to make changes to current situations to avoid realising the feared selves (Markus & Nurius, 1986). Essentially, the hope and fear elements in possible selves can make people behave differently and strive to approach or avoid their desired or undesired possible selves (Cross & Markus, 1991).

Strength is another feature of possible selves and is defined by salience (vanDellen & Hoyle, 2008). Salience matters because it represents the extent to which a possible self is an active element of an individual's identity and to which this self in the future is clear and easy to envision (King & Raspin, 2004). Individuals can possess multiple possible selves, but only

one of them (i.e., the salient self) tends to be activated and dominant in any particular context, and this can determine its effect on people's motivations and behaviours (Markus & Wurf, 1987; Stryker & Serpe, 1994).

An identity can be activated and made salient by contexts, such as taking up social roles related to leaders, employees, university professors or parents (Lord & Brown, 2004). Moreover, the salient identities can be activated more frequently, and can assert a more substantial effect on behaviours than other non-core identities (Stryker & Serpe, 1994). As a type of identity in the future form, when a salient possible self is activated, an individual becomes more sensitive to certain cues for behaviours related to this possible self (Markus, 1977; Stryker & Burke, 2000). As such, this individual may act according to the meanings and norms he or she associates with this identity (Stets & Burke, 2000), such as demonstrating leadership behaviour regarding a leader possible self. Nevertheless, individuals do not always take actions to attain their positive possible selves and avoid their negative possible selves (Oyserman & James, 2009). People's subjective interpretation facilitated by their salient possible selves can evaluate the gaps they perceive between their current selves and possible selves on the one hand, and their current efforts and further efforts needed on the other hand, and this self-evaluation cues the behaviours needed in order to bridge this gap (Oyserman & James, 2011).

3.2.1.2.   Future Work Selves

Concerning the concept of possible selves, FWS is a line of research that was developed in the last decade (Strauss et al., 2012). FWS is conceptualised as a future-oriented possible self that is attainable and which can predict future-oriented behaviours (Markus & Nurius, 1986; Strauss et al., 2012). Moreover, FWS is specific to the work domain and it can

affect behaviours related to individuals' work and career (Strauss et al., 2012; Strauss & Parker, 2018).

Another characteristic of FWS is that its strength is defined by salience and elaboration (Strauss et al., 2012). FWS's salience means the extent to which an FWS is clear and easy to imagine, while elaboration means the extent to which an FWS has diverse and complex features (Strauss & Kelly, 2016). FWS's salience can determine FWS's impact on behaviours, and elaboration reflects the richness of an individual's FWS, and thus the extent to which it makes people more adaptive to changes in their plans (Anseel et al., 2017; Strauss et al., 2012). In particular, salience reflects the subjective importance of identity to an individual and it is vital in making FWS effective in driving proactive career behaviours (Ashforth, 2000; Strauss et al., 2012). The FWS becomes salient when activated in the memory, and it can orient people's attention to relevant situations (Strauss et al., 2012). As such, FWS's salience develops over time as people prime themselves by thinking about their FWS-related aspirations and hopes (Aquino et al., 2009; de Place & Brunot, 2020; Strauss et al., 2012).

The last characteristic of FWS is that, whereas hope and fear elements are included in other possible selves, FWS research focuses primarily on hope elements and the related outcome of proactive behaviours at work. Proactive work behaviours represent self-initiated behaviours that are future-oriented and targeted at changing the status quo (Strauss & Kelly, 2016). Strauss et al. (2012) theorise FWS as a hoped-for, rather than a feared, FWS because fear elements can be associated with feelings of worry and threat. Moreover, fear elements are less likely than hope elements to keep people focused on a specific direction (Elliot et al., 1997); thus, they are less effective in regulating individuals' behaviours (Strauss et al., 2012). The hoped-for possible selves have a positive valence, and typically refer to individuals' desired goals and aspirations, thus driving proactive behaviours (Bindl & Parker, 2011;

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Strauss et al., 2012). As such, the hoped-for FWS can predict proactive motivations and behaviours to reduce the discrepancy between the current self and FWS (Carver & Scheier, 1990; Higgins, 1987; Strauss et al., 2012). Notably, FWS's effect on motivation and behaviours is positive (Strauss et al., 2012). It is thought to lead to proactivity in career behaviours (Taber & Blankemeyer, 2015), career adaptability (Cai et al., 2015), career construction (Guan et al., 2014, 2017), improved job performance (Lin et al., 2016), seeking feedback (Anseel et al., 2017), and newcomers' proactive socialisation in Chinese organisations (Zhang et al., 2014).

3.2.2. The Conceptualisation of Leader Future Work Self (LFWS)

In this section, I will illustrate the key elements included in LFWS according to its conceptualisation. I will also elaborate how the elements in LFWS can be activated and their relationship with LFWS strength.

3.2.2.1. Key Elements of LFWS

Building on the possible selves and FWS literature, LFWS is conceptualised as related to the possible self concept and they share two similar characteristics. First, they are all domain-specific; for example, leadership domain (such as LFWS), work domain (such as FWS) (Strauss et al., 2012), or academic possible self (Oyserman et al., 2006) and teacher possible self (Hamman et al., 2013). Second, they are all future-oriented identities connected to present motivations and actions (Markus & Wurf, 1987; Strauss & Kelly, 2016). Regardless, LFWS has its unique features that are expected to predict positive outcomes in identity-based leadership development.

I theorise LFWS as a possible self which is sensitive to the social context of leadership and is associated with a clear referent, the leadership role (Brickson, 2007; DeRue et al., 2009; Parker et al., 2010). LFWS is expected to predict a positive impact in general. This is because people wish to construct positive identities at work (Gecas, 1982). People perceive identity as positive when regarded as valuable and linked with favourable outcomes, such as growth at work (e.g., Carlsen, 2008; Kreiner & Sheep, 2009; Maitlis, 2009; Roberts et al., 2005) or career development (e.g., Ibarra, 1999). In this respect, LFWS is a favourable identity where people can favourably differentiate themselves from others (e.g., non-leaders) (Dutton et al., 2010).

Hope and fear elements are included in the conceptualisation of LFWS for a few reasons. The hoped-for LFWS reflects the future leader self one desires to become, such as the successful self, the innovative self, or the loved and respected self. In contrast, the feared LFWS is defined as the future leader self one desires to avoid because it represents the undesired, sad, or tragic self (Markus & Nurius, 1986). Scholars suggest theorising possible selves with two dimensions (i.e., hope and fear) because their degree of valence can vary (Quinlan et al., 2006). The hope and fear elements represent positive and negative valence respectively, and the differences in the valence of these dimensions can influence their degree of impact on motivations and behaviours (Markus & Nurius, 1986).

It is recommended to include as many identity-relevant details as possible in conceptualising possible selves (de Place & Brunot, 2020). When individuals interpret their LFWS with more details (i.e., both hope and fear elements), such interpretation can reflect a more pragmatic view about their possible selves with relevance to their situation (i.e., the hopes and fears associated with their future as leaders at work). Therefore, the LFWS with more details is more efficient in initiating behaviours (de Place & Brunot, 2020; Oyserman & James, 2009). Notably, with a complex LFWS integrating both hope and fear elements,

individuals can have a clearer and more differentiated sense of how they should act in these situations, thus promoting more comprehensive guidance of their motivations and behaviours (Lord et al., 2011). Therefore, when both hope and fear elements are included in LFWS, this dynamic conceptualisation of LFWS is expected to predict a positive impact on driving individuals' motivations and behaviours in leadership development (Oyserman, 2015).

When we look at the hope and fear elements in LFWS separately, these elements are expected to motivate individuals to pursue or avoid specific behaviours (Hoyle & Sherrill, 2006). However, inconsistent results have been found in studies of the relative positive and negative impact of possible selves' hope and fear elements (Oyserman et al., 2015). For example, Ruvolo & Markus (1992) report positive impacts on motivations and behaviours of research participants when their positive future selves, instead of negative future selves, are salient. This result, though, is not replicated in other studies. Some suggest positive effects on research participants' motivations and behaviours when positive or negative possible selves are salient (compared to a control group) (Murru & Ginis, 2010; Ouellette et al., 2005). Others report positive effects on research participants' motivations and behaviours when they are randomly assigned to think of their negative possible selves instead of their positive possible selves (Dalley & Buunk, 2011; Hoyle & Sherrill, 2006). Given these inconsistent results across studies, the relative effect of hope and fear elements in LFWS is also examined in this study.

The hoped-for LFWS is expected to be seen as valuable and beneficial (Dutton et al., 2010) in predicting favourable self-views (Roberts et al., 2009). It is expected to predict a positive impact on individuals' motivations and behaviours because it can fuel them with the approach motivation to realise the desired future leader self (Lord & Brown, 2004). Fuelled by the approach motivation, individuals would put efforts into reducing the discrepancies between their current selves and the hoped-for LFWS by enacting future-oriented behaviours

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that target the desired future leader selves (Lord & Brown, 2004). They are more likely to pursue leadership roles or engage in leadership development opportunities to reduce the discrepancy between their current selves and the LFWS (Sessa et al., 2018).

The impact of feared LFWS is more complex, as it may not be unidirectional. As discussed earlier, the feared possible self could trigger either approach or avoidance motivation to increase the discrepancy between individuals' current selves and the undesired future leader selves (Bandura, 1989, 2001; Higgins, 1997). Avoidance motivation can lead to the rejection or avoidance of the undesired future leader self (Oyserman & Markus, 1990). Alternatively, approach motivation in a feared possible self can lead to improving the current self in order to prevent the feared leader possible self from being actualised (Markus & Nurius, 1986).

In the context of LFWS, fear elements can be associated with leadership role-relevant worries and concerns such as fear of failure, internal and external competitions, losing credibility, disappointing others, not being accepted as leaders, and so on (Aycan & Shelia, 2019; DeRue et al., 2009; Ferris, 1998; Zhang et al., 2020). These negative undesired images may motivate people to set avoidance goals to prevent the realisation of negative leader future selves (Stevenson & Clegg, 2011). Fear elements in LFWS associated with avoidance direction can be less effective at maintaining individuals' focus in a particular direction, making them less likely to take action (Elliot et al., 1997; Oyserman & Markus, 1990). Moreover, when individuals focus on these negative possible futures, it may increase their vulnerability and lower their behavioural performance (Markus & Nurius, 1986; Ruvolo & Markus, 1992). Regardless, LFWS is generally theorised as a favourable future self; it projects people's future images of taking up leadership roles at work, and this image provides them with a goal and expectation to focus on, driving them to put efforts into achieving it, even when they have worries and concerns regarding being future leaders (Bandura, 2001;

Markus & Ruvolo, 1989). Notably, when the perceived distance between individuals' current leader selves and feared LFWS is uncomfortably close, the feared LFWS could function as an effective push factor and fuel their motivations to change (Carver et al., 1999; Ogilvie, 1987). In this vein, the fear elements in LFWS can be a powerful force to drive individuals to change their current situations and make them opt for further developments (Markus & Nurius, 1986). As such, the fear elements in LFWS are expected to predict positive impact on individuals' motivations and behaviours in leadership development.

3.2.2.2. The Activation of Hope and/or Fear Elements in LFWS and LFWS Strength

In this section, I will discuss how the hope and/or fear elements in LFWS can be activated. Essentially, the activated LFWS elements are expected to change the LFWS strength. The relationship between these two variables will be discussed.

3.2.2.2.1. LFWS Strength

The strength of LFWS is determined by salience and centrality (Strauss et al., 2012; Stryker & Serpe, 1994). The strength of LFWS matters in this study because not all possible selves are active simultaneously and only a core and active one can regulate motivations and behaviour in leadership development (Lord & Brown, 2004). In other words, LFWS strength can indicate the level of importance of one's LFWS compared to his/her other possible selves. Salience in LFWS strength refers to accessibility (ease of imagination and clarity of a future image), and centrality means the relative importance of a core identity (such as LFWS) compared to other identities (McCall & Simmons, 1966; Rosenberg, 1979). Applying the notion of salience and centrality to LFWS, LFWS strength would mean the degree to which it

represents a clear and accessible image of an individual as a leader in the future and that this possible self is core to him/her compared to other future identities.

3.2.2.2.2.   Activation of LFWS Hope and/or Fear Elements and LFWS Strength

In line with the possible selves research, LFWS is multidimensional, and it contains both hope and fear dimensions (Markus & Wurf, 1987). Individuals can possess multiple possible selves, but not all are equally motivating (Oyserman & James, 2011; Strauss et al., 2012). A possible self can drive present motivation and behaviours only when a salient self is activated (Markus & Wurf, 1987).

As discussed earlier, LFWS strength (i.e., salience and centrality) refers to the degree to which an identity is central and accessible to an individual compared to their other identities (Strauss et al., 2012; Stryker & Serpe, 1994). The activation of the hope and fear elements of LFWS is expected to relate to LFWS strength positively.

The activation of identity elements can be cued by individuals' situations (Forehand et al., 2002). Situational cues (such as engaging in leadership tasks in the workplace) can increase an identity's salience related to a social role (such as a leadership role) (Kenny & Briner, 2013). These situational cues are identity-relevant information, and the related identity salience can be increased when people possess this information to interpret their experiences (Forehand et al., 2002). Importantly, the more identity is meaningful to a context (such as a leader identity in the context of leadership work at the workplace), the more likely an identity can be activated and be more accessible, thus increasing this identity's salience (Oyserman, 2009).

Applying this notion to future identity, envisioning a future interacting with the context (such as taking on a future leader role) can also activate a future-oriented identity (Hoyle & Sherrill, 2006). This type of cue can make an identity salient and increase its temporary importance and influence because it can produce an image of one engaging in behaviours related to these images (Hoyle & Sherrill, 2006; Lord & Brown, 2004; Oyserman & Destin, 2010). By doing so, more accessible cues related to these envisioned images are made available, which can make such an identity salient and direct individuals' actions related to this identity (Gollwitzer, 1999). In other words, the projection of future images as a priming cue can activate and increase the salience of people's future identities, therefore motivating them and guiding their actions accordingly (Bandura, 2001; Chong et al., 2017; Lord & Brown, 2004). Essentially, envisioning the elements in LFWS can enhance the clarity of an individual's future image as a leader, and by thinking about it more frequently, LFWS strength can be developed over time (Higgins et al., 1982; Strauss et al., 2012).

Comparing the positive impacts of activating LFWS hope and/or fear elements on LFWS strength, the combined impact of hopes and fears is expected to be the strongest, followed by the impact of hope elements, and fears' impact being the weakest. As mentioned earlier, when hope and fear elements are both included in LFWS, this future identity becomes more complex, and it represents clearer and more pragmatic situations individuals are facing (Oyserman et al., 2015). Thus, this combined impact can predict a consistent and robust positive motivational impact on individuals (de Place & Brunot, 2020; Lord et al., 2011; Oyserman, 2015).

This strong effect is also developed based on the impact of the hope elements in LFWS. Scholars argue that individuals have a solid drive to construct positive identities (Kreiner & Sheep, 2009). They may construct positive identities despite performing unfavourable tasks (Ashforth & Kreiner, 1999). They may also construct positive selves to

justify or excuse unfavourable performance reviews that threaten their identities (Elsbach & Kramer, 1996). It shows that positive elements effectively foster the pursuit of the desired goals and prevent undesired outcomes (Kreiner & Sheep, 2009; Sparks & Baumeister, 2008). Moreover, individuals are purposive, in that they develop personal goals and act towards them for self-satisfaction (Bandura, 2001). People think of hoped-for possible selves more frequently than negative ones (Markus & Nurius, 1986). In general, the hoped-for LFWS, which focuses on the positive and realistic possibility of becoming the desired leader in the future, provides individuals self-relevant goals to effectively regulate their current efforts and behaviours (Hamman et al., 2013; Markus & Wurf, 1987). As such, the impact of activating LFWS hopes on LFWS strength is expected to be weaker than the combined effect of both hopes and fears, but stronger than activating fears alone.

Based on the conceptualization of LFWS, activating LFWS fears can predict positive impact, but this impact is expected to be the weakest (compared to LFWS hope and fear and hopes). Individuals' attentions can be automatically drawn to the negative elements more strongly than they are automatically drawn to positive ones (Smith et al., 2003). It is also possible that individuals would also spend more time focusing on negative cues in LFWS and form vivid cognitive images of negative cues (Ogilvie, 1987; Vaish et al., 2008). Nevertheless, individuals are unlikely to stay focused in a particular direction when pursuing avoidance goals (i.e., attempts to avoid the undesired outcomes from becoming) (Elliot et al., 1997). Individuals are also likely to prolong their actions to realise changes due to the worries and concerns associated with LFWS's fear elements (Verbruggen & De Vos, 2019). As such, although activating LFWS fear elements may attract some attentions from individuals and mildly increase their LFWS strength, this positive effect is expected to be weaker than activating LFWS hopes and fears or hopes. Therefore, I propose:

Hypothesis 1: The activation of "LFWS (Hope and Fear)" (H1a), "LFWS (Hope)" (H1b) and "LFWS (Fear)" (H1c) will increase LFWS strength.

3.2.3. The Mediating Role of LFWS Strength in Identity-based Leadership Development

Individuals' interest in leadership development and perceived confidence in their leadership capacities are essential for identity-based development (Kwok et al., 2020; Lord & Hall, 2005). Both factors are beneficial in driving individuals' long-term commitments and resilience during the leadership development process (Day et al., 2021; Vogel et al., 2020). Moreover, LFWS strength is expected to predict these two positive outcomes. The related relationships will be covered in Sections 3.2.3.1 and 3.2.3.2, respectively.

3.2.3.1. LFWS Strength and Leadership Development Intention (LI)

LFWS strength is expected to predict leadership development intention. Development intention is a reliable predictor of individuals' actual participation in future development opportunities (Maurer et al., 2003). Following this logic, leadership development intention represents individuals' commitment and interest in engaging in leadership development activities (Ajzen, 1991; Bandura, 2001; Maurer et al., 2003).

Individuals' interest in leadership development is essential for identity-based development (Lord & Hall, 2005). Identity-based leadership development advocates that the development of leaders is associated with changes in their leader identities and perceptions of leadership (Lord & Hall, 2005). It is a long-term process that requires a long-term commitment to leadership development over time (Vogel et al., 2020). Moreover, scholars

assert the importance of proactive initiatives by potential leaders, indicating their motivation and interest in leadership are crucial requirements for identity-based leadership development (Chan & Drasgow, 2001).

As mentioned earlier, LFWS strength represents the degree to which a possible future leader image is accessible and central to an individual (Strauss et al., 2012; Stryker & Serpe, 1994). When activated, increased LFWS strength contributes to a salient LFWS, and it illustrates a clear and accessible future image of individuals taking leadership positions. This crystallised self-knowledge can unveil individuals' understanding of their developments (Cross & Markus, 1991), and provides them with a context to evaluate their current selves for future behaviours (vanDellen & Hoyle, 2008). Based on this self-evaluation, individuals form their perceptions about how possible it is to become their envisioned LFWS, and this perception can trigger their intention to develop themselves and attain this possible self (Avolio & Vogelgesang, 2012; Cross & Markus, 1991; Lord & Brown, 2004). Moreover, a salient LFWS is a future identity structure where relevant knowledge can be organised and which fuels people's motivation to seek out leadership development opportunities (Chan & Drasgow, 2001; Ibarra et al., 2010; Lord & Hall, 2005). Due to increased LFWS strength, individuals may become more sensitive to cues for behaviours associated with LFWS (Markus, 1977; Stryker & Burke, 2000). As such, increased LFWS strength can drive individuals to behave according to the meanings and norms associated with LFWS, such as showing interest in leadership development or participating in leadership-related activities (Stets & Burke, 2000).

I have already proposed that activated hope and/or fear elements are expected to cause varied positive impacts to LFWS strength. As suggested earlier, when LFWS hopes and fears are both activated, LFWS strength is expected to be at its strongest, and its impact on LI would also be the strongest compared to activating other elements (i.e., LFWS hopes or fears

or FWS). Moreover, when only LFWS hope elements are activated, the strength of LFWS can assert the second strongest positive impact on individuals' LI. Furthermore, when only the fears in LFWS are activated, it is expected to predict the weakest positive impact on LSE through LFWS strength. Therefore, I propose:

Hypothesis 2: LFWS strength mediates the positive relationship between the activation of "LFWS (Hope and Fear)" and LI (H2a), "LFWS (Hope)" and LI (H2b) and "LFWS (Fear)" and LI (H2c).

3.2.3.2.   LFWS Strength and Leader Self-Efficacy (LSE)

LFWS strength is expected to predict leader self-efficacy (LSE). LSE refers to one's perceived capabilities to perform tasks necessary to effectively accomplish leadership roles (Ng et al., 2008). Compared to general self-efficacy, which is defined as one's perception of his/her ability to perform tasks across varied situations (Judge et al., 1998), LSE is a specific form of leadership-related efficacy representing an individual's estimation of his/her ability to fulfil leadership responsibilities (Murphy & Johnson, 2016). Therefore, it also reflects one's confidence in his/her knowledge, skills and abilities (KSAs) concerning leading followers (Hannah et al., 2012).

LSE is a vital component in identity-based leadership development for several reasons. LSE is a cognitive-based belief structure that can reveal peoples' beliefs about their strengths and improvement areas related to leadership capabilities, serving as a beneficial reference as the starting point of leadership development (Anderson et al., 2008). LSE can also mean people's perceived beliefs about their abilities to fulfil the leadership role requirements, and such belief can boost their motivation to take part in leadership development opportunities and leadership experiences (Avolio & Vogelgesang, 2012; Day et al., 2008). Moreover,

leadership development can be challenging and stressful because it involves the expansion of complex leadership skills and changes in leadership self-perceptions (Liu et al., 2020). LSE plays a vital role in this process by fuelling people with the motivations and emotional energy needed to fulfil these challenging tasks (Courtright et al., 2014). Importantly, for individuals who experience challenging leadership developments, the development of LSE can facilitate their perception of alignment between their leadership roles and identities, thus contributing to a higher engagement in this stressful process (Courtright et al., 2014; Pratt & Ashforth, 2003).

LFWS strength is expected to facilitate the development of LSE. The salience and centrality (i.e., strength) of LFWS reflect the degree to which LFWS is seen as possible to attain in the future (Markus & Wurf, 1987). A higher LFWS strength implies an LFWS is salient (i.e., it is easy to imagine and accessible) and central to an individual and it means that individual would see this LFWS as possible to attain (Markus & Kunda, 1986). When individuals interpret LFWS as possible to realise, they would perceive this future image as highly relevant to their current leader selves (Oyserman & James, 2009). Also, they see the efforts needed for realising LFWS as not causing conflicts with their other salient current selves, such as the current self as a husband self of his partner, a daughter self of her parents, or a friend self of their close friends (Oyserman & Destin, 2010). Moreover, they perceive the level of difficulty of attaining this LFWS as manageable (Oyserman & James, 2011). Salient and central mental images of LFWS reflect individuals having achieved their goals as future leaders; individuals' perception that they can attain their LFWS can enhance their confidence in their leadership abilities (Markus & Wurf, 1987; Muhrru & Ginis, 2010). Moreover, when individuals have a positive evaluation of possessing required leadership KSAs to perform future leadership duties, their confidence as leaders may also be higher (McCormick et al., 2002). In a similar vein, when one envisions oneself behaving as the actualised LFWS, this

image can influence one's leadership self-efficacy beliefs because it gives a sense of control (Maddux & Kleiman, 2016). Although envisioning, in itself, is unlikely to have a very strong effect on one's beliefs about their leadership abilities, such beliefs can develop over time, if they are reinforced repeatedly during the development of LFWS (Hannah et al., 2008; Williams, 1995).

Based on the varied impact caused by activating LFWS hopes and/or fears and FWS to LFWS strength, LFWS hopes and fears are both activated, LFWS strength is expected to be at its strongest, and its impact on LSE would also be the strongest compared to other activating other elements (i.e., LFWS hopes or fears or FWS). Moreover, when only the LFWS hope elements are activated, the enhanced LFWS strength can predict the second strongest positive impact on individuals' LSE. Additionally, when only the fears in LFWS are activated, it is expected to predict the weakest positive impact on LSE through LFWS strength. Thus, I propose:

Hypothesis 3: LFWS strength mediates the positive relationship between the activation of "LFWS (Hope and Fear)" and LSE (H3a), "LFWS (Hope)" and LSE (H3b) and "LFWS (Fear)" and LSE (H3c).
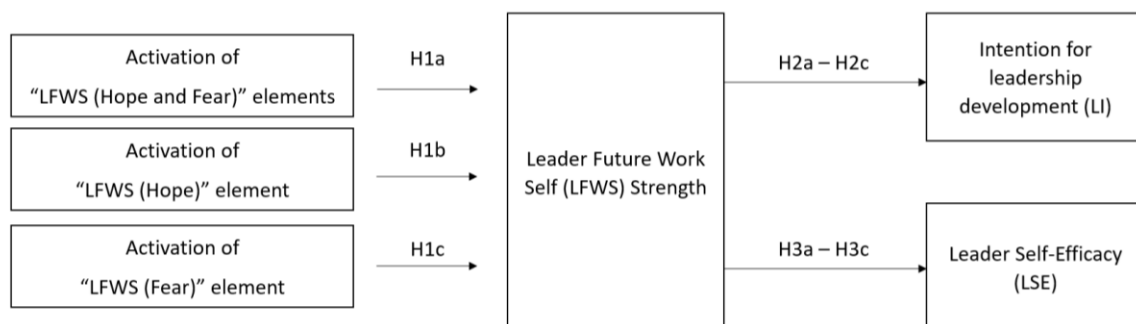
Figure 4 Research Model and Summary of Hypotheses

3.3. Method

In this section, I will describe the method I adopted in this research. The participant and procedure will be discussed first. Following this, the measures used will be elaborated. Finally, I will present the data analyses strategy.

3.3.1. Participants and Procedure

The study consists of two parts: a qualitative study (described in Chapter 2) and a quantitative study (described here in Chapter 3). As such, this study was launched to collect qualitative and quantitative data concurrently. I collected the survey data using an online research data collection platform, Prolific Academic at two time points in April and May 2020. This study was designed and administered using Qualtrics. I adopted an experimental design for this study, and I used narrative writing as the key intervention for both surveys to activate participants' FWS and LFWS images through imagination (de Place & Brunot, 2019; Hoyle & Sherrill, 2006; King & Raspin, 2004; King & Smith, 2004; Ruvolo & Markus, 1992; Strauss et al., 2012).

Each survey lasted for 20 minutes. At Time 1, I used the FWS narrative writing to activate the elements of FWS hope and fear by imagination and writing. The qualitative study is based on the premise that hope and fear elements are essential for possible selves in regulating motivations and behaviours (Oyserman & James, 2009). Therefore, both hope and fear elements are included in the FWS intervention at Time 1 and Time 2. The aim was to explore the elements included in FWS and their possible linkages to LFWS, which is the key theme of the qualitative study. This survey also included the questionnaires to collect the baseline data for the quantitative study, including FWS strength, LFWS strength, LSE, LI and a set of control measures. The Time 1 and Time 2 data collection were two weeks apart to

separate the measurements. I chose this method because priming can temporarily make certain information more accessible for individuals, thus increasing an identity's salience without any conscious awareness perceived by the participants about this identity activation (Lord & Brown, 2004). As such, the two-week gap served to ensure the priming effect at Time 1 would not be carried over to Time 2.

As in Time 1, I used narrative writing as an intervention to activate participants' imaginations of their FWS (hope and fear elements) or LFWS (hope and/or fear elements) via imagination and writing at Time 2. The interventions used at Time 2 serve different purposes for the qualitative (Chapter 2) and quantitative study (Chapter 3). For the qualitative part, these interventions are used to explore further the FWS and LFWS elements and their linkages with each other and shed light on their similarities and differences in regulating motivations and behaviours in different domains (i.e., work domain and leadership domain).

For the quantitative part, the Time 2 data collection aims to investigate the impact of activated LFWS elements (hope and/or fear) on LI and LSE through LFWS strength. According to the aim of this quantitative paper, the research design needs to serve the purpose of differentiating the relative impact of activated hope and/or fear elements in LFWS on the mentioned outcomes. As such, it was designed to include four groups for manipulation: hope and fear activation group ("LFWS (Hope and Fear)"), hope activation group ("LFWS (Hope)"), fear activation group ("LFWS (Fear)"), and control group ("FWS (control)"). The "LFWS (Hope and Fear)" group had the LFWS hope and fear narrative writing. The "LFWS (Hope)" group completed the LFWS hope narrative writing. The "LFWS (Fear)" group was assigned the LFWS fear narrative writing. The "FWS (control)" group completed the FWS hope and fear narrative writing. After the manipulations, I measured FWS strength, LFWS strength, LI, LSE and a set of control measures again. I also collected data about whether drastic changes happened within the gap in time between Time 1 and Time 2.

At Time 1, I recruited 200 full time and part-time students. Of the N = 200, 175 responded to both surveys (87.5%). No responses were deleted due to failing the quality checks or engaging in straight-lining (i.e., cases where answers from respondents had zero variance across all questions). However, one response was deleted because of the negative value found between his/her current age and envisioned age. To ensure the quality and effect of the interventions, I also checked all narratives to confirm if the participants had written according to the instructions. I deleted participants' responses that were not aligned with the narrative writing instructions, such as not writing hope and fear when they were instructed to write both or writing hope/fear when they were asked to write fear/hope. Finally, 1 response from the "LFWS (Hope)" group and 14 responses from the "LFWS (Fear)" group were eliminated. As a result, I proceeded with a final sample of N = 174.

Of the final sample size, 46 participants (26.4%) were female, while 128 (73.6%) were male. The average age of the participants was 22.54. The average difference between their current age and envisioned age of becoming future leaders was 12 years. They had 2.14 years of full time or part-time working experience on average. Their average years of leadership experience at work or in non-work groups or associations (e.g., student union / volunteer / community service / sports / religion / scouts) was 1.93 years. In terms of education, 31.6% held undergraduate degrees, 25.9% completed post-secondary education (college, A-Levels, NVQ3 or similar), 24.7% completed secondary education (GCSE/O-Levels), and 10.3% held postgraduate degrees.

To assess the presence of attrition effects, I examined whether my final sample of 174 systematically differed from the Time 1 sample by creating a dichotomous variable reflecting those who participated at Time 2 (Goodman & Blum, 1996; Schyns et al., 2020). The result of multiple logistic regression revealed that demographic variables of gender (coded as 1 for female, 0 for male), age and years of leadership experience did not predict the dichotomous

variable and that the attrition effect was not a threat, and the participants' dropouts were not systematic.

3.3.2. Measures

All questions, unless otherwise stated, were scored on a five-point scale with response choices ranging from 1 ("strongly disagree") to 5 ("strongly agree").

Future Work Self: narrative and strength. The participants were instructed to imagine their future selves in their future work lives and write a narrative of at least 200 words at Time 1. The control group also completed this same narrative at Time 2. As mentioned in Sections 3.2.1.2 and 3.2.2, the conceptualisations of FWS and LFWS are related but not entirely the same. The concept of LFWS strength is about the salience and centrality of an individual's future identity compared to his/her other future identities. To align the possible selves measurements with the key concept adopted in this study, I did not use the original FWS to measure FWS strength. Instead, I assessed participants' FWS strength (salience and centrality) by adapting the FWS measure from Strauss et al. (2012) and identity centrality measure from Vignoles et al. (2006). Sample items include "This future is very easy for me to imagine" and "This image of my future work self is a main part of my identity". The reliabilities of the 8-item version of the measures at Time 1 and Time 2 were α = .894/.901, respectively.

Leader Future Work Self: narratives and strength. At Time 2, participants, who were randomly assigned to the "LFWS (Hope and Fear)" / "LFWS (Fear)" / "LFWS (Hope)" groups, were asked to mentally travel to the future and to imagine their hoped for and/or feared future selves as leaders, and they all had to write at least 200 words about these future images for each question. The "LFWS (Hope and Fear)" group had to write at least 100

words for the future hope and fear images, respectively. For the "LFWS (Hope)" and "LFWS (Fear)" groups, participants wrote at least 200 words for the future hope or fear images, respectively. After that, I assessed the LFWS strength (salience and centrality), adapting the Future Work Self measure from Strauss et al. (2012) and identity centrality measure from Vignoles et al. (2006). Sample items include "Being a leader in the future is very easy for me to imagine" and "The image of myself as a future leader is a main part of my identity". The reliabilities of the 8-item version measures at Time 1 and Time 2 were α = .938/.932, respectively.

Leader Self-efficacy (LSE). I assessed participants' LSE at Time 1 and Time 2 using the measure from Murphy (1992). Sample items include "I know what it takes to make a work group accomplish its tasks", "I am confident in my ability to influence a work group that I lead" and "I know what it takes to keep a work group running smoothly". The reliabilities of the 5-item version measures at Time 1 and Time 2 were α = .845/.877, respectively[1].

Intention for leadership development (LI). I assessed participants' LI by adapting the leadership self-development measure from Boyce et al. (2010). Sample items include "If I had no constraints (e.g., financial, time, etc.), I would perform self-development activities to become a better leader" and "In the next 12 months, I have plans to develop my leadership knowledge, skills and experience through self-directed leadership development". The

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[1] Murphy (1992)'s original LSE measure contains 8 items. However, items 1, 7 and 8 were eliminated in the Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) procedure in my study due to the cross-loading issue. As such, a 5-item version was adopted. More details about the EFA process and results can be found in Section 3.4.

reliabilities of the 3-item version measures at Time 1 and Time 2 were α = .781/.809,

respectively[2].

Control Measures. Need for power was controlled for because studies have shown it

is related to leadership motivation and leader emergence (Liu et al., 2010; McClelland &

Boyatzis, 1982; McClelland & Burnham, 1995). The length of leadership experience was also

controlled for because previous research argued its impact on leader identity development

(Hiller, 2005; Lord & Hall, 2005; Sessa et al., 2018; Zaar et al., 2019). Other control

variables, such as length of working experience, education level, worries caused by the

historical event Covid-19, impact of possible dramatic change(s) in identity vision between

Time 1 and Time 2, and Big 5 personality were originally included in the analysis, but they

were dropped later because of their lack of significance with the study variables and results

(Becker, 2005; Spector & Brannick, 2011).

3.3.3. Data Analyses Strategy

Prior to the hypothesis testing analyses, I tested the factor structure and measurement

model with an Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) and Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA),

using SPSS and AMOS (v.26). To test the effect of the manipulations (i.e., activation of

"LFWS (Hope and Fear)", "LFWS (Hope)" and "LFWS (Fear)" on LFWS strength at Time 2

over Time 1, I used the univariate ANOVA in SPSS 27. Moreover, I examined the mediation

predictions (H2a-H3c) by using a Process macro for SPSS 27 (Hayes, 2017b) for the

mediation (Process model 4) analyses. Bootstrap-based analysis was used because this

method deals with non-normality problems that can be present in mediations, thus yielding

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[2] Boyce et al. (2010)'s original measure contains 4 items. However, item 1 was eliminated in the CFA procedure in my study to improve the model fit (Hair et al., 2013). As such, a 3-item version was adopted. More details about the EFA process and results can be found in the Section 3.4.

more accurate probability estimates (Shrout & Bolger, 2002). The 95% confidence interval of the indirect mediation effect was obtained with 5000 bootstrap resamples (Preacher & Hayes, 2008). Significant mediation is present where the confidence intervals do not contain zero (Hayes, 2017b). Individuals from different gender groups may differ in their cognitive knowledge structures about gender, thus impacting how they integrate their gender self-views into their LFWS (Karelaia & Guillen, 2012; Markus et al., 1982). I also conducted several post hoc tests to examine the moderating effect of gender on the manipulations and LFWS strength passing to the LI and LSE, respectively. I used Process model 7 for the moderated mediation analyses.

3.4. Results

The descriptive statistics, correlations and reliability coefficients of the measures are presented in Table 1. I included control variables of years of leadership experience and the need for power. All reliability coefficients of key variables in the model (LFWS strength, LI and LSE) were above the acceptable standard of .70 (Serban & Roberts, 2016).

Although most measures used in this study are validated scales, I decided to perform an Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) prior to other analyses for two reasons. First, LFWS is a newly adapted measure that has not been validated in previous research. Second, it was found that correlations of LFWS (T1) and LSE (T1) ($r = .656$, $p < .01$), LFWS (T2) and LI (T2) ($r = .701$, $p < .01$), and LFWS (T2) and LSE (T2) ($r = .646$, $p < .01$) had relatively high positive correlations. To understand and clarify the new scale and improve the correlation issues, I decided to perform an EFA using Time 1 data. An EFA was conducted on the 20-item, three first-order correlated factors model to examine the factor structure. In line with the study's hypotheses, oblique (oblimin) rotation was applied because it assumes these variables

are related theoretically (Field, 2013). The EFA produced four factors which were not in line with the overall theoretical constructs. Inspection of the results showed that 2 items had issues with cross-loadings. That means they either did not load on their theoretical factor or the item also loaded highly on a different factor (with a difference between the primary and secondary factor loadings below .300) (Costello & Osborne, 2005).

To improve the factor structure of the 20 items, I applied certain criteria to determine the number of factors to retain: eigenvalue-greater-than-one rule (Kaiser, 1960), the scree test (Cattell, 1966), and assessment of variable communalities and interpretability. Together, these methods suggested three factors as the most appropriate solution, and this result was aligned with the overall theoretical constructs hypothesized in this study. Items that met the standard criteria of .400 (Hair et al., 2013) were retained. Crossloading items that loaded at .320 or higher on two or more factors and with a difference <.300 between the loadings were deleted (Costello & Osborne, 2005). Based on these criteria, 17 items were retained and the pattern matrix revealed all factor loadings were in the range of .644 to .930.

I further used the Time 2 data and tested the measurement model with confirmatory factor analysis, using AMOS version 26. The 8-factor full measurement model included LFWS strength (T2), LI (T2), LSE (T2) and control variables of FWS strength (T1), LFWS strength (T1), LI (T1), LSE (T1) and Need for Power (T1). The model showed an acceptable fit (χ^2 = 1604.753, df = 791, p < .050; CFI = .849, RMSEA = .077) and a better fit than a one-factor model (χ^2 = 2981.740; df = 819, p < .050; CFI = .598, RMSEA = .124; $\Delta \chi^2$ = 1376.987, Δdf = 28, p < .001).

To evaluate if common method variance was a concern, I employed the unmeasured factor approach as recommended by Podsakoff et al. (2003). Common Method Variance (CMV) is defined as the amount of artificial correlation between variables attributable to the

measurement method applied (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Common method bias may be present because this research collected all data through the method of self-reported surveys (Mostafa et al., 2015). Therefore, procedural and statistical methods to control for CMV are necessary (Archimi et al., 2018). First, survey question randomisation was applied to minimise the common method bias (Chang et al., 2010). Second, the unmeasured common factor method was conducted (Podsakoff et al., 2003). The results indicated that the model including an unmeasured common factor did not improve the fit compared to the measurement model ($\chi^2 = 1600.016$, df = 790, $p < .050$, CFI = .849, RMSEA = .077, $\Delta \chi^2 = 4.737$; Δdf = 1, $p < .05$). Moreover, the average variance extracted (AVE) by the unmeasured common factor was .177, which is below the threshold of .5 associated with a substantive construct suggested by Fornell and Larcker (1981). As a result, it is concluded that model fit common method bias was unlikely to cause a threat to the data for this study.

The hypotheses are depicted in Figure 4, and the results are presented in Table 3 through to Table 6.

To test the hypotheses H1a – H1c, I performed univariate ANOVA in SPSS to examine if "LFWS (Hope and Fear)", "LFWS (Hope)" and "LFWS (Fear)" conditions caused changes in LFWS strength at T2 over T1. I followed the recommendations from Hayes and Preacher (2014) and created three dummy variables, "LFWS (Hope and Fear)", "LFWS (Hope)", "LFWS (Fear)", with each representing a mean difference test between two experimental categories. First, "LFWS (Hope and Fear)" (contrast coded as 0 for control group and 1 for hope and fear group) thus represented the impact of the mean difference between the "LFWS (Hope and Fear)" and "FWS (control)" conditions on LFWS strength. Second, "LFWS (Hope)" (contrast coded as 0 for control group and 1 for hope group) thus represented the impact of the mean difference between the "LFWS (Hope)" and "FWS (control)" conditions on LFWS strength. Third, "LFWS (Fear)" (contrast coded as 0 for

control group and 1 for fear group) thus represented the impact of the mean difference between the "LFWS (Fear)" and "FWS (control)" conditions on LFWS strength.

Results indicated the "LFWS (Hope)" intervention was found to cause positive changes in LFWS strength [$F(1,84) = 4.492$, $p < .05$, $\eta_2 = .051$] at Time 2 (Figure 5). As such, H1c was supported. No support was found for Hypotheses 1a and 1b, so these hypotheses were rejected.

Because FWS and LFWS are related concepts, I also conducted an additional analysis to test the intervention effect of "FWS (control)" on LFWS strength. I created an additional dummy variable "FWS (control)" (contrast coded as 0 for other LFWS groups and 1 for FWS control group), which thus represented the impact of the mean difference between the "FWS (control)" and other LFWS conditions on LFWS strength. The results showed that the effect of "FWS (control)" on LFWS strength was not significant ($p = .069$) as none of the LFWS elements was activated.
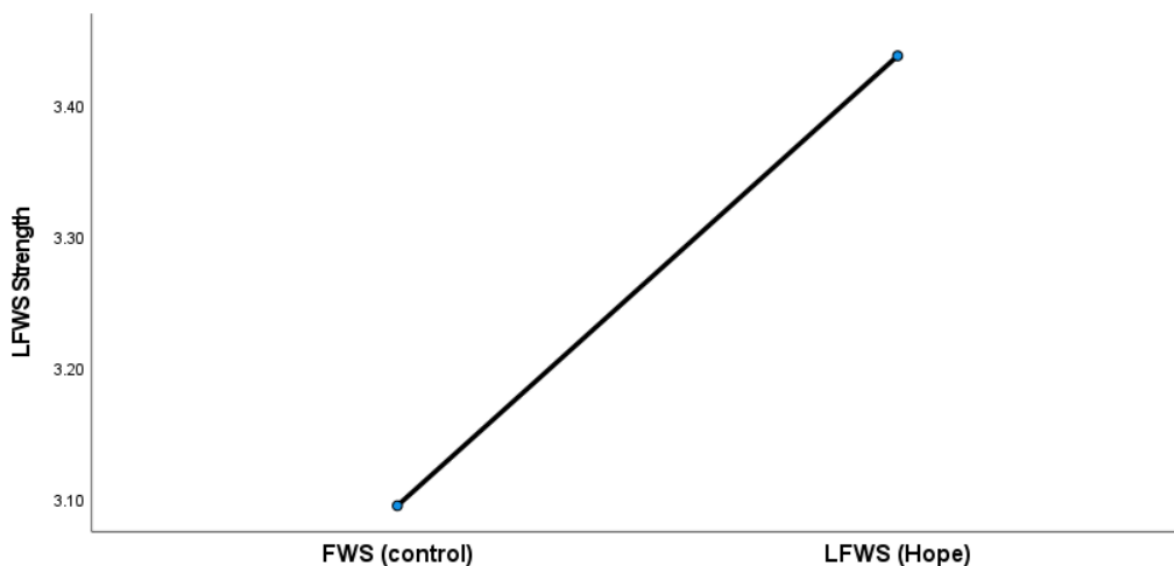
Figure 5 LFWS Strength Change based on "LFWS (Hope)" Condition

Hypothesis 2a postulated that LFWS strength mediated the relationship between the activation of "LFWS (Hope and Fear)" and LI. The activation of "LFWS (Hope and Fear)" did not have a significant relationship with LFWS strength ($p = .086$). LFWS strength was positively associated with LI ($b = .608$, t(85) = 5.312, $p < .001$). The indirect effect from activation of "LFWS (Hope and Fear)" to LI was not significant ($b = .134$, SE = .074, [95% CI = -.014, .281]). As such, Hypothesis 2a was rejected.

Hypothesis 2b predicted that LFWS strength mediated the positive relationship between the activation of "LFWS (Hope)" and LI. The activation of "LFWS (Hope)" had a positive relationship with LFWS strength ($b = .336$, t(83) = 2.077, $p < .05$) and LFWS strength was positively associated with LI ($b = .370$, t(82) = 3.60, $p < .001$). The indirect effect from activation of "LFWS (Hope)" to LI was significant ($b = .124$, SE = .072, [95% CI = .005, .283]). Thus, Hypothesis 2b was supported.

Hypothesis 2c predicted that LFWS strength mediated the positive relationship between the activation of "LFWS (Fear)" and LI. The activation of "LFWS (Fear)" did not have a significant relationship with LFWS strength ($p = .777$), but LFWS strength was positively associated with LI ($b = .670$, t(61) = 6.170, $p < .001$). The indirect effect from activation of "LFWS (Fear)" to LI was not significant ($b = .032$, SE = .113, [95% CI = -.207, .246]). Thus, Hypothesis 2c was rejected.

Hypothesis 3a stated that LFWS strength mediated the positive relationship between the activation of "LFWS (Hope and Fear)" and LSE. The activation of "LFWS (Hope and Fear)" did not have a significant relationship with LFWS strength ($p = .341$), but LFWS strength was positively associated with LSE ($b = .262$, t(85) = 3.116, $p < .01$). The indirect effect from activation of "LFWS (Hope and Fear)" to LSE was not significant ($b = .031$, SE = .038, [95% CI = -.038, .117]). As such, Hypothesis 3a was rejected.

Table 3 Descriptive Statistics, Correlations and Reliabilities

Variable	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1 Age	22.46	3.888												
2 Gender[a]	.264	.442	-.041											
3 Leadership experience	1.931	2.480	.176*	-.065										
4 Need for power	3.489	.998	-.109	-.196**	.234**	(.562)								
5 FWS strength (T1)	3.651	.847	.107	.084	.195**	.153*	(.894)							
6 LFWS strength (T1)	3.222	1.047	.079	-.152*	.352**	.653**	.437**	(.938)						
7 LI (T1)	3.441	1.027	.097	-.037	.235**	.467**	.215**	.574**	(.781)					
8 LSE (T1)	3.640	.782	.012	.096	.243**	.524**	.326**	.619**	.451**	(.845)				
9 FWS strength (T2)	3.559	.863	.032	.012	.121	.272**	.702**	.519**	.308**	.326**	(.901)			
10 LFWS strength (T2)	3.286	.990	-.023	-.037	.282**	.572**	.414**	.710**	.491**	.596**	.628**	(.932)		
11 LI (T2)	3.362	1.024	.038	-.017	.222**	.406**	.168*	.514**	.678**	.456**	.321**	.631**	(.809)	
12 LSE (T2)	3.591	.802	.054	.085	.258**	.587**	.383**	.628**	.476**	.776**	.404**	.678**	.559**	(.877)

N = 174; reliabilities are presented in parentheses along the diagonal

*p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001

[a] 0= 'male'; 1= 'female'

FWS = Future Work Self

LFWS strength = Leader Future Work Self strength

LI = Leadership development intention

LSE = Leader self-efficacy

Table 4 One-way ANOVA results for LFWS Strength across "LFWS (Hope and Fear)", "LFWS (Hope)" and "LFWS (Fear)" Conditions

Interventions		MS	df	F	p	η2	Partial η2
1)	"LFWS (Hope and Fear)"	1.029	1	3.063	.084	.034	.034
	Error	.336	87				
2)	"LFWS (Hope)"	2.497	1	4.492	.037	.051	.051
	Error	.556	84				
3)	"LFWS (Fear)"	.049	1	.119	.732	.002	.002
	Error	.411	63				

Notes:

LFWS strength = Leader Future Work Self strength

Table 5 Results from Tests of Direct and Indirect Effects of Activation of Leader Future Work Self Elements on Leadership Development Intention [a]

Variables	LFWS Strength	LI	CI$_{95}$	
	B	**B**	**Lower**	**Upper**
Activation of LFWS ('Hope' and 'Fear') elements	.221	.064		
LFWS Strength		.608***		
Indirect Effect of Activation of LFWS ('Hope' and 'Fear') elements via LFWS Strength		.134	-.014	.281
	B	**B**	**Lower**	**Upper**
Activation of LFWS ('Hope') elements	.336*	-.224		
LFWS Strength		.370***		
Indirect Effect of Activation of LFWS ('Hope') element via LFWS Strength		.124*	.005	.283
	B	**B**	**Lower**	**Upper**
Activation of LFWS ('Fear') elements	.048	.017		
LFWS Strength		.670***		
Indirect Effect of Activation of LFWS ('Fear') element via LFWS Strength		.032	-.207	.246

[a] Unstandardized coefficients are reported.

[b] Coefficient for block variable (direct effect of congruence)

Notes: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

LFWS strength = Leader Future Work Self strength

LI = Leadership development intention

Table 6 Results from Tests of Direct and Indirect Effects of Activation of Leader Future Work Self Elements on Leader Self-efficacy [a]

Variables	LFWS Strength	LSE	CI₉₅	
	B	**B**	**Lower**	**Upper**
Activation of LFWS ('Hope' and 'Fear') elements	.119	-.024		
LFWS Strength		.262**		
Indirect Effect of Activation of LFWS ('Hope' and 'Fear') elements via LFWS Strength		.031	-.038	.117
	B	**B**	**Lower**	**Upper**
Activation of LFWS ('Hope') elements	.344*	-.065		
LFWS Strength		.233**		
Indirect Effect of Activation of LFWS ('Hope') element via LFWS Strength		.080	-.007	.222
	B	**B**	**Lower**	**Upper**
Activation of LFWS ('Fear') elements	.088	-.015		
LFWS Strength		.318**		
Indirect Effect of Activation of LFWS ('Fear') element via LFWS Strength		.028	-.083	.146

[a] Unstandardized coefficients are reported.

[b] Coefficient for block variable (direct effect of congruence)

Notes: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

LFWS strength = Leader Future Work Self strength

LSE = Leader self-efficacy

Hypothesis 3b predicted that LFWS strength mediated the positive relationship between the activation of "LFWS (Hope)" and LSE. The activation of "LFWS (Hope)" was positively associated with LFWS strength ($b = .344$, $t(83) = 2.248$, $p < .05$) and LFWS strength was positively associated with LSE ($b = .233$, $t(82) = 2.892$, $p < .01$). The indirect effect from activation of "LFWS (Hope)" to LSE was not significant ($b = .080$, SE = .060, [95% CI = -.007, .222]). As such, Hypothesis 3b was not supported.

Hypothesis 3c postulated that LFWS strength mediated the positive relationship between the activation of "LFWS (Fear)" and LSE. The activation of "LFWS (Fear)" did not have a significant relationship with LFWS strength ($p = .573$), but LFWS strength was positively associated with LSE ($b = .318$, $t(61) = 3.294$, $p < .01$). The indirect effect from activation of "LFWS (Fear)" to LSE was not significant ($b = .280$, SE = .055, [95% CI = -.083, .146]). Hypothesis 3c was rejected.

I also performed post hoc tests to explore the moderating role of gender in the relationship between the activation of LFWS elements (i.e., "LFWS (Hope and Fear)", "LFWS (Hope)" and "LFWS (Fear)") and LFWS strength based on the hypothesised mediation relationships (i.e., Hypotheses 2a – 3c). Following the literature about the linkage between possible selves and gender, it is asserted that people from different gender groups can hold different views about gender, therefore affecting how they integrate their gender self-perception into their LFWS (Karelaia & Guillen, 2012; Markus et al., 1982). Based on Hypothesis 3c, the post hoc test results showed a significant interaction between gender and "LFWS (Fear)" on LFWS strength ($\beta = -.746$, $p < .05$). It appears that the activation of "LFWS (Fear")" is associated with lower LFWS strength for women but not for men.

3.5. Discussion

Identity-based leadership development research is built upon the idea that current leader identity is a positive identity, and it can predict positive outcomes in leader identity and leadership development (Lanka et al., 2020). However, there is an implicit assumption that leader identity only contains positive elements. Also, it does not fully cover the impact of the future form of leader identity, which can fuel individuals' future-oriented motivations to change their current behaviours to realise this future identity (Hannah et al., 2013). This study addresses these research gaps and develops an adapted concept, LFWS, to illustrate the role of this leader possible self in leadership development.

The concept of LFWS was found to help explain a number of findings. First, imaginative narrative writing is effective in activating "LFWS (Hope)" elements, thereby increasing LFWS strength. It means this intervention can be used to develop LFWS. Second, I have found empirical evidence that LFWS strength can increase individuals' interest in leadership development, when "LFWS (Hope)" is activated. Notably, the consistently positive impact of LFWS strength on LI and LSE suggests that LFWS is a positive leader possible self in general. Third, the activation of "LFWS (Fear)" can likely lower female's LFWS strength but not men's.

3.5.1. **Theoretical Implications**

This research contributes to the literature of possible selves and identity-based leadership development by advancing the understanding of the role of LFWS and the activation of its hope and/or fear elements in leadership development. The first contribution is about the effectiveness of using imaginative narrative writing to activate LFWS elements and develop LFWS. A narrative or a story can be used to represent LFWS's characteristics and the meanings that individuals attach to themselves (Dutton et al., 2010; Gecas, 1982). A self-

narrative is argued to help express and construct an identity because it can link an individual's past, present and future (Ibarra & Barbulescu, 2010; Josselson, 2004; McAdams, 2008; Pentland, 1999). This technique can facilitate the ability of individuals to express their thoughts and feelings about personal and meaningful subjects, and it has often been used in psychology and health research experiments due to its associations with health and psychological outcomes (Frattaroli, 2006).

In the arena of possible selves research, scholars integrate narrative writing with best possible self imagination intervention, and have found supporting evidence regarding the effectiveness of this intervention in association with increased optimism, improved health and well-being (King, 2001; Loveday et al., 2018; Seligman et al., 2005; Sheldon & Lyubomirsky, 2006). Moreover, scholars apply this intervention in FWS research to activate the imagination of participants' positive future work selves, and the activated salient FWS is claimed to lead to proactive behaviours in work settings (Lin et al., 2016; Strauss et al., 2012; Strauss & Parker, 2018; Taber & Blankemeyer, 2015). In line with previous research adopting imaginative narrative writing as an intervention, results from this study also show that this type of cognitive processing intervention can help individuals understand and gain insights about their future selves as leaders (Frattaroli, 2006). This intervention effectively activates the "hope" elements in LFWS and increases LFWS's strength. As such, an LFWS with increased strength enhances individuals' intention to engage in leadership development.

Writing about positive and negative topics is argued to facilitate the integration of individuals' broader experiences and help them better understand themselves. This technique is claimed to improve their awareness about the situations they enter and foster the self-regulation of their motivations and behaviours (King, 2001). Counter to expectations, the impact of activating "LFWS (Hope and Fear)" on LFWS strength was not significant. Literature suggests that the inclusion of hope and fear elements can provide individuals with

insight into the situations they enter (Lord et al., 2011). When individuals consider both their hopes and fears about their possible selves in the future, this information is expected to help them have a more accurate evaluation of the distance between their current selves and possible selves (vanDellen & Hoyle, 2008). However, the results from Hypothesis 2a and 3a indicated that envisioning "LFWS (Hope and Fear)" did not cause any effect on LI or LSE via LFWS strength.

The non-significant result of activating "LFWS (Hope and Fear)" could be due to two reasons. First, it is about the linkage between fear elements and the perceived distance between current leader selves and LFWS. The average age difference between the current and envisioned age of participants was 12 years approximately. This is not surprising because the participants were instructed to imagine their future selves as leaders and go as far ahead into the future as possible. Notably, possible selves in the distant future are more centred on goals than in the near future (Hoyle & Sherrill, 2006). Participants might use the hope elements in LFWS to outline what they can do to avoid the fear elements (Oyserman & Markus, 1990). In other words, the positive impact of activated fear elements is more indirect and less impactful than the hope ones.

Second, fear elements can be associated with worries and threats, and individuals can find it challenging to stay focused on a particular direction to avoid feared LFWS from becoming reality (Elliot et al., 1997; Strauss & Kelly, 2016). As such, fear elements in LFWS can be less effective in regulating individuals' motivations and behaviours in leadership development (Bindl & Parker, 2011; Strauss et al., 2012). For these reasons, the positive impact of "LFWS (Hope and Fear)" on LFWS strength is not significant.

In sum, the activation of "LFWS (Hope)" elements increased LFWS strength. This finding supports the argument that envisioning LFWS hope elements can increase the

strength of LFWS because the future selves images become clear, and by thinking about them more often, LFWS can be developed over time (Higgins et al., 1982; Strauss et al., 2012). The development of LFWS in identity-based leadership development is hence an important factor because leadership skills can be associated with the changes in one's LFWS (Miscenko et al., 2017). As such, this research provides insights into the development of LFWS from a practical perspective.

The second contribution is regarding the critical role of LFWS strength in leadership development. As reported in the results of Hypotheses 2b and 3b, when the "hope" elements of LFWS were activated, they led to increased LFWS strength. The increased LFWS strength further enhanced individuals' intention to engage themselves in leadership development (Hypothesis 2b). These results align with the arguments mentioned above that the hoped-for LFWS is perceived as a valuable possible self and can promote favourable self-views (Dutton et al., 2010; Roberts et al., 2009). It increases LFWS strength, led by the activation of hope elements, fuelling respondents' approach motivation to actualise the desired LFWS (Lord & Brown, 2004). Individuals then show a higher interest in taking on leadership development opportunities, aiming to reduce the distance between their current leader selves and desired LFWS (Sessa et al., 2018). Based on this self-evaluation, they have a better sense of their strengths and limitations related to the possibility of becoming their envisioned LFWS (Cross & Markus, 1991). In this vein, this perceived possibility can invoke an intention to develop themselves and attain this possible self (Avolio & Vogelgesang, 2012; Cross & Markus, 1991; Lord & Brown, 2004).

However, the mediation relationship between the activation of "LFWS (Hope)" and LSE through LFWS strength was not significant. This may be because believing that one has the required skills and abilities for attaining their LFWS can only be a starting point for strengthening one's LSE (Dwyer, 2019). To further confirm these beliefs, it may also be

necessary to have multiple sources of information about the abilities and resources they can access to realise their LFWS (Hannah et al., 2012; McDaniel & DiBella-McCarthy, 2012). In other words, LFWS can only be a partial source of reference that people can use to evaluate their leadership capabilities; it appears that they also need different sources of performance feedback to enhance their LSE.

Despite the fact that this study failed to find support for the mediating effect of LFWS strength in the relationship of "LFWS (Fear)" and LI/LSE, it unveils an insight into an unexpected aspect, as the exploratory post hoc analyses have indicated that women, but not men, may have lower LFWS strength if "LFWS (Fear)" elements are activated. This is crucial, since it shows that the female respondents may perceive a lower possibility of becoming future leaders when they think of related worries and concerns. There may be two possible reasons for this. First, female respondents' self-view of their gender may be incongruent with their perceptions of leadership roles, which are traditionally seen as masculine roles (Eagly & Karau, 2002). Women who have internalised gender stereotypical self-views would use these internalised gender beliefs to judge their own behaviours (Bussey & Bandura, 2004). They are inclined to perceive themselves as feminine, and that they demonstrate behaviours which are congruent to these perceptions for feeling good about themselves (Eagly et al., 2004). However, perception of leaders is predominately associated with masculine qualities and women can be seen as not possessing the required masculine characteristics of leaders (Dwivedi et al., 2021; Koenig et al., 2011). If they cannot see a connection between the LFWS and their current identity (such as gender identity), they are likely to perceive the LFWS as a possible self that is not realisable. As such, their LFWS is lowered because of such concerns.

Second, LFWS is just one of multiple possible selves people hold, and these are all related to different social roles people can hold in the future, such as caregivers or economic

providers (Brown & Diekman, 2010; Oyserman & James, 2011). Beliefs about gender are an essential element in one's self-concept (Markus et al., 1982); individuals develop gender stereotypes based on these beliefs and evaluate the degree to which a person (himself/herself or others) demonstrates masculine or feminine characteristics (Powell & Butterfield, 2017). These stereotypes are individuals' perceptions of how men and women should behave, such as that men should be competitive and decisive, while women should be emotionally sensitive and considerate (Abele, 2003; Diekman & Eagly, 2000; Heilman, 2012). As such, women are more likely to see women (including themselves) as caregivers and men as economic providers (Croft et al., 2019). Notably, these expectations of gender stereotypes are integrated into possible selves, and can likely affect individuals' possible selves when they envision their distant and abstract future (Croft et al., 2019). Thus, female respondents may envision their family-related possible selves in a role that involves caregiving. They may have concerns about the conflict between this family-focused possible self and LFWS, and such a sense of incongruence would make them think LFWS is not a possible, attainable self due to the unmanageable difficulty (Oyserman & James, 2009). Therefore, the activated "LFWS (Fear)" has lowered their LFWS strength.

3.5.2. **Practical Implications**

The influence of activating hope elements in LFWS and the positive impact of LFWS strength on LI contribute to a growing understanding of possible selves' function in identity-based leadership development. Firstly, because leader identity development can sustain one's interest and motivation in becoming a leader (Vogel et al., 2020), it is essential to include LFWS in leadership development and imaginative narrative writing can be used as an intervention to develop this identity. Compared to leader identity, the future-oriented nature

and positive valence of LFWS strength shown in this study represent pathways for individuals' development as future leaders (Kreiner & Sheep, 2009). LFWS provides individuals guidance and facilitates self-evaluation according to the aspirational standard (Cross & Markus, 1991). In particular, when one envisions LFWS with detailed hope elements associated with this possible self, this information improves people's LFWS strength. Consequently, it impacts their behaviours for realising their LFWS.

The motivation derived from this self-evaluation mechanism implies the drive for growth toward the positive identity of striving (Kreiner & Sheep, 2009). It means that activating LFWS hope elements through imaginative narrative writing can facilitate individuals' self-awareness about the gap between current leader selves and hoped-for LFWS, thus regulating their motivations regarding the realisation of this desired possible self (King, 2001). In essence, it is a leadership and leader identity development process with a growth approach.

Building on the suggested growth approach, it is advisable to use the activation of LFWS hope elements in leadership development. The results from this study suggest that positive information (i.e., hope) is beneficial for enhancing one's LFWS strength. Importantly, imaginative narrative writing is shown as an effective intervention to activate the "LFWS (Hope)" element. To facilitate the development of LFWS effectively, organisations can use this intervention to enhance employees' self-awareness and gain a deeper understanding of their hoped-for LFWS (King, 2001).

3.6. Limitations and Future Research

This study has some limitations that should be noted. First, visual methods can be integrated with imaginative narrative writing to improve the activation impact. Possible

selves are basically rooted in personalised imagined images (Ruvolo & Markus, 1992).

LFWS is a distant possible self, and it is typically more abstract than a near possible self

(Croft et al., 2019). Therefore, visual methods, such as using drawings, pictures and

photographs, can help to make abstract ideas more concrete and explicit (Schyns et al., 2011;

Loveday et al., 2018). Drawing is especially beneficial for eliciting non-textual and spatial

forms of representation (e.g., a future image as a leader) (Packard & Conway, 2006).

Moreover, it includes an emotional aspect that can help individuals unveil their implicit

thoughts (Schyns et al., 2013). In addition to imaginative narrative writing, drawings can also

provide an additional source of data to be analysed, and they can facilitate the richness of

data and usefulness of findings (Klenke et al., 2016; Packard & Conway, 2006).

Another limitation is that this study's results may be limited in generalisation because

these findings were based on a student sample with similar demographic characteristics (e.g.,

age, education, little working and leadership experience).This particular student sample was

appropriate for this research because all the student participants had been exposed to

leadership experiences (i.e., holding leadership roles in work or non-work related

organisations (such as student unions or voluntary organizations), meaning they had formed a

certain extent of leader self-views (Miscenko et al., 2017). This suggests these students can

envision LFWS as working population, therefore implying the student sample matches the

population of interest to my research (i.e., people who have LFWS) (Rietzschel et al., 2017).

However, leader identity formation can happen across one's lifespan and can form before

taking on a formal leadership role (Liu et al., 2020). Moreover, leader identity is also

malleable when individuals acquire more information (e.g., leadership experience and

knowledge) to make sense of this identity (Lord & Hall, 2005). Furthermore, LFWS is also

malleable, as identity is sensitive to context, and it can be revised gradually when new

information and experiences emerge (Markus & Wurf, 1987). Therefore, it is worthwhile for

future research to investigate the impact of LFWS on a working population with a longitudinal design to realise the changes of LFWS during the leadership development process (Miscenko et al., 2017).

3.7. Conclusion

In summary, the present study results indicated that LFWS strength's compelling effect enhances individuals' interest in leadership development. Specifically, when hope elements are activated, they are effective in enhancing individuals' LFWS strength. Counter to expectations, activation of fear elements in LFWS does not increase women's LFWS strength. The negative impact of activated LFWS fear elements sheds light on the how women are impacted by gender incongruent perceptions of leaders. This study's findings also demonstrate the effectiveness of using imaginative narrative writing as an intervention in possible self research. Moreover, the research outcomes also cast light on integrating LFWS and the activation of its hope elements in identity-based leadership development practices.

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Chapter 4

The Impact of Congruence between Implicit Leadership Theories (ILT) and Implicit Self Theories (IST) on Leader Self-efficacy (LSE): The Role of Gender

Abstract

The supply of leaders continues to garner attention from the leadership development field, yet critical questions remain regarding what makes people feel able to lead and step up to take on leadership roles. This chapter draws on Implicit Self-Theories (ISTs) and Implicit Leadership Theories (ILTs) to conceptualise the congruence between the self-views as leaders and the characteristics people expect of leaders. Moreover, the study investigates the role of gender in the relationship between IST/ILT congruence and Leader Self-Efficacy (LSE). Results on IST/ILT congruence reveal individuals' LSE can be affected by different forms of congruence and incongruence. Also, the results unveil gender differences in the relationship between IST/ILT congruence and LSE. Findings are discussed in the light of ILT, IST and gender theories, along with their limitations and future research directions.

4.1. Introduction

The global business environment has become increasingly complex and the important role of leaders is reflected in a recent human capital trends survey in 2021, where 60% of the senior executives surveyed emphasised that leadership was a top priority for preparing and supporting their organisations to tackle the challenging future (Volini et al., 2020). While organisations aspire to increase their organisation's leadership capabilities through leadership development, there has been a growing shortage of leaders in organisations (DeRue & Myers, 2014; Luria et al., 2019). This highlights an overlooked issue that individuals need to make a choice to pursue leadership in the first place (Quigley, 2012). This means we need to understand what makes people put themselves forward for leadership roles and developing themselves as leaders, so that organisations can manage their potential leader pool better (Day et al., 2021; Schyns et al., 2020).

A key reason that can motivate an individual to get engaged in a leadership role is their perceived confidence in their leadership abilities – or their Leader Self-efficacy (LSE) (Chan & Drasgow, 2001). Having leaders who have high LSE can help organisations deal with the challenging business environment, because LSE can improve overall leadership effectiveness (Quigley, 2012). Most importantly, LSE allows individuals to recognise a connection between their leadership roles and their leader self-views, which can enhance their engagement in leadership (Courtright et al., 2014). In this vein, we need to explore further what may be the predictors that facilitate the enhancement of people's LSE for taking on leadership responsibilities (Foti et al., 2012).

Implicit leadership theories (ILTs) provide suitable concepts for understanding LSE, because people use ILTs to shape their perceptions about leaders and they use ILTs as a benchmark for interpreting their own leadership capabilities, and ultimately generating their

own leadership behaviours (Leung & Sy, 2018; Lord et al., 2020). ILTs refer to people's perceptions (lay stereotypes) about leaders' characteristics and qualities (Lord et al., 1984). Past research has focused on different kinds of prototypes; for example, perceived characteristics and skills that ideal, effective or typical leaders possess (Li et al., 2020; Schyns & Schilling, 2011; Tavares et al., 2018). Such leadership characteristics include being dedicated, disciplined, hardworking, strong, sensitive, tyrannous and masculine (Den Hartog et al., 1999; Epitropaki & Martin, 2004; Offermann et al., 1994). However, these characteristics can vary depending on the context and culture (Schyns & Schilling, 2011), and even across time (Shondrick et al., 2010). Scholars argue that ILTs are associated with whether individuals perceive themselves as able to lead, or whether they are willing to lead and take up a leadership role. Indeed, research provides some evidence for the relationship between ILTs and leader self-efficacy (Schyns et al., 2020).

As DeRue & Ashford (2010) put it, individuals initiate the assumption of leadership roles based on how they perceive a match between their self-views as leaders and their ILTs. As such, scholars have recently discussed the role of the congruence and incongruence between ILT and how an individual perceives themselves (Implicit self-theories (ISTs); Schyns et al., 2020). The basic premise of congruence is a match between one's perception of an ideal leader and the perception of one's own leadership characteristics (DeRue & Ashford, 2010). In other words, the more individuals perceive a match between their self-view as leaders (ISTs) and their overall perception of leaders (ILTs), the more likely they might claim leadership roles (Schyns et al., 2020). In this respect, the IST/ILT congruence[3] between ISTs and ILTs is relevant to LSE because such congruence can signal to individuals that they are able to meet the perceived requirements of the leadership role, which can boost their confidence in pursuing leadership positions (Guillén et al., 2015).

[3] I use the term congruence to refer to the degrees of congruence and incongruence for easier reading

In a recent review paper published by Shen and Joseph (2021), the authors have asserted that gender seems to influence and shape leadership processes, and that a joint consideration of the relationship between gender and leadership is deemed necessary. ILT literature can shed light on this subject. ILTs are perceptions developed through interaction with contextual elements, such as gender (Braun et al., 2018). Because people generally see leadership roles as masculine and hold stereotypical views about gender (for example, men should be masculine and women should be feminine), the interaction between these perceptions forms leadership stereotypes that are more aligned with male stereotypes; for example, that leaders should demonstrate masculine characteristics of dominance and ambition (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Heilman, 2001). Essentially, these masculine perceptions associated with leadership roles still persist in the society and still impact people's perceptions of leadership (Eagly et al., 2020), and thus their ILTs (Foti et al., 2012).

The role of gender is also related to IST, because a focal person's gender can impact how they view themselves as a leader. Individuals develop their knowledge about their gender roles during childhood; they develop gender perceptions to judge whether a person (themselves or others) displays gender-appropriate characteristics according to their perceptions (Bandura, 1977b; Hoyt & Johnson, 2011). It is also claimed that individuals' perceptions about their gender can have an impact on their self-views as leaders (Hoyland et al., 2021). This is because one's leader identity can be related to self-views (such as gender self-views) (Ibarra et al., 2010). Individuals who have internalised gender self-views will behave in congruence with these beliefs; for example, women who possess feminine gender self-views are likely to view themselves as feminine leaders (Hoyt & Johnson, 2011; Mahon & Greenwald, 2018).

Given the interaction between gender, ILTs and ISTs, men and women are likely to have a different perceived match between their ISTs and ILTs (Hoyt & Johnson, 2011).

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Men's masculine gender self-views would lead them to see themselves as masculine leaders, and they would have a higher congruence with the masculine perception of leaders (Koenig et al., 2011). In contrast, women would be less inclined to view themselves as masculine leaders because this is not congruent with their gender self-view (Foti et al., 2012; Koenig et al., 2011; Mahon & Greenwald, 2018). As such, their feminine leader self-views would have a lower congruence with the masculine perception of leaders. They would have lower confidence as leaders due to this incongruence between their ISTs and ILTs (Hoyland et al., 2021). Therefore, further investigation into the relationship of IST/ILT congruence and LSE for men and women is necessary (Foti et al., 2012).

To address the limitations of past research, I propose to examine the impact of IST/ILT congruence on LSE. I also explore the role of gender in affecting the relationship between IST/ILT congruence and LSE. This research contributes to the ILT, gender and LSE literature by clarifying the impact of IST/ILT congruence on LSE according to four scenarios (i.e., high IST/high ILT, low IST/low ILT, high IST/low ILT, low IST/low ILT). Recent research has started to examine how the concept of self (i.e., IST) relates to ILT and its resulting association with people's motivation to lead (e.g., Guillén et al., 2015; Schyns et al., 2020). I extend this line of research by integrating the theoretical arguments regarding IST/ILT congruence's effect on LSE and the role of gender in this relationship. Practically, these findings can feed into suggestions on how organisations can integrate IST/ILT congruence and gender perspectives to develop individuals' LSE. As such, organisations can consider promoting feminine and masculine leadership characteristics of both male and female leaders to revise the gender stereotypical perception. This gender neutral approach can lead to women's feeling of being included and higher confidence at work (Martin & Phillips, 2017). Moreover, practitioners can make use of the IST/ILT congruence scenarios to develop a more robust diagnosis of people's self-perceived confidence in their leadership capabilities,

which would help improve their interest in pursuing leadership and motivation to lead (Chan & Drasgow, 2001; Reichard et al., 2017).

4.2. Hypotheses Development

There are several stages in the development of hypotheses. In the sections 4.2.1 and 4.2.2, I will introduce the background of ILT, IST and concept of congruence. Section 4.2.3 includes the development of IST/ILT congruence and its relationship with LSE. An IST/ILT model with four congruence scenarios will be displayed and discussed. I will further explore and elaborate the role of gender in the relationship of IST/ILT congruence and LSE in section 4.2.4.

4.2.1. **Implicit Leadership Theories (ILT) and Implicit Self Theories (IST)**

The study of ILT content and structure has received considerable attention from ILT scholars and the most extensive theoretical groundwork of this line of research was undertaken by Robert Lord and his colleagues (e.g., Lord et al., 1984; Lord & Maher, 2002; Phillips & Lord, 1986). The basic premise of their studies was that perceivers (e.g., followers) categorise the targeted person (e.g., their supervisors) by comparing them to the prototypes of a category (e.g., leader vs non-leader; ideal vs typical leader). Offermann et al. (1994) studied the differentiation between the categories of leaders and effective leaders. Their studies defined the content of ILTs and developed a list of 41 characteristics for assessing ILTs. These characteristics were categorised under eight dimensions: sensitivity, dedication, charisma, attractiveness, intelligence, strength, tyranny, and masculinity.

Based on the work of Offermann et al. (1994), Epitropaki and Martin (2004) further validated the findings and found six factors (i.e., sensitivity, intelligence, dedication,

dynamism, tyranny, and masculinity). A 21-item measurement of ILT was developed according to these six dimensions. Sensitivity includes the attributes of being understanding, sincere and helpful; intelligence refers to being intelligent, knowledgeable, educated and clever; dedication includes being motivated, dedicated and hard-working; dynamism consists of the attributes of being energetic, strong and dynamic; tyranny includes domineering, being pushy, manipulative, loud, conceited and selfish; and masculinity refers to behaving as masculine and male. They also categorised sensitivity, intelligence, dedication and dynamism as prototypes which are effective and favourable leadership attributes. Tyranny and masculinity were categorised as anti-prototypes which are ineffective and unfavourable leadership attributes.

Replication of masculinity was not found in Schyns and Schilling (2011)'s study, but they discovered eight additional dimensions (i.e., being pleasant, a team player, communicative, extraverted, organised, conscientious, honest, and open for new experiences). In terms of content and structure of ILTs, the common findings from previous studies are that leadership prototypes consist of both positive and negative characteristics, and some of these are recurring themes found in different studies (e.g., sensitivity, intelligence, dedication and tyranny) (Schyns et al., 2020). Regardless, the differing results indicate that ILTs include different dimensions and that the nature and extent of endorsement of the dimensions seem to vary from one person to another (Foti et al., 2012) and across social and contextual features (e.g., gender, culture and profession) (Lord et al., 2001; Lord & Dinh, 2014).

Another key concept of ILTs is the differentiation of people's perceptions of "typical" versus "ideal" leaders (Junker & van Dick, 2014). I have taken the approach to ILTs that assesses an individual's perceptions of an ideal leader's characteristics. ILTs are cognitive categories developed according to prototypes, i.e., the most typical examples or the most ideal types (Gabora et al., 2008; Lord et al., 2020). While people use both typical and ideal

prototypes to distinguish leaders from non-leaders (Lord et al., 2020), ideal leadership prototypes are goal-directed based prototypes which can serve a particular goal related to the category better than the prototype of what is "typical" (such as feeling more able to lead within the leadership context) (Barsalou, 1985; Junker & van Dick, 2014). Therefore, the ideal leader concept is adopted in this research because the broad research question of this study is to examine the impact of IST/ILT congruence on predicting LSE (i.e., the goal of feeling confident to lead).

Despite the varying contents of ILTs studied in previous research, most ILT research has focused on examining the match between perceivers' perception of leaders and leaders' displayed characteristics in the social influence process because these are at the heart of leadership processes in organisations (Foti et al., 2017). A key argument about the role of ILTs in leadership is that they consist of individuals' expectations and assumptions about leaders' characteristics, skills and qualities (Lord et al., 1984). Although these leadership perceptions may not accurately represent actual leadership behaviours, they are used by perceivers to evaluate and differentiate leaders and non-leaders, or effective leaders and ineffective leaders (Den Hartog et al., 1999). However, recent research claims that the ILTs that individuals hold are not only used to evaluate others as leaders, but also to judge themselves (Guillén et al., 2015), because people's perceptions about the subject (e.g., leadership) are related to their self-concepts (Markus et al., 1985). Scholars claim that an ILT is related to one's leader identity, meaning one's self-view as a leader (Day & Dragoni, 2015; Zaar et al., 2019). The ILTs represent people's expectations and assumptions about the characteristics, skills and qualities leaders should have and these perceptions influence their self-perceptions of leadership (Hoyland et al., 2021). As a result, people develop a view of themselves as leaders and this guides how they think of their leadership characteristics, skills and qualities as leaders (Day & Harrison, 2007).

4.2.2. **IST/ILT Congruence**

The congruence between IST and ILT is crucial for individuals to determine if they feel comfortable in taking on leadership roles (Schyns et al., 2020). The self-concept plays an important role in social perceptions because people's perceptions of others are related to their perceptions of themselves (Markus et al., 1985). Moreover, people's perceptions about the leadership role are also regulated by their expectations related to that role (Lord & Maher, 2002) and by their needs to match those expectations with their sense of self (Ibarra et al., 2010; Lord & Hall, 2005). Therefore, the connection of self-perceptions and ideal perceptions of others is developed through social comparison (e.g., self versus ideal others) (Rus et al., 2010). People engage in social comparisons because they want to have a clear self-evaluation of themselves as leaders, and they achieve this aim by comparing their self-perceived leadership qualities (ISTs) with their view of ideal leaders (ILTs) (Diel et al., 2021). As such, the gap between these two types of perceptions functions as a key reference point for people's self-evaluation and can regulate people's motivations and behaviours in a particular context they are engaged in (e.g., leadership) (Van Hook & Higgins, 1988).

Due to this type of self-evaluation, people may evaluate their own leadership abilities by comparing their attributes to their ideal leader prototypes, thus influencing whether they want to be leaders or not (Zaar et al., 2019). For example, the outcome of self-evaluation can impact people's engagement in leader development (Schyns et al., 2020), their motivation to lead, and their ultimate efficacy in leading others (Guillén et al., 2015; Lord et al., 2020). Contrarily, people can possibly choose not to take on leadership roles because they perceive a mismatch between their self-perceptions as leaders (ISTs) and their perceptions about leaders (ILTs) (DeRue & Myers, 2014). Adding further complexity to the mismatch situation, people

can have higher perceived confidence when their ISTs exceed their ILTs (Schyns et al., 2020). Given the dynamic influence of IST/ILT congruence in leadership, it is vital to understand the IST/ILT congruence because its helps people to determine whether they feel confident about taking on leadership responsibilities (Schyns et al., 2020).

4.2.3. Implicit Leadership Theories (ILTs) and Implicit Self Theories (ISTs) Congruence and Leader Self-Efficacy (LSE)

Bandura (1977) introduced the construct of self-efficacy and defined it as one's self-perceived belief that one possesses personal characteristics and resources to meet task-specific demands. It is critical in helping people navigate challenging situations and staying resilient, as it affects their goals, thinking patterns, persistence and stress responses (Bandura, 1977a). This effect is especially important for leaders, because effective leaders need to devote greater efforts to fulfil their leadership responsibilities and persist longer when faced with difficulties (Ng et al., 2008). With this effect in mind, researchers connected self-efficacy beliefs to the leadership domain and developed the concept of leader self-efficacy (LSE) (Anderson et al., 2008; Paglis, 2010). LSE is defined as one's perceived confidence in their own knowledge, skills and abilities (KSAs) related to leading followers (Hannah et al., 2012). It extends beyond simply possessing leadership KSAs, as it represents one's judgement and confidence in the ability to successfully exert leadership and enact the required leadership capabilities (Kwok et al., 2020; Paglis & Green, 2002). Moreover, self-efficacy (SE) can also be a crucial facet of successful leadership, because effective leaders need SE to be strong-minded, resilient, goal-oriented, resourceful, and good at solving problems (Locke, 1999).

Extensive research into LSE has illustrated the positive relationship between individual characteristics and LSE, such as extraversion, conscientiousness, openness to experience, emotional stability (Chan & Drasgow, 2001; Courtright et al., 2014; Hendricks & Payne, 2007; Ng et al., 2008), cognitive ability (Quigley, 2012) and emotional intelligence (Semadar et al., 2006). Studies have also examined the effect of contextual factors on LSE, such as perceived controllability of organisations (Wood & Bandura, 1989); organisational commitment and followers' perception of change (Paglis & Green, 2002); position in a social network (Liou & Daly, 2020; Vancouver et al., 2014); working relationships with others (Paglis & Green, 2002; Trépanier et al., 2012); and job autonomy (Dwyer, 2019; Ng et al., 2008). Although there have been different approaches to studying LSE, using the self-concept to explain LSE will contribute to a fuller picture of what makes people feel more able to lead (Hannah et al., 2008). This is because LSE is a part of self, and is a result of self-judgment about one's leadership skills and capabilities for leading others (Hannah et al., 2008). Research has also suggested the relevance of self-schemas and self-identity to the perceived beliefs in one's leadership capabilities (Emery et al., 2011; Hall & Lord, 1995; Lord et al., 1999; Lord & Brown, 2004).

As Hannah et al. (2008) put it, people's perceptions can predict variations in their LSE and this claim can be well explained from ILT and IST perspectives. From the ILT perspective, people hold different perceptions of leadership according to the context they are engaged in, such as culture, organisation and previous leadership experience (Offermann & Coats, 2018). For example, ILTs in China were found to be different from those suggested by Offermann et al.'s (1994) results in the United States (Ling et al., 2000). People's ILTs can also vary depending on their exposure to different types of leaders, such as business versus religious leaders or effective versus ineffective leaders (Shondrick et al., 2010). These varied leadership perceptions would, in turn, affect their self-perceived beliefs of their capabilities as

leaders because ILTs are developed based on social comparisons. These comparisons between the self and prototypes have varied reference points (ILTs) and can influence people's self-evaluations of their leadership competence differently (Guillén et al., 2015; Hoyt & Simon, 2011). From the IST perspective, leadership self-views are how people see themselves as leaders, thus reflecting their beliefs about their own leadership capabilities (Emery et al., 2011; Hall & Lord, 1995; Lord et al., 1999; Lord & Brown, 2004). This is vital to LSE because LSE represents one's self-judgement of one's competence in respect of leadership behaviours (Ng et al., 2008). Moreover, people who see themselves as leaders are more likely to act as leaders, because they regard themselves as possessing suitable leadership capabilities (Hannah et al., 2009).

Taking the impact of ILT and IST into consideration, the congruence of IST and ILT meaningfully affects the degree to which people feel able to take on leadership roles (DeRue & Ashford, 2010). This is because people aim to have an accurate self-evaluation of their own abilities (i.e., IST) by engaging in social comparison with others whom they view as having similarities on an assessed dimension (i.e., ILT) (Diel et al., 2021). Based on such self-evaluation, people will feel more able to lead when they perceive a congruence between their leadership capabilities and their ILTs (Hoyland et al., 2021). Contrarily, an IST/ILT incongruence in which IST is lower than ILT could mean the person feels inadequate in their leadership capacities compared to their perceptions of leadership and, if this discrepancy is too large, they would feel demotivated and less comfortable in taking on leadership roles (DeRue & Myers, 2014; Diel et al., 2021). Conversely, a perceived incongruence between IST and ILT where ILT is lower than IST may mean the person believes they have a more advanced level of leadership capacities compared to their perceptions of ideal leadership, thus enhancing their perceived confidence as leaders (Schyns et al., 2020). In general, both IST

and ILT can have impacts on LSE separately, but the congruence of IST and ILT can determine their effect on LSE with reference to the results of the person's self-evaluation.

4.2.4. The Role of Gender in the Relationship between IST/ILT Congruence and LSE

Previous research has examined differences between men's and women's leadership behaviours as perceived by others (Cuadrado et al., 2015; Eagly et al., 2020; Eagly & Karau, 2002; Koenig et al., 2011; Powell & Butterfield, 2015). This highlights an imbalance between the genders regarding the stereotypical perceptions of leaders, and that there is still much to be investigated about the impact of this imbalance.

The research question I am aiming to explore is rooted in the match or mismatch between implicit-self theories and implicit-leadership theories, to which I investigate how this comparison influences people's perceived efficacy of leading. Gender is particularly relevant to this comparison because of people's association of leadership with masculinity and the effect this has on their perception of leaders (Hoyt & Burnette, 2013; Koenig et al., 2011). The predominately masculine perception of leaders impacts men and women differently, and women are less likely to be associated with leader roles due to their feminine characteristics (Eagly et al., 2014). Importantly, due to the impact of this pervasive male-manager perception, women are less likely than men to perceive themselves as prototypical leaders, influencing them to lose confidence and underperform at work (Foti et al., 2012; Shen & Joseph, 2021). Given the importance of gender in my research, I will discuss the relationship between gender and ILTs and ISTs in detail in Sections 4.2.4.1 and 4.2.4.2. In Section 4.2.4.3, I will elaborate on the role of gender in the relationship between IST/ILT congruence and LSE.

4.2.4.1. The Relationship between ILTs and Gender

The development of ILTs involves interactions between leadership perceptions and gender (Braun et al., 2018). Scholars suggest that leadership perceptions interact with contextual elements (such as people's gender, past leadership experience or culture) and these elements shape how people perceive leaders (Foti et al., 2008; Lord et al., 2001). The interaction between leadership perceptions and such contextual elements shapes people's prototypes of leaders (ILTs). Thus, perceivers utilise their ILTs to distinguish leaders from non-leaders (Braun et al., 2018; Den Hartog et al., 1999). Notably, gender is one of the contextual elements that can influence leadership perceptions (Hogue & Lord, 2007; Johnson et al., 2008; Lord et al., 2001; Scott & Brown, 2006). ILTs represent perceivers' expectations and assumptions about leaders' characteristics and capacities (Lord et al., 1984). Historically, agentic qualities (normally associated with masculinity) that are expected from leaders are often not expected from women due to stereotypes around femininity (Eagly & Karau, 2002). Thus, leadership stereotypes are strongly associated with masculinity, and this is best known as the "think-manager-think male" effect (Koenig et al., 2011; Schein, 1973). It means that people are more likely to hold perceptions about leaders as masculine and agentic than as communal and feminine; and their perceptions of leaders are seen as similar to males but not as similar to females (Koenig et al., 2011). However, some ILT scholars hold different views and claim that ILTs do not differ across gender groups (Deal & Stevenson, 1998; Nye & Forsyth, 1991; Offermann et al., 1994). It is argued that gender as a leadership characteristic may even be completely irrelevant to ILTs (Offermann & Coats, 2018).

However, the role of gender in ILTs is still worth exploring (Epitropaki & Martin, 2004), as the mixed findings about the relationship of ILTs and gender may be clarified by

investigating the sub-dimensions of ILT separately. Men and women may have similar perceptions about prototypical leaders, but men and women may also endorse different traits that they perceive as leaders' characteristics. For example, men endorse the traits of aggressiveness and competitiveness as prototypical leader characteristics more than women do, whereas women endorse sensitivity to others' feelings, being helpful and self-confident more than men do (Deal & Stevenson, 1998). Therefore, in the present study, we sought to expand on this work and investigate such dimensions of leadership perceptions separately, because scholars emphasise the importance of understanding the impact of specific leadership characteristics on the formation of leadership perceptions (Tavares et al., 2018). Essentially, an aggregated composite that includes all the dimensions would not be helpful in clarifying the relative importance of each individual IST/ILT dimension in predicting leadership outcomes (Schyns et al., 2020).

4.2.4.2. The Relationship of ISTs and Gender

Similar to the development of ILTs, the development of ISTs is also related to gender (Hoyt & Johnson, 2011). People develop the knowledge of their gender when they grow up and this reflects their understanding of themselves in terms of culturally embedded concepts of gender (Zheng et al., 2018). Based on such gender knowledge, they develop gender schemas which guide their interpretation of incoming information related to their gender (Hoyt & Johnson, 2011).

Similarly to ILT, which reflects prototypes (i.e., schemas) related to the leadership domain (Zaar et al., 2019), a gender schema is also an essential component of the self-concept (Markus et al., 1982). On the basis of these gender schemas, people form gender stereotypes, and these beliefs are about the degree to which a person (it can be oneself or

others) possesses characteristics of masculinity or femininity (Powell & Butterfield, 2017). In other words, people's gender facilitates the development of their perceptions about males and females, and they perceive themselves and others through the lenses of these perceptions. Importantly, these gender stereotypes prescribe how they should behave (Heilman, 2012). For example, agentic behaviour (e.g., inclination to be in charge, being competent, task-focused and decisive) is usually understood as a characteristic of males, while communal behaviour (e.g., demonstrating emotional sensitivity, being collaborative, considerate and obedient) is often seen as characteristic of females (Abele, 2003; Diekman & Eagly, 2000; Heilman, 2012).

Applying the notion of gender stereotypes in leadership perception, Ely et al. (2011) assert that invisible culturally-embedded gender stereotypes shape people's perceptions of what makes a leader. Given the cultural masculinity of leadership stereotypes and overvaluation of masculine leadership qualities, females are less likely than males to view themselves as prototypical leaders (Foti et al., 2012; Koenig et al., 2011; Mahon & Greenwald, 2018). There is also evidence showing that gender stereotyping of leadership is harmful to women's self-perceptions and leadership aspirations (Hoyt & Blascovich, 2007; Hoyt & Simon, 2011). In essence, the interaction of gender self-views and leadership perceptions influences a person's self-view as a leader (IST).

4.2.4.3. IST/ILT Congruence and LSE: A Gender Perspective

Given the role of gender in the development of ILTs and ISTs, it is expected that gender would have an impact on the relationship between IST/ILT congruence and LSE. Gender would likely affect the IST/ILT congruence due to the interaction between leadership perceptions and gender stereotypes. As discussed in Section 4.2.3, IST/ILT congruence

reflects the social comparison people make between themselves as leaders (ISTs) and their perceptions of ideal leaders (ILTs), and this helps people to generate accurate self-evaluations of their leadership capabilities (Diel et al., 2021). Indeed, people will feel more comfortable to claim leadership roles when they perceive a congruence between their perceived leadership capacities (ISTs) and the ideal leadership characteristics (ILTs) (Lord et al., 2020). Moreover, when people perceive themselves as having more leadership capacities (ISTs) than required by their perception of an ideal leader (ILTs), they will also feel more comfortable to lead (Schyns et al., 2020). Conversely, another perceived incongruence scenario will be when people perceive themselves as possessing weaker leadership capacities (ISTs) compared to their leadership perception (ILTs), and this will make them less confident about taking on leadership responsibilities (DeRue & Myers, 2014).

Gender is expected to predict variations in these predicted scenarios. Given that the nature of leadership perception (ILTs) is closely related to agentic and masculine qualities (Koenig et al., 2011), using these ILTs as a reference point in social comparison would predict variations in women's and men's LSE. From women's perspective, they are more likely to hold feminine and communal self-views about themselves as leaders (ISTs), because they are largely aligned with the social perception of femininity (i.e., women should display feminine characteristics) (Ellemers, 2018). In this case, they are less likely to view themselves as prototypical leaders (ISTs) and therefore they will not perceive a match between themselves and the ideal leaders (ILTs), which will decrease their self-confidence for becoming a leader (Derks et al., 2007; Foti et al., 2012). The situation is different for men. They are more likely to perceive themselves as leaders (ISTs) because of their agentic and masculine gender characteristics (Koenig et al., 2011). With stronger ISTs, they will perceive higher congruence between their self-perception as a leader (IST) and the prototype of an ideal leader (ILT), thus boosting their confidence about taking on a leadership role.

However, it is still not clear if gender would influence the IST/ILT congruence and LSE in the above suggested ways as there has been no empirical research on this thus far. Scholars hold different views about the interaction between leadership perceptions and gender. Some claim that there is a great deal of overlap between women's and men's leadership perceptions (Offermann et al., 1994) and thus the impact of gender on leadership perceptions is likely irrelevant (Eagly et al., 2020; Offermann & Coats, 2018). Conversely, other scholars have found that, while leadership perceptions are perceived similarly by women and men, they perceive the importance of individual traits differently (Epitropaki & Martin, 2004). Epitropaki and Martin (2004) pointed out that certain leadership qualities, such as being aware of others' feelings, being helpful and self-confident, are valued more by women, whereas the qualities of being aggressive and competitive are valued more by men. In support of this perspective, the implications of IST/ILT congruence for females would likely be different from that of males, because variations of leadership prototypes may depend on gender (Foti et al., 2017). Following this logic, the IST/ILT congruence effect on LSE would be dependent on gender, since women and men perceive the match or mismatch between their ISTs and ILTs differently.

In order to clarify the role of gender on IST/ILT congruence and LSE, it is necessary to look into separate IST/ILT dimensions as suggested in Section 4.2.4.1. Moreover, I will focus on the dimensions of sensitivity, dynamism, tyranny and masculinity and exclude intelligence and dedication, as the former are more relevant to men's and women's differentiated perception of leaders. Traditionally, sensitivity is more related to women and it was found to account for the largest variance in leadership perception (Offermann & Coats, 2018). Women were also found to endorse sensitivity-related characteristics (e.g., being understanding and sincere), as their ideal leader characteristics, more than men did (Deal & Stevenson, 1998; Epitropaki & Martin, 2004). Moreover, dynamism, tyranny and masculinity

reflect agentic attributes and can influence the activation of agentic-related leadership prototypes (Festekjian et al., 2014; Sy et al., 2010).

The dimensions of intelligence and dedication are not included in this study for two reasons. First, previous studies found that perceived intelligence was not related to employee development or self-ratings of skills development (Hezlett et al., 1996; Maurer et al., 2003). Therefore, in the context of the current study, perceived intelligence is not considered to be related to self-perceived leadership capabilities. Second, it was found that gender had no significant impact on intelligence and dedication, meaning men and women do not have different expectations of leaders' qualities regarding these two characteristics (Johnson et al., 2008). This reflects the neutral nature of intelligence and dedication dimensions (Offermann & Coats, 2018). Essentially, such neutral prototypes cannot distinguish leaders from non-leaders (Junker & van Dick, 2014). Therefore, I decided to exclude these two dimensions.

Thus, there is a lack of consistent evidence about the role of gender in IST/ILT congruence and LSE and, furthermore, it is still unclear whether gender would strengthen or weaken this congruence. This current study adds to the existing literature by examining the role of gender in an exploratory manner. In furthering this research agenda, I propose the following research question:

Research question: What is the role of gender in the relationship between IST/ILT congruence and LSE?

On the basis of the theoretical arguments about the dynamic nature of IST/ILT congruence and gender in relation to LSE, my research model follows the recommendations from Schyns et al. (2020). I conceptualise the congruence of IST and ILT by applying the IST dimensions directly onto ILT dimensions; i.e., the IST and ILT dimensions mirror each other. I assume the pattern of congruence will be applicable to both prototypical dimensions (e.g.,

sensitivity and dynamism) and anti-prototypical dimensions (e.g., tyranny and masculinity) in the same way. The prototypical and anti-prototypical categories can be misleading, as they represent the perceivers' perceptions about how characteristic the leadership attributes are, but these characteristics do not necessarily reflect the attributes of effective leaders (Schyns & Schilling, 2011). Given that the IST/ILT congruence pattern is a result of social comparison and self-evaluation (Diel et al., 2021), when focal persons use the IST and ILT dimensions as reference points to compare themselves against the ideal leaders, the congruence results will reflect how characteristic they believe they are as leaders. Therefore, I propose the comparison results will be applicable to both prototypical and anti-prototypical dimensions.

According to the diagram below, four prototypical congruence scenarios are produced (see Figure 6): two scenarios for congruence (low IST/low ILT and high IST/high ILT) and two scenarios for incongruence (low IST/high ILT and high IST/low ILT). The proposed four IST/ILT congruence scenarios are applicable to all dimensions in the same way, based on matching the gender with the perception of leaders.

Congruence is represented in quadrants 1 and 3 (with two scenarios: either of low IST/low ILT, or high IST/high ILT). Hannah et al. (2009) stated that individuals would initiate actions to assume leadership roles based on their self-views as leaders. This means there is a connection between individuals' ISTs and their ILTs and the match of these perceptions can influence their motivations and behaviours within a leadership domain (Schyns et al., 2020). This congruence can signify to individuals that they are in the right role, which can enhance their confidence in leading (Guillén et al., 2015). Given this, the scenario of high IST/high ILT represents high congruence between self-perception and perception of ideal leaders. It means that individuals perceive themselves as possessing characteristics of a

specific dimension (e.g., sensitivity) and they perceive this dimension as a characteristic of an ideal leader, and thus they have higher perceived confidence in their ability to lead.

High IST

4 Incongruence (High IST/Low ILT) I am very sensitive Ideal leaders are not sensitive	1 Congruence (High IST/High ILT) I am very sensitive Ideal leaders are very sensitive
3 Congruence (Low IST/Low ILT) I am not sensitive Ideal leaders are not sensitive	2 Incongruence (Low IST/High ILT) I am not sensitive Ideal leaders are very sensitive

Low ILT — — — — — — — — — — — — — — — — — **High ILT**
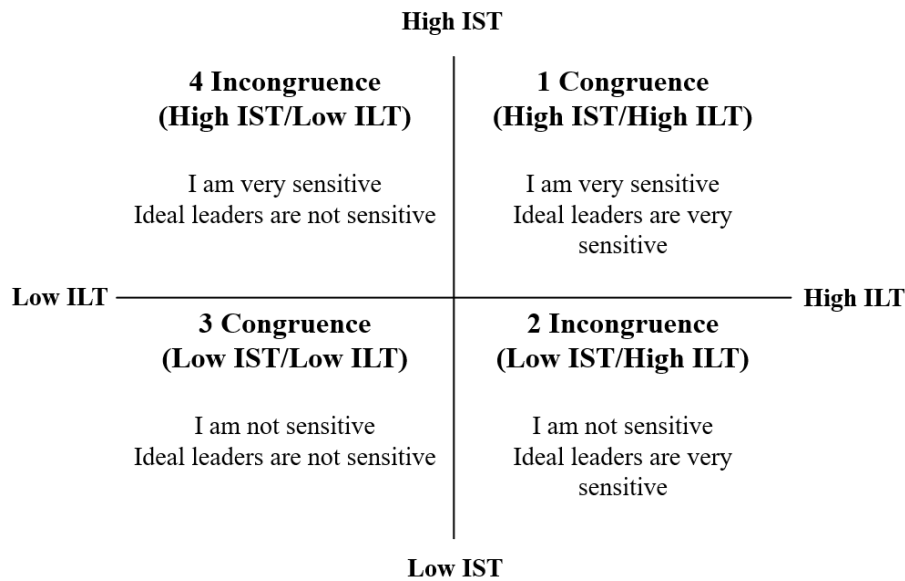
Low IST

Figure 6 Conceptualization of IST/ILT Congruence/Incongruence – Example of Sensitivity Dimension

Low IST/low ILT signifies a congruence at low levels for both IST and ILT, where individuals perceive the respective dimension (e.g., sensitivity) as not characteristic of themselves as leaders and not characteristic of an ideal leader either. The latter congruence at low levels of IST and ILT would most likely result in lower LSE. This scenario represents congruence with a perception that the dimension is not perceived to be a characteristic of leaders in general, thus is not likely to cause a negative impact on individuals' LSE, as this dimension is not considered particularly characteristic by the individual. In other words, congruence between IST and ILT may result in higher LSE, only when this congruence reflects high levels of both IST and ILT. Conversely, lower levels of IST and ILT relate to lower self-perceived efficacy as leaders. Therefore, I propose:

Hypothesis 1a: LSE will increase when the level of congruence between ILT Sensitivity and IST Sensitivity increases from low-low to high-high.

Hypothesis 1b: LSE will increase when the level of congruence between ILT Dynamism and IST Dynamism increases from low-low to high-high.

Hypothesis 1c: LSE will increase when the level of congruence between ILT Tyranny and IST Tyranny increases from low-low to high-high.

Hypothesis 1d: LSE will increase when the level of congruence between ILT Masculinity and IST Masculinity increases from low-low to high-high.

The two cases of incongruence (see quadrants 2 and 4) can be seen in the scenario of low IST/high ILT (quadrant 2) and in the scenario of high IST/low ILT (quadrant 4) for each dimension. In the scenario of low IST/high ILT (quadrant 2), an individual regards the ideal leader as more characteristic of a respective dimension (e.g., sensitivity), compared to themselves. The individual would perceive themselves as possessing less advanced leadership capacities, compared to an ideal leader. The perception of ideal leaders represents people's expectations of the leadership role (Lord et al., 2020). The low IST/high ILT incongruence can put people under pressure to possess and demonstrate the necessary leadership characteristics they feel they lack (Fast et al., 2014). Thus, this type of incongruence is typically associated with lower LSE, due to the perceived mismatch resulting from the comparison between IST and ILT (DeRue & Myers, 2014).

In the scenario of high IST/low ILT (quadrant 4), an individual views themselves as possessing more of this quality (e.g., sensitivity), than the ideal leader. In this case, the individual would perceive themselves as possessing more advanced leadership capacities than the ideal leader. This type of incongruence can be a form of feedback to individuals that they do not just possess but excel as a leader, thus increasing their self-efficacy within the

leadership context (Wallace et al., 2021). This can also relate to their confidence in their previous leadership experience, which can positively enhance their perception of their leadership capabilities (McClean et al., 2019). In other words, because their ISTs surpass the ILTs, this would make them feel more confident of leading others. Furthermore, due to the higher confidence reflected in their higher ISTs, the positive impact of high IST/low ILT on LSE is likely stronger than that of the low IST/low ILT (quadrant 3) scenario. Thus, I propose:

Hypothesis 2a: LSE will decrease when the level of incongruence between ILT Sensitivity and IST Sensitivity increases. Specifically, when IST Sensitivity is low and ILT Sensitivity is high, LSE will be lower than when IST Sensitivity is high and ILT Sensitivity is low.

Hypothesis 2b: LSE will decrease when the level of incongruence between ILT Dynamism and IST Dynamism increases. Specifically, when IST Dynamism is low and ILT Dynamism is high, LSE will be lower than when IST Dynamism is high and ILT Dynamism is low.

Hypothesis 2c: LSE will decrease when the level of incongruence between ILT Tyranny and IST Tyranny increases. Specifically, when IST Tyranny is low and ILT Tyranny is high, LSE will be lower than when IST Tyranny is high and ILT Tyranny is low.

Hypothesis 2d: LSE will decrease when the level of incongruence between ILT Masculinity and IST Masculinity increases. Specifically, when IST Masculinity is low and ILT Masculinity is high, LSE will be lower than when IST Masculinity is high and ILT Masculinity is low.

To further illustrate the application of IST/ILT congruence scenarios on men and women, I will discuss the following examples based on an assumption that, due to men's and women's internalised gender self-views, men / women hold masculine / feminine views about themselves as leaders respectively. It is also assumed that they are influenced by the masculine perception of leaders.

The dimension of sensitivity is a characteristic typically associated with feminine individuals; it is not typically associated with perceptions of leaders, which are broadly associated with agentic characteristics (Rosette et al., 2016). From the gender perspective, men and women likely have different internalised gender self-views, meaning men tend to perceive themselves as possessing masculine characteristics while women are likely to view themselves as feminine (Koenig et al., 2011). In the case of men, male prototypes are relatively similar to traditional expectations of leaders' characteristics (Rosette et al., 2016). In line with the general perception that agency is ascribed to leadership roles (Koenig et al., 2011), men would also have agentic self-views as leaders, because of their internalised gender self-perceptions (Hoyland et al., 2021). As such, the IST/ILT congruence on the dimension of sensitivity for men can be a low IST/low ILT scenario (quadrant 3), which may result in a lower LSE.

In the case of women, there may be a mismatch between sensitivity (i.e., feminine) and their perception of leaders (i.e., masculine). Women are more likely to view themselves as sensitive leaders because of their gender self-views (Eagly et al., 2014). However, they are less likely to view sensitivity as a characteristic dimension of ILT due to the influence of masculine stereotypical perception of leaders. In this case, the IST/ILT congruence on the dimension of sensitivity for women would be a high IST/low ILT scenario (quadrant 4) and this can increase their LSE.

For the dimension of dynamism, tyranny and masculinity, these characteristics are associated with masculine qualities (Festekjian et al., 2014; Offermann & Coats, 2018; Sy et al., 2010). Based on the previous descriptions about the match between men's gender self-views and their perceptions of leaders, IST/ILT congruence on the dimension of dynamism, tyranny and masculinity can be a high IST/high ILT scenario (quadrant 1), which may result in a higher LSE.

In the case of women, the characteristics of dynamism, tyranny and masculinity are more in line with the masculine perception of leaders (Koenig et al., 2011). However, women are likely to view themselves as feminine leaders because of their gender self-views (Eagly et al., 2014). When these two concepts are paired together, women are inclined to form self-views that they are not agentic enough, compared to the general perception of the ideal leader (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Heilman, 1983). In this vein, IST/ILT congruence on the dimension of dynamism, masculinity and tyranny for women would be a low IST/high ILT scenario (quadrant 2) and this would predict a negative impact on their LSE.

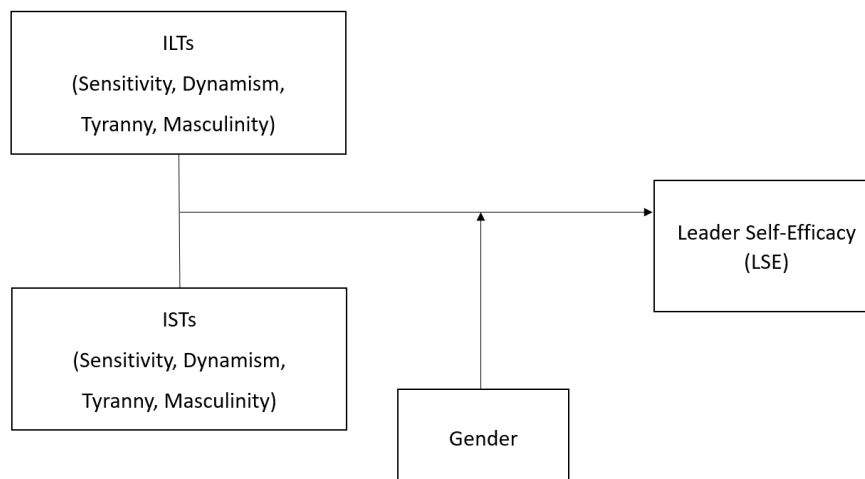**Figure 7 Conceptual Model: Impact of Implicit Self Theories (ISTs)/Implicit Leadership Theories (ILTs) congruence on Leader self-efficacy (LSE)**

4.3. Method

This method section will firstly cover the participant and procedure of this research. After that, I will present the measurements employed. Following this, I will describe the ethical considerations and steps adopted. Finally, the analytic strategy will be covered.

4.3.1. **Participants and Procedure**

I collected one set of data using Prolific Academic, an online research data collection provider and another set of data from MBA students from Warwick Business School via Qualtrics survey platform provided by Warwick Business School. This research adopted a survey design to collect quantitative data. The survey lasted for 20 minutes and data collected included Implicit Leadership Theories (ILT), Implicit Self Theories (IST), Leader Self Efficacy (LSE) and demographic characteristics (e.g., age, gender, education level, country of origin, length of working experience, job position, work function, employer's industry, and length of leadership experience). Randomised questions were assigned to the participants during the data collection process. At the end of each survey, all participants were offered monetary incentives according to Prolific's minimum standard (£5 per hour) on completion of the survey and approval of their responses.

I recruited a working population (either part time or full time) via Prolific and MBA students via Warwick Business School (WBS) as participants. All the participants were required to have previous leadership experience. These two independent samples were combined as the final dataset. To justify this decision, I conducted *t*-tests to compare demographic variables of gender, age, years of leadership experience, position, function and industry in the two samples. The results revealed significant differences in these variables between the two samples, except position, function and industry. Given this, it is appropriate to include a dichotomous variable to control for the sources of data. Thus, I created a dichotomous variable (Prolific data coded as 0 and MBA data coded as 1) and included this as a control variable in all subsequent analyses.

Measures were adopted to ensure the data quality. Two responses were deleted because the participants failed to pass the quality checks (i.e., they failed to answer at least

half of the attention checking questions correctly). Another two responses were excluded due to failing the requirements of this study (i.e., not having any supervisory experience and reporting his/her age as 5). No responses were deleted due to failing the quality checks or engaging in straight-lining (i.e., cases where answers from respondents had zero variance across all questions). Therefore, I proceeded with a final N=173 (N=132 from Prolific and N=41 from WBS) for the sample.

Of the final sample size, 82 participants (47.4%) were female, while 85 participants (49.1%) were male. The average age of the participants was 35.12. They all had working experience and had worked in their current/previous organisation for 6.7 years, on average. Also, they had 6.36 years of leadership experience on average. They were from diverse industries and work functions. The top 5 work functions were operations (11%), project management (9.8%), customer service (9.8%), information technology (8.1%) and finance (6.4%). The top 5 industries were education and training (15.6%), government and public administration (8.1%), healthcare (7.5%) and retail (6.9%). Regarding education level, 46.2% of them held postgraduate degrees, 17.9% had completed doctorate education, 13.9% had completed post-secondary education (college, A-Levels, NVQ3 or similar), and 9.2% held undergraduate degrees.

4.3.2. **Ethical considerations:**

Based on the Data Protection Act (DPA) 2018, General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and Warwick Business School (WBS) ethical research guidelines, I conducted my research with the following practices. I only collected research-related data. I maintained the confidentiality and privacy of participants by measures such as the use of anonymous and aggregated data and data encryption. I handled participants' agreements on their voluntary

participation, data collection and use of data by using consent forms and background briefings at the beginning of the survey. No names or identifying information were collected. I stored the data online in the Qualtrics and Warwick file storage systems, which are protected by passwords and it is accessible only by me and my two supervisors. The data will be kept secure by me as the researcher, as instructed by the University of Warwick data retention policy.

4.3.3. **Measures**

Implicit leadership theories (ILT) and Implicit self-theories (IST). I adapted the 21-item ILT measure from Epitropaki & Martin (2004) to evaluate participants' ILT and IST. They were asked to rate their perceptions of each item according to how characteristic it was of ideal leaders (ILT) and, in a separate block, how characteristic it was of themselves (IST). The stem questions I used were "How characteristic do you consider the following traits to be of an ideal leader's style?" and "How characteristic do you consider the following traits to be of your own leadership style?". The questions were scored on a nine-point scale, from 1 ("not at all characteristic") to 9 ("very characteristic").

Due to the theoretical arguments and hypotheses related to the congruence effect of IST/ILT, the dimensions of IST and ILT included in this research (i.e., sensitivity, dynamism, tyranny and masculinity) had to be measured with the same items. I proceeded with exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) using SPSS and AMOS (v.26). First, the original sample was divided randomly into subsamples (N=86 and 87 respectively). I conducted an EFA for IST and ILT measures separately with the first set of the subsamples (N=86). According to the theoretical assumptions of this study, I adopted the oblique (oblimin) rotation method because the factors were expected to correlate with

each other theoretically (Field, 2013). Inspection of the results demonstrated that 3 IST items and 5 ILT items have cross-loading issues. This means that these items did not load on their theoretical factors or an item also loaded highly on a different factor (i.e., there is a difference of factor loading below .3 between the primary and secondary factor loadings) (Costello & Osborne, 2005). Therefore, factor structure refinement and improvement were necessary.

To improve the factor structure of the 28 items, I adopted certain criteria to decide on the number of factors being retained: the eigenvalue-greater-than-one rule (Kaiser, 1960); the scree test (Cattell, 1966); and an assessment of variables' communalities and interpretability (Hair et al., 2013). The result showed that IST and ILT yielded four and three dimensions, respectively. I retained items that met the standard criteria of .4 for their factor loadings (Hair et al., 2013). I eliminated 3 IST and 4 ILT crossloading items that loaded at .3 or higher on two or more factors and with a difference of at least .3 between the loadings (Costello & Osborne, 2005). Based on these criteria, I retained 18 out of 28 (64.29%) overlapping items with adequate factor loadings (.58 or larger) (Hair et al., 2013).

Second, I conducted a series of CFAs using the second sub sample (N=87). The final 9-factor model with 4 IST,4 ILT factors (9 items each) and LSE yielded an acceptable fit (χ^2 = 151.675, df = 108, p<.01; CFI = .935, RMSEA = .069). The reliabilities of the respective IST and ILT dimensions were: sensitivity α = .755/.716; dynamism α = .667/.637; tyranny α = .722/.719 and masculinity α = .900/.860.

Leader Self-efficacy (LSE). I assessed participants' LSE using Murphy's (1992) measure. Sample items include "I know what it takes to make a work group accomplish its tasks", "I am confident in my ability to influence a work group that I lead" and "I know what it takes to keep a work group running smoothly". An eight-item LSE measure was adopted in

the research of Guillén et al. (2015) and the reported reliability was $\alpha = .84$. The reliability of

the 5-item version[4] measure used in the current study was $\alpha = .819$.

Gender. A dummy variable was computed, coded as 0 for male and 1 for female.

Control Measures. I controlled for data source and leadership experience. The dataset

is a combined dataset with the Prolific and MBA data. Therefore, I created a dichotomous

variable, "source of data", reflecting the different data sources and this was included as a

control variable. Leadership experience was controlled for because it can be related to the

formation of people's leadership perceptions (Braun et al., 2018; Foti & McCusker, 2017).

Other control variables, such as position, function, industry, were originally included in the

analysis but they were dropped later because of their lack of a significant relationship with

the independent and dependent variables (Becker, 2005; Spector & Brannick, 2011).

4.3.4. Analytic Strategy

I posed the research question about the role of gender in the relationship between

IST/ILT congruence/incongruence and LSE. To explore the question, I constructed

independent samples *t*-tests for ISTs, ILTs and LSE using SPSS and conducted separate

moderation tests for IST and ILT with the Process macro for SPSS (Process model 1) (Hayes,

2017a) (see Table 8). I included leadership experience and source of data as control variables.

I used polynomial regression with response surface analysis to examine the

congruence effects suggested in Hypotheses 1a – 2d. This method can reveal conceptually

meaningful results that could be misinterpreted by other analyses commonly adopted in

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[4] Murphy (1992)'s original LSE measure contains 8 items. However, the items 1, 3 and 8 were eliminated in the Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) procedure in my study due to the low loading issue (loading < .4). As such, a 5-item version was adopted. More details about the EFA process and results can be found in the Section 4.4.

congruence research, such as methods involving difference scores and congruence indexes (Edwards & Cable, 2009; Lord et al., 2020). Also, polynomial regression provides much more information than moderated regression because it allows for a three-dimensional examination of the tested relationship that illustrates congruence and incongruence effects (Shanock et al., 2010). I tested four parallel regression models (one for each implicit theory dimension of sensitivity, dynamism, tyranny and masculinity) for LSE. Specifically, LSE was regressed on the control variables of leadership experience, source of data as well as five polynomial terms, meaning ILT, IST, ILT squared (ILT^2), ILT times IST (ILT x IST), and IST squared (IST^2). Following recommendations by Aiken & West (1991) and Edwards (1994), I mean-centred the predictors (i.e., IST and ILT) around the midpoint of their respective scales to facilitate interpretation of the results and avoid multicollinearity.

Instead of examining the regression coefficients, as is commonly done in a regression analysis, under the condition where the R2 (variance in the outcome variable explained by the regression) is significantly different from zero (Edwards, 2002), I evaluated the polynomial regression results according to four surface test values: a1, a2, a3, and a4.

a1: represents the slope of the line of congruence (ILT = IST) as related to LSE.

a2: represents the curvature along the line of perfect agreement as related to LSE. This slope represents a non-linear slope of the line of perfect agreement, i.e., congruence between IST and ILT as related to LSE in a non-linear way. As I anticipate a linear relationship between the IST/ILT and LSE, I do not expect a significant a2. In this case, the a2 slope information is irrelevant to this study and it will not be discussed in the following result reporting and interpretation sections.

a3: represents the slope of the line of incongruence as related to LSE, illustrating the direction of discrepancy. Specifically, a significant positive slope would mean that LSE is higher when the direction of discrepancy (i.e., incongruence) is such that IST exceeds ILT than when ILT is higher than IST. Conversely, a significant negative slope would indicate that LSE is higher when the direction of discrepancy (i.e., incongruence) is such that ILT exceeds IST.

a4: represents the curvature along the line of incongruence as related to LSE, demonstrating the degree of discrepancy. Specifically, a significant positive slope would indicate a convex surface in the response surface figure. That is, LSE would increase more sharply when the degree of incongruence between IST and ILT increases. In contrast, a significant negative slope would indicate a concave surface in the response surface figure. That is, LSE would decrease when the degree of incongruence between IST and ILT increases.

These response surface analyses examine the degree to which the surface differs along two dimensions; the line of congruence and the line of incongruence. The line of congruence is the line that indicates IST and ILT match. In the figures, this is a dashed line on the floor of the graph running from front to back, where the surface plot's front indicates low-low congruence and its back indicates high-high congruence. There is also a solid line on the floor of the plot, running from left to right, where the plot's left side illustrates high ILT and low IST, and the right side illustrates low ILT and high IST.

I hypothesised a congruence effect for each dimension of IST and ILT on LSE. Whereas scholars have claimed that leadership perceptions are viewed similarly by males and females at the aggregate level, we know that men and women rate the importance of individual traits differently (Epitropaki & Martin, 2004). This means that, if we aggregate the

results of men and women in the same model, the result can be misleading because they cannot illustrate the separate views of men and women about the importance of leadership perceptions to them. Therefore, I examined the results from aggregate (i.e., including both male and female participants) and gender groups' (i.e., separate male and female participants groups) perspectives. I conducted three polynomial regressions ('all' (i.e., model for all participants), 'male' (i.e., model for male participants) and 'female' (i.e., model for female participants)) for each of the IST and ILT dimensions.

4.4. Results

The descriptive statistics, correlations and reliability coefficients of the measures are presented in Table 7. I included control variables of years of leadership experience, source of data, IST sensitivity and IST dynamism. The reliability coefficients of all variables in the model reached the commonly accepted standard of .60 (Taber, 2018; Ursachi et al., 2015; van Griethuijsen et al., 2015).

Prior to analyses of the research question and hypotheses, I performed Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) using AMOS (v.26) to examine the full measurement model (N=87). The 9-factor full measurement model included IST sensitivity, IST dynamism,

Table 7 Descriptive Statistics, Correlations and Reliabilities

Variable	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1 Age	35.116	10.120													
2 Gender[a]	.491	.501	.146												
3 Leadership experience	6.364	5.777	.678**	.091											
4 Source of data	.237	.426	-.231**	-.243**	-.178*										
5 IST - Sensitivity	7.773	1.018	.010	.064	.071	.058	(.755)								
6 IST - Dynamism	6.659	1.322	-.070	-.038	-.050	.180*	.385**	(.667)							
7 IST - Tyranny	3.523	1.827	-.123	-.227**	-.034	.269**	-.143	.142	(.722)						
8 IST - Masculinity	4.124	2.844	-.050	-.803**	-.078	.160*	-.064	.084	.372**	(.900)					
9 ILT - Sensitivity	8.098	.884	-.034	.093	-.038	.030	.468**	.183*	-.223**	-.105	(.716)				
10 ILT - Dynamism	7.578	1.111	-.077	.082	-.132	.047	.295**	.332**	-.048	-.044	.413**	(.637)			
11 ILT - Tyranny	3.647	1.918	-.158*	-.233**	-.067	.103	-.115	.003	.620**	.377**	-.313**	-.100	(.719)		
12 ILT - Masculinity	3.431	2.238	.084	-.385**	-.019	-.047	-.234**	.026	.296**	.550**	-.183*	-.063	.392**	(.860)	
13 LSE	3.941	.593	.016	.010	.153*	.074	.325**	.426**	.057	-.025	.194*	.087	-.057	-.054	(.819)

N = 173; reliabilities are presented in parentheses along the diagonal

*p < .05; **p < .01

[a] 0= 'male'; 1= 'female';

LSE = Leader self-efficacy, ILT = Implicit leadership theories, IST = Implicit self-theories

IST tyranny, IST masculinity, ILT sensitivity, ILT dynamism, ILT tyranny, ILT masculinity and LSE. The model showed an acceptable fit (χ^2 = 282.184, df = 195, p < .05; CFI = .907, RMSEA = .073) and a better fit than a one-factor model (χ^2 = 902.464; df = 230, p < .05; CFI = .285, RMSEA = .185; $\Delta \chi^2$ = 620.280, Δdf = 35, p < .001).

I also implemented different measures to avoid common method variance (CMV) and examined if this has caused threats to the validity of the study. CMV is the systematic error variance shared among variables attributable to the measurement method employed (Johnson et al., 2011). Common method bias could exist because I collected data through self-reported surveys (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Therefore, I adopted different procedural and statistical methods to control for the CMV (Archimi et al., 2018). First, the survey design adopted question randomisation to minimise the possible common method biases (Chang et al., 2010). Second, I included the unmeasured latent common factor in the 9-factor model to detect whether CMV affected the data (see Podsakoff et al., 2003). The results indicated that the model, though it included an unmeasured latent common factor, did not increase the model fit (χ^2 = 281.740; df = 194, p < .05; CFI = .907, RMSEA = .073; $\Delta \chi^2$ = .444, Δdf = 1, p = .505). I therefore concluded CMV had no significant impact on the results.

As the first step to explore the research question about the role of gender in this research, the t-test results showed that female respondents reported significantly lower scores in IST tyranny, IST masculinity, ILT tyranny and ILT masculinity than their male counterparts. This means that women see themselves as less tyrannous and masculine than men. Also, women see tyranny and masculinity less as ideal leaders' characteristics than men do.

I conducted moderation tests to further explore the role of gender in the relationship of IST/ILT and LSE (see Table 8). In the moderation tests, IST sensitivity, IST dynamism,

Table 8 Regression Results of PROCESS for the Moderating Role of Gender in the Relationship of IST/ILT and LSE

Variables	Model 1 Sensitivity (IST)	Model 2 Dynamism (IST)	Model 3 Tyranny (IST)	Model 4 Masculinity (IST)	Model 5 Sensitivity (ILT)	Model 6 Dynamism (ILT)	Model 7 Tyranny (ILT)	Model 8 Masculinity (ILT)
Constant	3.804***	3.787***	3.761***	3.731***	3.746***	3.738***	3.765***	3.776***
Gender[1]	-.002	.023	.043	-.007	.007	.018	.020	.014
Years of leadership experience	.015	.019*	.018*	.018*	.020*	.021*	.018*	.018*
Source of data	.119	.059	.147	.173	.183	.180	.170	.161
IST	.151	.186***	.021	.013				
IST X Gender	.054	-.003	.005	-.041				
ILT					.030	-.024	-.006	-.016
ILT X Gender					.193	.146	-.006	.017
R^2	.127***	.199***	.043	.041	.088*	.062	.039	.040

N=167

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

[1]Gender: 0=Male, 1=Female; LSE = Leader self-efficacy; IST = Implicit self-theories; ILT = Implicit leadership theories

Table 9 Polynomial Regression of LSE on IST/ILT Congruence

Variables	Sensitivity Dimension			Dynamism Dimension			Tyranny Dimension			Masculinity Dimension		
	All model	**Male model**	**Female model**	**All model**	**Male model**	**Female model**	**All model**	**Male model**	**Female model**	**All model**	**Male model**	**Female model**
Constant	3.798***	3.718***	3.861***	3.804***	3.757***	3.828***	3.748***	3.699***	3.707***	3.627***	3.552***	3.968***
Years of leadership experience	.015	.013	.017	.018*	.014	.022*	.016*	.011	.018	.017*	.012	.020
Source of data	.110	.259	-.030	.031	.207	-.194	.118	.276	-.134	.154	.238	-.141
IST	.187**	.239*	.130	.194***	.204***	.159**	.024	-.010	.088	-.025	.060	.015
ILT	.037	-.116	.124	-.002	-.096	.094	-.042	-.018	-.080	-.007	-.027	.055
IST^2	.028	.068	-.036	-.009	.003	-.041	-.006	-.005	.005	.016	.020	-.006
IST X ILT	-.056	.015	-.074	.002	-.017	.027	.030	.052*	.006	-.013	.006	-.018
ILT^2	.023	-.041	.038	.024	.016	.029	.004	-.009	.037	.017	.022	-.044
R^2	.138**	.140	.208*	.217***	.257**	.237**	.084*	.154	.111	.073	.200*	.098
Congruence (IST = ILT) line												
Slope (a1)	.224**	.123	.254*	.191***	.108	.253***	-.018	-.027	.008	-.032	.033	.071
Curvature (a2)	-.005	.042	-.072	.017	.002	.015	.029	.038*	.048	.020*	.048**	-.068
Incongruence (IST = -ILT) line												
Slope (a3)	.150	.356*	.005	.196**	.300***	.064	.066	.008	.168	-.018	.087	-.040
Curvature (a4)	.108	.012	.076	.013	.036	-.039	-.031	-.065	.036	.046*	.035	-.032

All: N=173; Male group: N=85; Female group: N=82

*p < .05; ** p < .01; *** p < .001*

LSE = Leader self-efficacy, ILT = Implicit leadership theories, IST = Implicit self-theories

Figure 8 Congruence/Incongruence Effect of IST and ILT for Sensitivity Dimension on LSE ('All' Group)

Figure 9 Congruence/Incongruence Effect of IST and ILT for Sensitivity Dimension on LSE ('Male' Group)
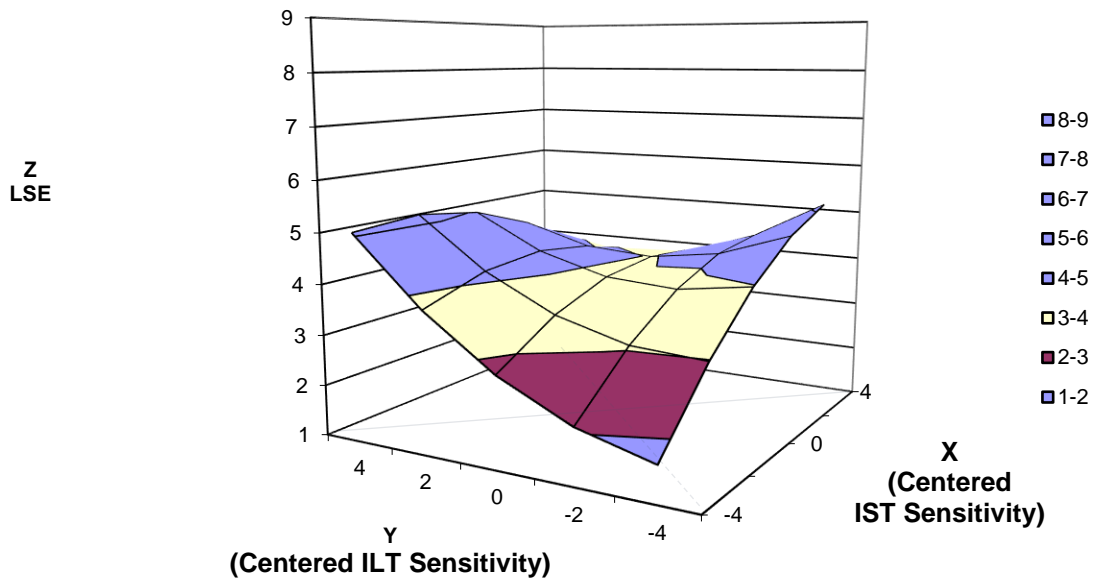
Figure 10 Congruence/Incongruence Effect of IST and ILT for Sensitivity Dimension on LSE ('Female' Group)
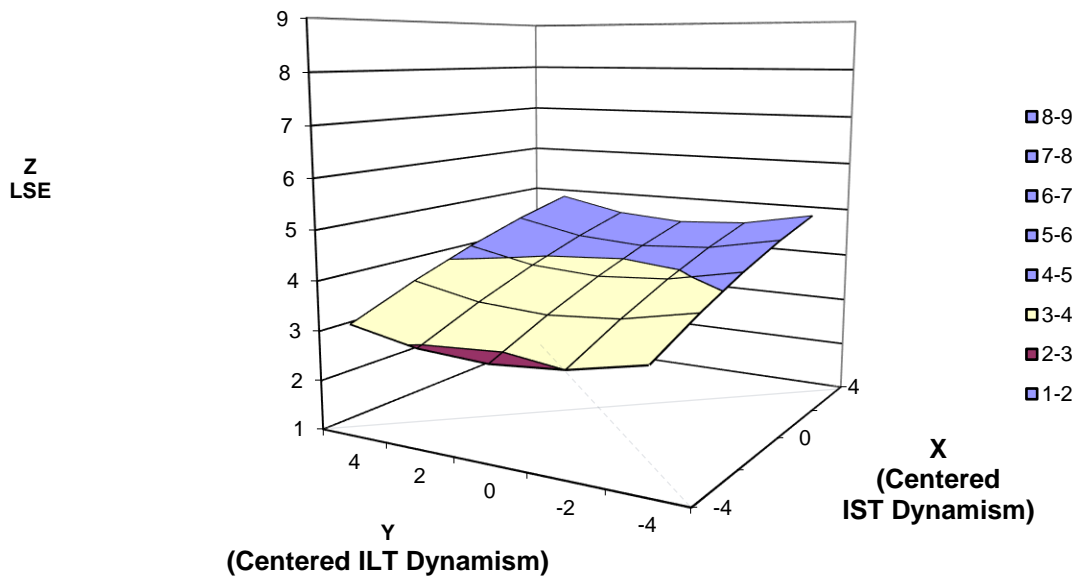
Figure 11 Congruence/Incongruence Effect of IST and ILT for Dynamism Dimension on LSE ('All' Group)
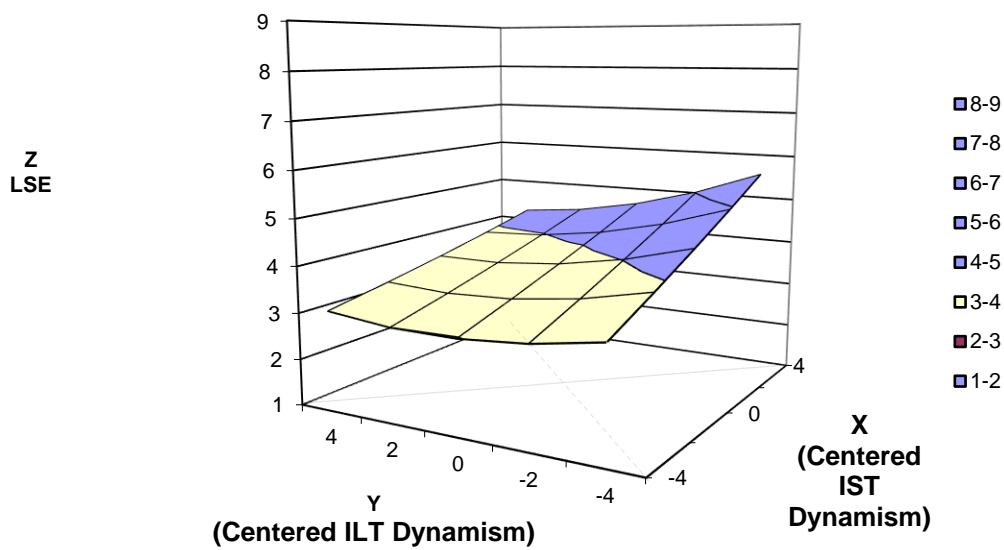
Figure 12 Congruence/Incongruence Effect of IST and ILT for Dynamism Dimension on LSE ('Male' Group)
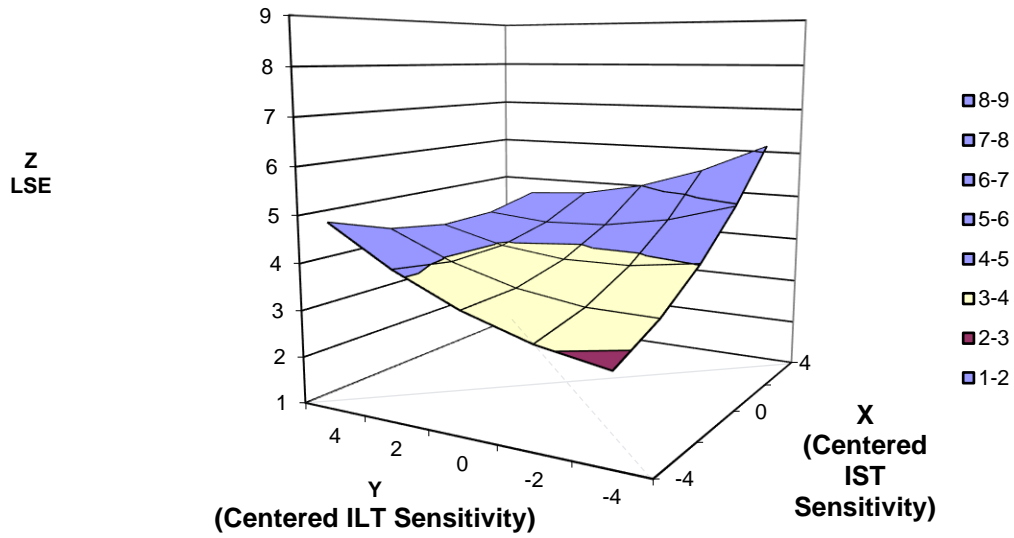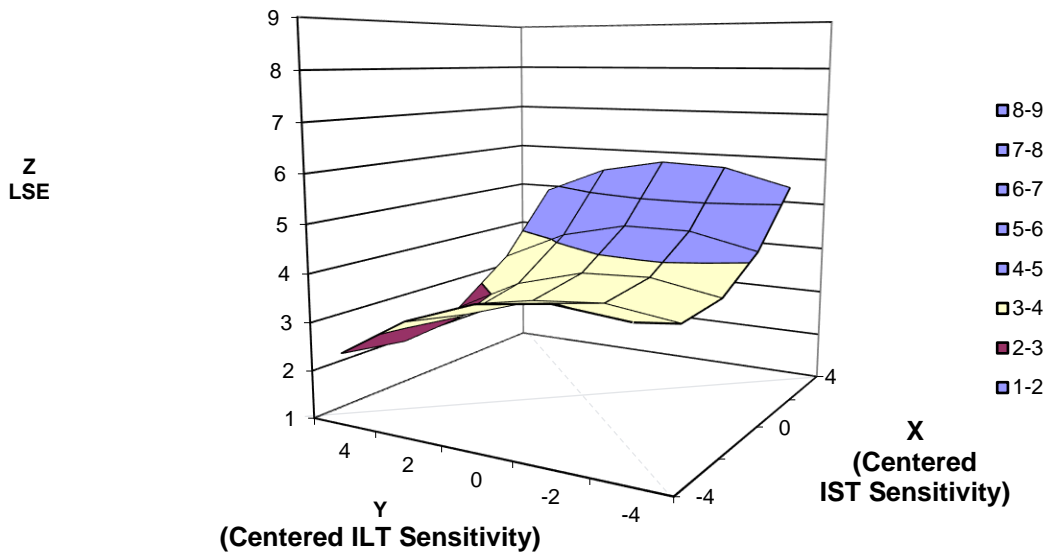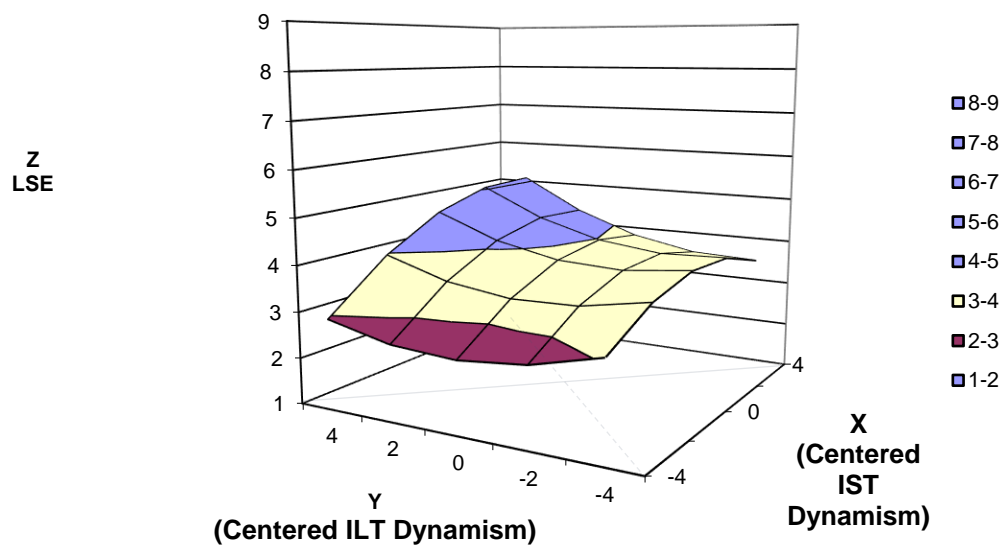

Figure 13 Congruence/Incongruence Effect of IST and ILT for Dynamism Dimension on LSE ('Female' Group)
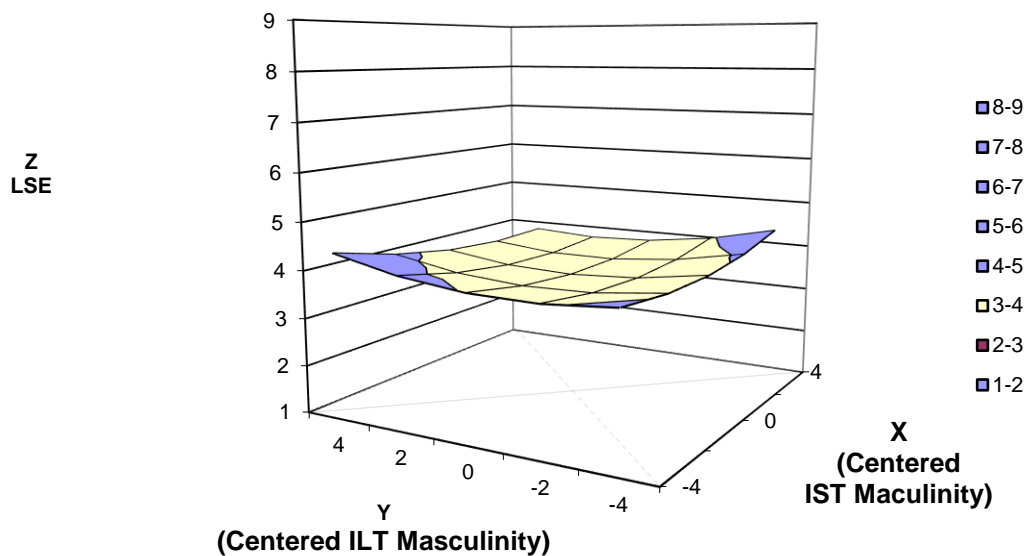
Figure 14 Congruence/Incongruence Effect of IST and ILT for Masculinity Dimension on LSE ('All' Group)

IST tyranny, IST masculinity, ILT sensitivity, ILT dynamism, ILT tyranny, and ILT masculinity were inserted as independent variables. The main direct effect of IST dynamism on LSE was found to be significant (β=.186; $p <. 001$). This means that people in general have higher LSE when they perceive themselves as dynamic leaders. However, gender was not found to moderate any of the IST or ILT dimensions and LSE. This illustrates that men and women do not differ regarding the impact of IST or ILT dimensions on their LSE.

Table 9 reports the polynomial regression results in predicting LSE. Information about the estimated coefficients, the slopes and curvatures along congruence and incongruence lines for the polynomial regressions are included. Figure 8 to Figure 14 show

the response surface based on these coefficients[5]. First, for the dimension of sensitivity, two second-order polynomial terms were significant in the 'all', 'female' and 'male' models respectively. The positive slopes along the congruence lines were significant for 'all' (a1 = .224; $p <. 01$) and 'female' (a1 = .254; $p <. 05$) models. This indicates that high IST/high ILT for sensitivity was associated with higher LSE than low/low congruence for both groups. Specifically, the effect in the 'female' group was higher than the 'all' group which contains aggregated data from both male and female participants. The response surfaces in Figure 8 and Figure 10 illustrate that LSE was higher at the left back corner (high/high congruence) than at the front right corner (low/low congruence) for 'all' and 'female' groups. This means that women and people in general felt more able to lead when they perceived they were similar to the ideal leaders who were also sensitive. However, the positive slope for the congruence line for 'male' group was not significant. Therefore, Hypothesis 1a was partially supported for 'all' and 'female' models.

The positive slope along the incongruence line was significant for 'male' model (a3 = .356; $p < .05$). This indicates that high IST/low ILT for sensitivity was associated with higher LSE. The response surfaces in Figure 9 illustrated that LSE was higher when IST sensitivity was higher than ILT sensitivity (right corner) rather than when ILT sensitivity was higher than IST sensitivity (left corner). This means that men showed higher LSE when they perceived themselves as more sensitive than the ideal leaders. However, neither the slope nor the slope for the incongruence line was significant for 'all' and 'female' models. This indicates that LSE of 'all' and 'female' groups did not increase when their IST sensitivity was higher than ILT sensitivity. Also, the curvature for the incongruence line was not significant for any of the models, indicating that people's LSE did not decrease when the IST sensitivity and ILT sensitivity became discrepant. Rather, their LSE continued to increase as

[5] Only figures with significant results that are relevant to the hypotheses are presented.

their IST sensitivity exceed their ILT sensitivity. In particular, these incongruence results indicate that the direction of incongruence, rather than degree of incongruence, matter more in the relationship between IST/ILT incongruence of sensitivity and LSE for the 'men' group. These results demonstrated partial support for Hypothesis 2a for 'men' group.

Second, for the dynamism dimension, four second-order polynomial terms were found to be significant in 'all', 'male' and 'female' models. Similar to the sensitivity dimension, the slopes along the congruence lines were significant and positive for 'all' ($a1 = .191$; $p < .001$) and 'female' ($a1 = .253$; $p < .001$) models. This showed that high IST/high ILT for dynamism was associated with higher LSE than low/low congruence for both groups. The response surfaces in

Figure **11** and Figure 13 showed that LSE was higher at the left back corner (high/high congruence) than at the front right corner (low/low congruence). This means that women and people in general felt more able to lead when they perceived they are similar to the ideal leaders who were also dynamic. However, the positive slope for the congruence line for 'men' group was not significant. Thus, for the dynamism dimension, the congruence effect hypothesised in Hypothesis 1b was partially supported for 'all' and 'female' groups.

There were positive and significant slopes for the line of incongruence found for 'all' ($a3 = .196$; $p < .01$) and 'male' ($a3 = .300$; $p < .001$) models. This indicates the LSE did increase when IST dynamism was higher than ILT dynamism for these two groups. The response surfaces in

Figure **11** and Figure 12 illustrated that LSE was higher when IST dynamism was higher than ILT dynamism (right corner) rather than when ILT dynamism was higher than IST dynamism (left corner). This means that men and people in general showed higher LSE when they perceived themselves as more dynamic than the ideal leaders. However, no

support was found for the slope of incongruence for 'female' group, indicating that women's LSE did not increase when their IST dynamism was higher than ILT dynamism. Moreover, there was no support for the curvature of the incongruence of dynamism related to LSE for all groups. The non-significant curvature along the incongruence line indicated that LSE did not decrease but continued to increase as IST dynamism exceeded ILT dynamism; thus, Hypothesis 2b was partially supported for 'all' and 'male' groups.

Third, for the tyranny dimension, there was no support for the slope along the congruence line across all models. Therefore, Hypothesis 1c was not supported. Also, the slope and curvature along the incongruence line was also found non-significant across all models. Thus, Hypothesis 2c was not supported.

Finally, for the dimension of masculinity, there was no support across all models for the slope along the congruence line. Therefore, Hypothesis 1d was not supported.

The slope along the incongruence line was found non-significant across all models. This indicates that individuals' LSE did not increase when their IST masculinity was higher than ILT masculinity. As such, the slope of incongruence did not matter in the relationship between IST/ILT congruence of masculinity and LSE. However, a one second-order polynomial term was found significant in the 'all' model . The curvature along the incongruence line was significant and positive (a4 = .046; $p < .05$), indicating that LSE increased as the degree of incongruence between IST and ILT increased. The response surface in Figure 14 indicates a convex surface, and the graph shows that toward the left and right of the graph, where IST and ILT become more discrepant, LSE increases. However, the curvature along the incongruence line was non-significant for 'male' and 'female' groups. Therefore, Hypothesis 2d was partially supported for 'all' group.

In summary, the polynomial regression results supported some of the hypotheses with new insights about the role of gender in predicting varied results.

For the sensitivity dimension, IST/ILT congruence was positively associated with LSE for both aggregated (including both male and female) (a1 = .224; $p <. 01$) and female (a1 = .254; $p <. 05$) groups, though the impact was stronger for the female group. The IST/ILT incongruence was positively associated with LSE for male group (a3 = .356; $p < .05$). The positive IST/ILT incongruence impact on LSE for the male group was stronger than the positive IST/ILT congruence impact on LSE for the female group.

For the dynamism dimension, IST/ILT congruence led to higher LSE for both aggregated (a1 = .191; $p <. 001$) and female (a1 = .253; $p <. 001$) groups, with a stronger impact for the female group. The IST/ILT incongruence impact (with the scenario of high IST/low ILT) was also found to lead to a higher LSE for both aggregated (a3 = .196; $p < .01$) and male (a3 = .300; $p < .001$) groups, and the impact was stronger for the male group. The positive IST/ILT incongruence impact on LSE for the male group was stronger than the positive IST/ILT congruence impact on LSE for the female group.

For the tyranny dimension, the IST/ILT congruence and incongruence results were non-significant for all groups, it appears that IST/ILT congruence effect of tyranny dimension does not matter to people's LSE.

For the masculinity dimension, the IST/ILT incongruence curvature positively affected LSE for the aggregated group (a4 = .046; $p < .05$), meaning individuals' LSE increased when their IST masculinity and ILT masculinity became more and more discrepant.

4.5. Discussion

This discussion section will cover theoretical and practical implications based on the results presented.

4.5.1.   **Theoretical Implications**

This research contributes to Implicit Leadership Theories, gender, and leader self-efficacy literature by crystallising the varied impact of IST/ILT congruence on LSE and the critical role of gender in predicting different results. The first contribution is the examination of the impact of IST/ILT congruence on LSE. The congruence impact entailed in the scenarios of low IST/low ILT, high IST/high ILT, high IST/low ILT and low IST/high ILT provided clarity about the predictors of LSE beyond previous ILT research. I found that IST dynamism showed a positive impact on LSE for all participants in general. These results are aligned with the self-concept theory of the positive impact of leaders' self-views on LSE (Hannah et al., 2008; Wallace et al., 2021). This suggests that people, in general, have higher LSE when they see themselves as dynamic leaders. However, the moderating effect of gender for IST dimensions and LSE was not significant, meaning IST dimensions do not affect men's and women's LSE differently. Surprisingly, no support was found for the impact of ILT; it appears that ILT does not matter much to people's LSE. This result contradicts the claim that individuals' ILTs contribute to LSE (Lord et al., 2020). While these results can provide some evidence about what makes people feel more able to lead, the insights are limited. This echoes the need to integrate the concept of congruence in order to develop a more meaningful explanation of the impact of IST and ILT on what makes people feel able to lead (DeRue & Ashford, 2010).

The IST/ILT congruence effect can provide a clearer explanation of the increase of LSE with different scenarios. The results suggested different congruence patterns for

different dimensions and groups (i.e., 'all', 'male' and 'female'). These findings contribute to the extant ILT literature by linking it to the self-concept, social and self-comparison mechanism.

ILT conceptualisation is based on social comparison, whereby people use the perception of the ideal leader as a reference point to judge whether others are leaders (i.e., match) or not (i.e., mismatch) (Foti & Luch, 1992; Offermann et al., 1994). However, scholars have claimed that one's self-evaluation of competence could also be affected by social comparisons (Hoyt & Johnson, 2011). Also, people do not just use the ILT they hold to judge others but also use it to judge themselves (Zaar et al., 2019). As such, people are likely to judge their leadership capabilities by comparing their ISTs to their ILTs, thereby affecting whether they feel capable of claiming a leadership role (Schyns et al., 2020).

The IST/ILT congruence on LSE confirmed and clarified the dynamic described between IST and ILT. Regarding the IST/ILT congruence of the sensitive and dynamism dimensions, a high IST/high ILT congruence effect is associated with higher LSE than low-low congruence in general, particularly for women. This means that people's (especially women's) LSE increases when they perceive both ideal leaders and themselves as sensitive and dynamic. Regarding the incongruence effect, men demonstrated higher LSE when their IST sensitivity/dynamism was higher than their ILT sensitivity/dynamism. This implies men see themselves as more sensitive and dynamic as leaders than their perceptions of ideal leaders, signifying higher confidence in their abilities to lead.

Interestingly, for the dimension of tyranny, I found no support for the effect of IST/ILT congruence or incongruence on LSE. While tyranny is an anti-prototype that is seen as a negative and ineffective leader characteristic (Offermann et al., 1994), individuals may not necessarily consider negative leadership prototypes ineffective (Schyns & Schilling,

2011). The non-significant IST/ILT congruence or incongruence effect of tyranny can be explained from this view. In a qualitative study, Schyns and Schilling (2011) instructed participants to list characteristics of leaders and rate them as effective or ineffective. For the category of tyranny, almost 50% of the participants rated this characteristic as effective and another 50% as ineffective. At the same time, the participants in this study mostly also rated strong and devoted (positive characteristics similar to the dimension of dynamism) as effective. This means the participants in the current research might have differing views about tyranny, with some of them perceiving it as effective while others considered it as ineffective. In other words, they may characterise an ideal leader as someone who exhibits tyrannical characteristics (Epitropaki & Martin, 2004). Therefore, the results may have evened each other out and cannot provide more insights about the impact of IST/ILT congruence in respect of tyranny on people's LSE.

For the dimension of masculinity, it is found that people's LSE increases as the incongruence between IST and ILT masculinity increases. It is unclear if the respondents have high IST/low ILT or low IST/high ILT due to the non-significant result of the a3 slope. The figure shows that people's LSE is at approximately the same level (the left and right corners of the convex curve) when their ILT masculinity is higher than IST masculinity, or vice versa. This means that people appear to hold a neutral view about this dimension and that it may not be related to leader effectiveness (Junker & van Dick, 2014), i.e., that they may not perceive masculinity as a vital leader attribute. If masculinity is not an important leader characteristic in their eyes, it would be unlikely to influence their LSE, no matter if it is a high ILT/low IST or low ILT/high IST scenario.

The second contribution of this research is about differing IST/ILT congruence effects on men's and women's LSE. Markus et al. (1982) contended that people vary in their self-schema content (i.e., IST) in a particular domain (e.g., leadership). Moreover, previous

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research pointed out men and women might endorse similar leadership prototypes, but there were differences between men and women about their ranking of leadership attributes (Epitropaki & Martin, 2004).

The dynamic between perceptions of leaders and gender stereotypes adds additional complexity to these variations. Perceptions of leaders are predominantly masculine (Koenig et al., 2011), and are associated with masculine attributes such as being energetic, decisive and aggressive (Abele, 2003; Diekman & Eagly, 2000; Heilman, 2012). Gender stereotypes are derived from people's cognitive knowledge structure around gender (Markus et al., 1982), and people form their perceptions about what men and women are like and how they should behave (Hoyt & Johnson, 2011). Applying these notions to IST/ILT congruence, men and women would have different perceptions about leaders, and the varied IST/ILT congruence would lead to varied impacts on their LSE.

The role of gender in the relationship between IST/ILT congruence and LSE is not completely clear if we only look into the 'all' (including both male and female participants) group. For the sensitivity dimension for the 'all' group, the results demonstrate that the high IST/high ILT congruence of sensitivity is associated with higher LSE. The result for dynamism is more complicated. Like the dimension of sensitivity, high IST/high ILT congruence of the perception of dynamism is associated with higher LSE. However, the incongruence between IST/ILT dynamism in the scenario of high IST/low ILT is also associated with higher LSE. We can conclude that high IST/high ILT congruence matters for higher LSE in general, but the complicated congruence and incongruence results for the dynamism dimension are further clarified by the female's and male's results, as explained below.

With regard to the dimension of sensitivity, women have higher perceived confidence in their leadership capabilities when there is a better match (i.e., higher similarity) between their self-perceptions and their ideal leadership perceptions of being sensitive. For the dimension of dynamism, women also show higher LSE when they perceive a high IST/high ILT congruence.

Given sensitivity is a communal (feminine) characteristic and dynamism is an agentic (masculine) characteristic (Hoyt & Johnson, 2011), the female group appears to hold an androgynous view where they recall both feminine and masculine attributes from their gender-linked schemas as their personal standards for IST/ILT self-comparison (Markus et al., 1982). Therefore, women who participated in this research may hold a balanced view of leadership perception and this view gives rise to their LSE despite the "think manager-think male" stereotype linkage (Mahon & Greenwald, 2018).

For the male group, it appears that men also hold an androgynous view of leadership perception. For the dimension of sensitivity and dynamism, men have higher LSE when they possess high IST/low ILT. This means that they have a higher perceived belief in their leadership abilities when they view themselves as more sensitive and dynamic than the ideal leader. This result suggests that the leader role may be starting to be regarded as less masculine and more androgynous (Hoyt & Johnson, 2011). This may be due to the increase of women in leadership roles, thereby weakening the association between masculinity and leadership for both men and women (Carli & Eagly, 2017; Hoyt & Johnson, 2011).

Another interesting finding is that the IST/ILT congruence has a stronger effect on LSE for women while IST/ILT incongruence has a stronger effect on LSE for men. This is evident from the results of the sensitivity and dynamism dimension. The IST/ILT congruence effect on LSE for women is much weaker than the IST/ILT incongruence effect on LSE for

men. It seems that having a higher similarity to the ideal leader, rather than being more characteristic than them in particular characteristics, is more important for women than for men. From the gender perspective, gender stereotypes can have a corrosive impact on women's self-evaluation (Heilman, 2012); women tend to hold a more negative and critical view of themselves (Shen & Joseph, 2021). According to the internalised gender stereotypical self-views, women may also have lower confidence than men in their capabilities to be effective in leading (Hoyland et al., 2021). Based on these internalised self-views, women tend to be relational, and want to include people who are important to them (Eagly et al., 2004). In other words, women may feel more confident to lead and have a higher self-evaluation when the perceived similarity between ideal leaders and themselves is higher.

In contrast, high IST/low ILT of sensitivity and dynamism are associated with higher LSE for men. Based on men's gender-stereotypical self-views, they may see themselves as possessing masculine attributes, such as competitiveness and being competent (Heilman, 2012). Given this, men may tend to have a higher leadership performance self-rating than women assign to themselves (Paustian-Underdahl et al., 2014). They may also hold a more masculine leadership stereotype that they associate good leaders with masculine qualities (Koenig et al., 2011). As such, they see themselves as better leaders than ideal leaders, thus boosting their LSE.

4.5.2. **Practical Implications**

The dynamic among IST/ILT congruence, gender and LSE contributes to a growing understanding of the function of differentiated IST/ILT congruence and gender stereotypes in LSE development. First, given that IST/ILT congruence and gender are critical components for developing LSE in leadership development, consideration of ways to revise women's

perceptions of leaders is deemed necessary. This chapter demonstrates that there are differences in terms of how men and women's LSE would be influenced by the dynamic of IST/ILT congruence and gender. It appears that women have a stronger need to perceive themselves as similar to their ideal leaders than men. Moreover, women's LSE is weaker than men's, even when they see themselves as similar to sensitive and dynamic leaders. This may be because they still hold a masculine perception associated with leadership roles (Eagly et al., 2014). It is also found that women associate leader roles with masculine characteristics more than men do (Cuadrado et al., 2015). The gap between their feminine gender self-views and perceptions of leaderships may signify to them that they are not suited for leadership roles (Rosette et al., 2016).

Along these lines, organisations may consider showcasing a larger variety of male and female leadership role models, encompassing the benefits of androgynous leadership characteristics, and these leaders can share their views on these leadership styles and how they attain and manage their leadership responsibilities with these styles. Research has found that exposure to non-traditional roles, such as female engineers (i.e., successful women in a masculine career) can weaken women's beliefs about their leading abilities (Chong et al., 2017). In other words, merely demonstrating female role models with masculine characteristics does not seem to be effective in enhancing women's self-efficacy as leaders. In this case, demonstrating both male and female leaders possessing androgynous leadership attributes can subtly de-emphasise the gender differences (Martin & Phillips, 2017). Women can uniquely benefit from endorsing such neutral perceptions of leaders, and they may feel more confident of associating themselves with masculine actions (e.g., leading others) (Shen & Joseph, 2021). Additionally, this information on gender-neutral leadership qualities can help individuals enrich their leadership knowledge and revise their leadership schema (Scott & Brown, 2006), contributing to the enhancement of women's confidence and the feeling of

being included, especially when they take a role perceived as masculine (e.g., leadership role) (Martin & Phillips, 2017). In this case, more women may feel comfortable to lead and step up to assume leadership roles. As a result, this can possibly, in the longer term, solve the leader-shortage issue as mentioned in the introduction.

Second, the information derived from IST/ILT congruence scenarios can be useful information for women to develop their confidence in leading. Given that women tend to have a lower self-rating of their leadership performance due to the impact of gender stereotypes (Heilman, 2012; Paustian-Underdahl et al., 2014), facilitation of constructive self-reflection for female leaders based on the IST/ILT congruence scenarios would help their LSE development (Dwyer, 2019). Doing so would provide female leaders more factual information to mitigate the self-directed bias that leads to low self-rating and low self-confidence (Heilman, 2012).

4.6. Limitations and Future Research

This research is subject to several limitations. First, the results were applicable to predominately Caucasian samples collected from the U.K. and U.S., with an average of 6.36 years of leadership experience. Leadership perceptions are sensitive to context (such as national culture) and leadership experience (Braun et al., 2018). Moreover, experience in a specific domain is a proven predictor of self-efficacy in that domain (Bandura, 1989; Wood & Bandura, 1989). Although Offermann and Coats (2018) have claimed in their analyses that ILTs are remarkably stable elements, given the differentiated results shown in this research, it is suggested that these results could be generalised to other populations with further research.

Second, this research is not a longitudinal study, and all data were collected using a single method. Although common method bias was not found to be a threat to the results of

this research, a longitudinal study could better rule out this risk (Podsakoff et al., 2003). In general, future research should adopt a longitudinal approach that can better capture the possible changes in people's leadership perceptions (Epitropaki & Martin, 2004) and the subsequent impact on LSE.

Third, future research could further differentiate the concept of characteristics of leaders and characteristics of effective leaders in the ILT survey. ILT measurement has been designed based on the assumption that the characteristics of leaders are consistent with followers' prototypes of leaders (Avolio et al., 2020). However, there can be differences between ideal leaders' characteristics and the leader characteristics that are perceived as effective (Schyns & Schilling, 2011). Having more clarity about this differentiation is important because people may not necessarily consider anti-prototypical characteristics (such as masculinity and tyranny) as ineffective (Schyns et al., 2020). Moreover, people's ILTs can represent the expectations of leader behaviours (Lord et al., 2020). As such, integrating the concept of effective leaders' characteristics in the ILTs survey can help to collect information that can better interpret the IST/ILT congruence results, especially results related to anti-prototypical characteristics.

Conclusion

This research contributes to the literatures on Implicit Leadership Theories, gender and leader self-efficacy. The results show that IST/ILT congruence is related to LSE in varied ways, considering different dimensions and across different gender groups. This further confirms the importance of the congruence of IST and ILT and their combined impact on LSE. This also clarifies the dynamic between leadership perceptions and gender stereotypes

and their influence on men's and women's LSE. In other words, men and women's LSE are influenced differently by IST/ILT congruence and incongruence.

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Chapter 5

General Discussion and Conclusion

5.1. Introduction

The popularity and prevalence of leadership development continues to receive growing attention in organisations and research (Hammond et al., 2017). Despite different approaches (such as competence-based or identity-based theories), organisations are still facing the challenge that there is a shortage of effective leaders (Day et al., 2014; DeRue & Myers, 2014; Lord & Hall, 2005; Luria et al., 2019). This thesis has sought to address issues around the reasons triggering individuals to step up and pursue leadership development. Building upon the literature of possible selves, leader identity development and Implicit Leadership Theories (ILTs), a more thorough conceptual and theoretical understanding of individuals' interest in pursuing leadership development can bring several benefits for research and organisations' stakeholders.

Firstly, based on the insights of this thesis, other scholars may investigate identity-based leadership development from the Leader Future Work Self (LFWS) and Implicit self-theories (IST) / Implicit Leadership Theories (ILT) congruence perspective. My research results support that LFWS is a multidimensional possible self that is specific to the leadership domain. It includes both hope and fear elements and its contents encompass both leadership and the personal lives of individuals. These elements have linkages with individuals' motivations and behaviours in leadership development. Essentially, the results illustrate LFWS's positive impact on individuals' interest in leadership development.

From the IST/ILT congruence perspective, individuals have higher LSE when they perceive a close alignment between their own leadership capacities and those they expect of

leaders (Hoyland et al., 2021). LSE can also vary depending on the IST/ILT incongruence. People's LSE are higher when they see themselves as having more leadership characteristics than their actual leaders (Schyns et al., 2020). In contrast, they may feel less comfortable to lead, when they see they do not possess the necessary leadership capabilities in comparison with other leaders (DeRue & Myers, 2014; Diel et al., 2021). These insights clarify differentiated scenarios that can cause variations to individuals' LSE.

Second, insights from this thesis can unveil the gender differences in the context of LFWS and IST/ILT congruence. According to the results of this thesis, women and men appear to be motivated in different ways for leadership development. Women's, rather than men's, LFWS appears to decrease when they think about their worries and concerns about becoming future leaders. Furthermore, it seems that women see ideal leaders as possessing both masculine (i.e., dynamic) and feminine (i.e., sensitive) characteristics and they feel more confident to lead when they also see themselves as having both these characteristics. Similarly, men also hold a balanced view about the perception of leaders and that they show higher LSE when they view themselves as both more sensitive and dynamic than the ideal leaders. Regardless, women's LSE is still weaker than men's despite both of their LSE were increased by different IST/ILT congruence scenarios. This illustrates that the male-manager association still persists (Koenig et al., 2011), and individuals' gender-congruent, or gender-incongruent perception of leaders has an impact on men's and women's LSE.

Finally, insights from this thesis might be valuable for organisations and leadership development practitioners in helping them develop a more comprehensive identity-based leadership development approach. Such an approach needs to look into the hopes of individuals' LFWS for increasing their interest in leadership development, and IST/ILT congruence for enhancing their LSE. Practitioners also need to consider the gender differences in LFWS and IST/ILT congruence to develop men's and women's LI and LSE

differently. As such, this approach can provide more pragmatic insights for organisations to encourage their employees' pursuit of leadership development.

In this chapter, I will briefly recap the key findings and contributions of each of the three empirical chapters. After that, I will further discuss the overall contributions of the thesis. Lastly, I will provide detailed suggestions of future directions that identity-based leadership development could take.

5.2. Thesis Findings and Contributions

In this section, I will briefly recap the key findings and contributions of each chapter as a reminder before I discuss the overarching implications.

5.2.1. **The Conceptualisation of Leader Future Work Self (LFWS) for Understanding Leadership Development**

The first empirical paper (Chapter 2) of this thesis aimed to address the concerns about a general lack of understanding of future leader identity, which would explain individuals' interest in the pursuit of leadership development (Avolio & Hannah, 2008; Markus & Nurius, 1986; Sessa et al., 2018). Results reported in this chapter showed that LFWS was a related concept of FWS. LFWS focuses specifically on the future identity related to leadership role, while FWS refers more generally to the future self in the domain of work more broadly. It was found that LFWS consisted of both hope and fear elements that were related to individuals' work and personal lives.

This chapter contributes to the understanding of LFWS in two main ways. Firstly, it develops a new concept and clarifies the content of LFWS. In line with the possible selves

literature, LFWS includes four categories of content (i.e., leadership-related work, personal life, motivations and behavioural strategies) and two dimensions (i.e., hope and fear). Specially, these categories and dimensions have linkages with each other. Second, this chapter suggests a new model of the LFWS, revealing the dynamics of content included in LFWS. This LFWS structure shows that there are linkages between the content of LFWS and individuals' motivations and behavioural strategies to actualise their LFWS. These results indicate that hope and fear elements should be included in LFWS because they have linkages to varied motivations and behaviours strategies. In this respect, this chapter sets the stage for the further investigation of the role of LFWS in leadership development.

5.2.2. The Role of Leader Future Work Self (LFWS) in Identity-based Leadership Development: the Leader Self Efficacy (LSE) and Intention for Leadership Development (LI)

Building upon our improved understanding of Leader Future Work Self (LFWS) from the previous chapter, the second empirical chapter (Chapter 3) sought to explore the impact of activating the LFWS's hope and/or fear elements on LI and LSE through the strength of LFWS. This chapter found that imaginative narrative writing was effective in activating "LFWS (Hope)" elements to enhance individuals' LFWS strength. Moreover, LFWS strength was found to act as a mediator between the independent variable of 'LFWS (Hope)' and the dependent variables of LI. Surprisingly, the activation of "LFWS (Fear)" was found to lower women's LFWS strength, but not men's.

This chapter makes the following contributions to possible self and identity-based leadership development theories and research. First, it highlights the function of imaginative narrative writing for activating LFWS elements. The positive impact of the activation of the

LFWS hope elements illustrates that thinking in hopeful terms can enhance an individual's LFWS strength.

Second, this chapter makes a theoretical contribution to identity-based leadership development, through drawing attention to how LFWS strength may enhance individuals' LI, when their LFWS hope elements are activated. Within identity-based leadership development, the importance of the future-oriented motivation, triggered by possible leader self, has not been completely covered (Hannah et al., 2013; Lord et al., 2011). By revealing the positive role of LFWS strength, this research highlights the inclusion of LFWS within identity-based leadership development. Third, women demonstrate a lower LFWS strength, when they think of their worries and concerns about becoming future leaders, but men do not. This finding suggests organisations to mitigate the negative impact of fears on women's LFWS strength by utilising the positive impact of hopes activation more often.

5.2.3. The Impact of Congruence between Implicit Leadership Theories (ILT) and Implicit Self-Theories (IST) on Leader Self-efficacy (LSE): The Role of Gender

The final empirical chapter of this thesis (Chapter 4) aimed to investigate how the congruence between people's self-views as leaders and their general perceptions of leadership can enhance their perceived confidence as leaders. Using IST/ILT congruence as a measurement of the congruence between people's self-views as leaders and the characteristics individuals expect of leaders, my research tested the relationship between IST/ILT congruence and LSE. This chapter also examined the effect of IST/ILT congruence on LSE for men and women respectively.

Chapter 4 contributes to the understanding of IST/ILT congruence in the following ways. First, by using IST/ILT congruence as a conceptual basis, this chapter illustrates empirically the meaningful relationship between IST and ILT in explaining whether individuals feel able to attain leadership roles (DeRue & Ashford, 2010). IST/ILT congruence elaborates on the relationship between people's leader self-views and their ILTs with reference to social comparisons (Rus et al., 2010). Based on the congruence scenarios (i.e., low IST/low ILT, high IST/high ILT, high IST/low ILT and low IST/high ILT), IST/ILT congruence unveils its varied impact on individuals' LSE according to different leadership characteristics.

Second, this chapter clarifies the gender differences in IST/ILT congruence on LSE. While the ILT literature suggests ILTs can be generalised across gender groups (e.g., Deal & Stevenson, 1998; Nye & Forsyth, 1991; Offermann et al., 1994), and that gender is likely not a relevant ILT leadership characteristic (Offermann & Coats, 2018), my research's results suggest that the IST/ILT congruence of different leadership characteristics affects men and women's LSE differently.

5.3. *Implications of Research and Future Research Directions*

We understand from previous research that leader identity is a core element in leadership development (e.g., Day et al., 2014; Day & Sin, 2011; Lord & Hall, 2005; Miscenko et al., 2017). The main reason is that the development of leadership skills is inherently related to changes in leader identity (Miscenko et al., 2017). Individuals would pay more attention to the information contained in this identity and this guides them to behave as leaders (Lord & Hall, 2005; Murnieks et al., 2014). Therefore, individuals with leader identity are likely to see themselves as leaders and believe that they possess the leadership capabilities (Dutton et al., 2010), thus having higher confidence in leading (Wallace et al.,

2021). Moreover, because these individuals can identify themselves as leaders, they are more likely to seek out relevant leadership development opportunities for self-fulling purposes (Day & Harrison, 2007; Finkelstein et al., 2018).

This thesis is developed based on these premises of leader identity, but it has also included additional perspectives to extend our understanding about the role of leader identity in leadership development and leadership broadly. The key three additional perspectives included in this thesis are: future leader identity (i.e., LFWS), self-to-prototype comparison (i.e., IST/ILT congruence) and gender. While recent theories emphasized the importance of the development and internalisation of leader identity (Day et al., 2008; DeRue & Ashford, 2010), there has been a lack of clarity about the content of leader identity and a well-established measurement of this identity according to its content (Epitropaki et al., 2017). Moreover, there has not been sufficient empirical research on how the underlying cognitive component of leader identity can best enhance the development of this identity (Zaar et al., 2019). Given that, our knowledge of the development of leader identity remains mostly theoretical (Ryan et al., 2020).

This thesis fills the gaps in our understanding of the above-mentioned research in leader identity development from several perspectives. In particular, these perspectives are the influence of future identity, clarifying the future leader identity content, the comparison between self and prototype and the role of gender. I will further discuss them in detail in the following sections.

5.3.1. Leader Future Identity Content Illustrates Clearer Components

The importance of leader identity has been well-recognised in leadership development literature for its positive impact in triggering individuals' interest in leadership development

(Day & Harrison, 2007; Finkelstein et al., 2018). However, the content of leader identity, particularly leader possible self, has not been well defined and it is not completely clear how it can affect individuals' pursuit of leadership development (Avolio & Vogelgesang, 2012; Sessa et al., 2018).

Given these limitations, Leader Future Work Self (LFWS)'s content can shed light on this matter. LFWS is a more specific concept compared to Future Work Self (FWS). FWS focuses on the general work domain, while LFWS is more specific to the leadership domain and its content is related to different aspects of the realisation of future leadership roles. Content specificity in LFWS is important because individuals' behaviours are governed by personalised motivations, fuelled by specific possible selves (Cross & Markus, 1991). LFWS content encompasses four categories (i.e., leadership, personal life, motivation, and behavioural strategies) and each of these categories have linkages to two dimensions (i.e., hope and fear). My research also shows that LFWS is not a choice for everyone because some participants clearly mention it in their narratives.

This high level of specificity of LFWS content implies LFWS is a clearly defined identity, and that it can establish a stable sense of self-knowledge which can predict future events and regulate identity-related actions (Shamir & Eilam, 2005). Moreover, the more specific a possible self is, the more behavioural strategies can be generated in order to attain the hoped-for and avoid the feared possible self (Cross & Markus, 1991). These claims are also supported by the results that more behavioural strategies are found in LFWS than in FWS, and they are mainly related to the element of leadership performance. This establishes the conceptual foundation of LFWS and functions as a starting point where subsequent examinations of its impact on leadership development can be conducted by future research.

5.3.2. **Leader Future Identity Connects the Future and the Present**

It is argued that there is a lack of clarity regarding how the dynamics between possible selves' hope and fear elements matter to individuals' behaviours (Oyserman, 2015). This thesis provides new insights about the mechanism of leader future identity. The LFWS content structure reveals the dynamics of LFWS contents and the hope and fear dimensions. It shows that the hope and fear elements facilitate the envisioning of attaining the desired and avoiding the unwanted LFWS, and this process evokes motivations to approach or avoid specific behaviours (Hoyle & Sherrill, 2006).

Future identities matter because they function as future goals that are linked with our current motivations and behaviours (Oyserman & James, 2009). Evidence from this thesis shows that individuals appear to use the LFWS hope elements to guide their motivations and behavioural strategies to avoid the feared LFWS from realisation. It is reflected in the results, where mixed elements of hopes and fears are found across different content categories, particularly in the fear narratives. People mention their hopes when they think about their fears. Moreover, behavioural strategies are often found in the fear narratives, but not in the hope ones. These behavioural strategies are also related to the hoped-for LFWS they mention the most: being effective at managing team performance. Also, most of these strategies are proactive activities for driving development and changes to their current situations (Strauss & Kelly, 2016). These results are aligned with the claim that a hoped-for possible self can provide guidance as to what an individual can do to avoid becoming the feared self (Oyserman & Markus, 1990). Similarly, people appear to opt for approach behaviours to avoid the feared LFWS in order to actualise the hoped-for LFWS. Essentially, the results highlight the importance of hope elements in LFWS.

There are not many behavioural strategies found in FWS and LFWS in general, particularly in the hope narratives. It appears that positive elements in LFWS do not necessarily generate positive actions (Oyserman, 2015). The results show that individuals seem to know clearly about the leadership qualities leaders should or should not possess. While they appear to be not very confident and feel stressed about their feared LFWS, they seem to be certain about their experience and skills gaps, and that bridging these gaps would be a manageable task for them. When people perceive a high certainty about realising the LFWS and see it as a certain outcome, they are less likely to take actions to change current situations (Oyserman & James, 2011). This implies that when people imagine their hoped-for LFWS, they may think current actions are unnecessary and these actions can always be delayed. These results suggest the importance of including both hope and fear elements in LFWS to trigger behavioural strategies.

The concept of leader identity is not a sufficiently clear identity and there is no objective measurement to clarify whether an individual has a leader identity or not (DeRue et al., 2009). This thesis provides some clarification about this matter. Individuals clearly express their unwillingness to become future leaders, even when they are instructed to imagine their hopes. These participants provide more detailed descriptions about their negative emotions if they are made to take up leadership roles. They also perceive the leadership failures as possible and these experiences can damage other identities in their personal lives. This disconnection between LFWS and their current selves and other possible identities, and the high degree of perceived difficulty of attaining LFWS have explained their choice of 'leadership is not for me'. These results suggest that we should not assume everyone possess LFWS. Unless there are drastic changes (such as external shocks or events) to change the development of these people's LFWS, they are less likely to take actions and attain their LFWS (Miscenko et al., 2017). In this respect, the content structure of LFWS is

effective in explaining people's unwillingness to become future leaders: it also implies that these people may not be the right candidates for leadership development, because some fears and worries in LFWS are unlikely to be resolved.

5.3.3. **The Use of Leader Identity in Leadership Development and Leadership**

Leader future identity and self-to-prototype comparison can serve different purposes. This thesis provides a more detailed insight about how leader identity can be better utilised in facilitating individuals' pursuit of leadership development and leadership more broadly.

5.3.3.1. **Thinking about Future Leader Identity to Enhance Interest in Leadership Development**

Previous identity-based leadership development research has assumed leader identity only contains positive elements, and it mainly focuses on the current leader identity, without acknowledging the impact of future-oriented leader identity (Hannah et al., 2013; Lanka et al., 2020). Also, there have been inconsistent results concerning the hope and fear elements in the possible selves literature (e.g., Dalley & Buunk, 2011; Hoyle & Sherrill, 2006; Murru & Ginis, 2010; Ouellette et al., 2005; Ruvolo & Markus, 1992).

Given this inconsistency, this thesis highlights that narrative writing is beneficial in helping people express their thoughts and gain insights about their LFWS (Frattaroli, 2006). In particular, this method is effective in activating the hope elements in LFWS that can increase LFWS strength. It shows that this cognitive processing intervention is able to enhance individuals' awareness of their situations and effectively regulate their motivations (King, 2001). Essentially, when individuals think of their hope elements in LFWS, these

imaginative images can enhance their LFWS strength. This means that these interventions are able to increase the perceived clarity, accessibility and subjective importance of people's LFWS, and by thinking about these elements more frequently, their LFWS can be strengthened and developed over time (Higgins, 1987; Strauss et al., 2012).

A particularly important insight for identity-based leadership development is that, when the hope elements in LFWS are activated, the increased LFWS strength enhances individuals' interest in leadership development. This indicates that the hoped-for LFWS is perceived as a valuable element that can promote a positive self-view (Dutton et al., 2010; Roberts et al., 2009). It fuels people with an approach motivation to realise their hoped-for LFWS (Lord & Brown, 2004). As such, individuals demonstrate higher intention for leadership development to reduce the gap between their current leader selves and hoped-for LFWS (Sessa et al., 2018).

5.3.3.2. Looking into the Comparison between Self and Prototype to Increase Perceived Confidence in Leading

Whereas there has been a lack of understanding about the impact of ILT and its sub-dimensions on LSE, scholars have contended the critical role of self-views as leaders in facilitating people's leadership development (Lord & Hall, 2005; Van Knippenberg et al., 2004; Van Knippenberg & Hogg, 2003). To take a step further, congruence is a key element to relate leader self-views and perception of leaders, because prototype matching is important not only for the perceptions of others, but also for the perception of the self (Lord et al., 2020).

This research can shed light on the importance of congruence. There are two IST/ILT scenarios that warrant the enhancement of individuals' perceived confidence in leading. The

higher the congruence between IST and ILT on the dimensions of sensitivity and dynamism, the higher the women's LSE will be. The second scenario is when men have higher IST than ILT on the dimension of sensitivity and dynamism and this increases their LSE. Although the congruence scenario that works for men or women is different, this can still support the claim that individuals need to see themselves as similar, or even better than the ideal leaders, in order to feel confident to lead. While the general assumption is that people feel less comfortable to lead, when they perceive a mismatch between their IST and ILT (DeRue & Myers, 2014; Epitropaki et al., 2017), this research clarifies a high IST/low ILT incongruence situation can indeed increase people's LSE. This further confirms the importance of using congruence measures to meaningfully relate IST to ILT in order to explain LSE (DeRue & Ashford, 2010).

5.3.4. Gender Matters in Identity-based Leadership Development

Previous research asserts that people hold different cognitive knowledge structures about gender and they differ in how their gender self-views are incorporated into their self-concepts (Markus et al., 1982). Individuals form their gender self-views when they are growing up; they learn about the meaning of their gender and develop perceptions (stereotypes) about the appropriate characteristics men and women should demonstrate (i.e., women should be feminine, while men should be masculine) (Bandura, 1977b; Eagly & Karau, 2002; Hoyt & Johnson, 2011).

Such gender beliefs are also critical components of an individual's self-concept (Markus et al., 1982). The gender differences in these beliefs influence people's self-concepts; therefore, self-concepts are generally inclined to be gender-stereotypical (Eagly et al., 2004). Based on the gender stereotypes individuals develop, they evaluate a person (themselves or

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others) and conclude whether this person demonstrates masculine or feminine qualities, according to their gender (Powell & Butterfield, 2017).

While the traditional views about what men and women should do have been evolving, gender stereotypes still persist in the leadership field and affect the leadership development of men and women differently (Eagly et al., 2020). In this regard, this research contributes to our understanding of the possible selves, ILT and identity-based leadership development literature, by clarifying the role of gender in LFWS development and IST/ILT congruence.

5.3.4.1. Fears in Future Leader Identity Can Impact Women Negatively

When the gender stereotypical self-concepts are internalised, individuals use them as a benchmark for judging their own behaviours (Bussey & Bandura, 2004). Due to the stereotypical gender self-views people hold, as discussed in the previous section, gender differences are found in the context of LFWS. It is found that women, rather than men, appear to have lower LFWS strength, when they think of their worries and fears associated with LFWS. Women who have internalised gender self-views are more likely to hold feminine views about themselves and to behave according to these perceptions to feel good about themselves (Eagly et al., 2004). However, their internalised stereotypical gender self-views can contradict their general perception of a leadership role, which is traditionally masculine (Eagly & Karau, 2002). In this respect, when women perceive a lack of connection between LFWS and their current gender self-views, they are unlikely to perceive the attainment of LFWS as possible. Therefore, their LFWS strength decreases, because of these concerns embedded in the fear elements of their LFWS.

Women, rather than men, may have perceived an incongruence between their LFWS and other possible selves they may possess in the future, and this is part of their fears and

worries in LFWS. Individuals can hold multiple possible selves that are related to different

social roles they will hold in the future, such as families' main homemaker or families' main

provider (Brown & Diekman, 2010; Eagly et al., 2020; Oyserman & James, 2011). Due to

people's stereotypical gender self-views, as discussed earlier, women are more likely to

expect women (including themselves) to be responsible for care-giving, rather than being

financial providers (Croft et al., 2019). Essentially, these views can be integrated into

women's possible selves and they may envision themselves as possessing family-related

possible selves (e.g., caregivers) (Croft et al., 2019). Given women's concerns regarding the

possible conflict between their family-focused possible selves and their LFWS, they may

interpret the realisation of LFWS as unmanageable, due to the difficulty involved (Oyserman

& James, 2009). In this way, these fears and concerns trigger women's thoughts about these

concerns and lower their LFWS strength.

5.3.4.2. Self-to-Prototype Congruence Matters for Women, while Incongruence Matters for Men

Unlike the assumption that leadership perceptions are predominantly masculine

(Koenig et al., 2011), women appear to endorse sensitivity (i.e. typical feminine leader

characteristic (Offermann & Coats, 2018) and dynamism (i.e. typical masculine leader

characteristic (Festekjian et al., 2014; Sy et al., 2010) as stereotypical leaders' characteristics.

Also, they feel more able to lead when their ISTs are close to their ILTs on these two

dimensions. Similarly, men also seem to hold an androgynous view of perception of leaders.

They feel more able to lead, when they see themselves as more sensitive and dynamic than

ideal leaders.

This result can mean people perceive the leader role as less masculine and more androgynous (Hoyt & Johnson, 2011). However, the impact of IST/ILT congruence on LSE is stronger for women, while the IST/ILT incongruence (i.e., high IST/low ILT) on LSE is stronger for men. This reveals that the pattern of congruence matters to men and women differently. Women appear to need a higher similarity between ideal leaders and themselves to feel more confident to lead, while men have higher LSE when they view themselves as better than the ideal leaders. It seems that women are more critical about their leading capabilities and are less confident in leading (Hoyland et al., 2021; Shen & Joseph, 2021). This can be because women are less likely to see themselves as prototypical leaders due to the incongruence between their feminine gender self-views and their masculine perception of leaders (Cuadrado et al., 2015; Foti et al., 2012). Even if women endorse the sensitivity and dynamism dimensions, this does not rule out the 'male-manager' association, which still persists in society and has an impact on individuals' perception of leaders (Eagly et al., 2020).

In general, this research confirms the importance of testing separate IST/ILT dimensions to understand how specific leadership characteristics contribute to men's and women's LSE (Schyns et al., 2020; Tavares et al., 2018). This also sheds light on the influence of gender congruent and incongruent leadership characteristics on men's and women's LSE.

5.4. Practical Implications

The present research has implications for organisations and leadership development practitioners who need to increase their employees' interest in leadership development and leadership more broadly. In addition to the identity-based leadership development, which advocates the development of leader identity (e.g., Day & Harrison, 2007; Ibarra et al., 2010; Miscenko et al., 2017), LFWS and IST/ILT congruence offer additional insights about the

development of leader identity for leadership development. As suggested by Kragt and Day (2020), individuals' self-views and their developmental needs are vital for driving them to engage in leadership development and leadership activities. Organizations can adopt imaginative narrative writing to help individuals gain insights into their hopes and aspirations in their LFWS (King, 2001), thus helping them to develop their LFWS. Importantly, this practice can help to increase individuals' LSE and LI, which are critical elements for leadership development (Anderson et al., 2008; Boyce et al., 2010).

Practitioners can also utilise IST/ILT congruence to help employees identify a specific scenario that can enhance their LSE. In particular, women feel more able to lead, when they see themselves as similar to sensitive and dynamic leaders. Men show stronger perceived confidence to lead when they perceive themselves as better than sensitive and dynamic leaders. Both scenarios can enhance men's and women's confidence in their leadership capabilities. This type of self-evaluation can be a source of feedback that helps to enhance individuals' LSE (Bussey & Bandura, 1999; Wood & Bandura, 1989). As a result, they may also be more likely to claim the leader identity and to step up as leaders (Lord et al., 2020).

Organizations can integrate the insights from this research to promote a more neutral perception of leaders' qualities. This research shows that women are still impacted by the perception of 'male-manager' association (Koenig et al., 2011), due to their stronger need for IST/ILT congruence and lower confidence in leading. We know from research that promoting femininity in female leaders can only further the gender stereotypical perception that women are not sufficient for leadership roles (Ellemers, 2018). In contrast, promoting a successful female leader role model with masculine leadership qualities alone can weaken women's confidence in leading (Chong et al., 2017). In other words, merely promoting female leader role models with agentic characteristics may not be effective in enhancing women's LSE.

Practically, organisations can consider promoting male and female leader role models who possess androgynous leadership characteristics. By adopting this gender-neutral approach, the gender differences can be downplayed subtly (Martin & Phillips, 2017). Thus, women can feel more included and have higher confidence, especially when they hold a masculine role (e.g., leader role) (Shen & Joseph, 2021). These measures are likely to revise people's perception of leaders and create a more encouraging environment for women to feel able to lead.

5.5. *Future Research Directions*

This research is not without limitations and there are several suggestions recommended for future research, relevant to this thesis topic.

Regarding the qualitative methodology used in this research, although narratives can provide rich details of LFWS and its linkage with LFWS-related motivations and behaviours, face-to-face interactions with participants (such as using interviews) can provide the opportunity for clarification; thus, this method is recommended for future research for collecting data concerning LFWS elements (Patton, 2002).

Regarding the experiment design of activating LFWS elements, visual methods can be combined with the imaginative narrative writing to maximise the effect of activation. Possible selves are basically embedded in people's imagined images (Ruvolo & Markus, 1992). As a distant possible self, LFWS is more abstract than a possible self that is near to the present (Croft et al., 2019). Thus, employing visual methods, for example, drawings, pictures and photographs, can be effective in making abstract conception more concrete and clearer (Schyns et al., 2011; Loveday et al., 2018). Particularly, drawing can help to derive non-textual and spatial format of representation (e.g., an envisioned future as a leader) (Packard &

Conway, 2006). Furthermore, the emotional facet involved in this method can facilitate individuals to reveal their implicit thoughts (Schyns et al., 2013). In addition to the data collected through imaginative narrative writing, drawings can also serve as an additional source of data for analysis, and they can enhance the data richness and findings' usefulness (Klenke et al., 2016; Packard & Conway, 2006).

Regarding research sample, student samples were employed for the LFWS and IST/ILT congruence studies. These samples surveyed were suitable for the current research, because the participants have been exposed to leadership experiences (i.e., holding leadership roles in work or non-work related organisations, such as voluntary associations), meaning they have already developed, to some degree, a self-view as leaders (Miscenko et al., 2017). From LFWS perspective, this implies these student participants would be able to envision an actively working LFWS, thus indicating the student sample matches the population of interest in my research (i.e., individuals who possess LFWS) (Rietzschel et al., 2017). However, future research can test the impact of LFWS on working people or respondents from other cultures (i.e., non-Caucasian population). This is because perceptions of leaders can be sensitive to the context (such as culture) and experience as leaders (Braun et al., 2018). Furthermore, experience can have an impact on one's self-efficacy in a particular domain (Bandura, 1989; Wood & Bandura, 1989). Whereas ILTs are suggested to be stable elements that can be generalised across different groups (Offermann & Coats, 2018), the IST/ILT congruence and incongruence influence women and men differently. This means that, the culture, leadership experience and gender are possible factors that can be related to the variations of IST/ILT congruence. Given this possibility, future research could test the impact of IST/ILT congruence on other populations.

Another limitation is related to longitudinal research design. LFWS can be malleable, especially as people gain more leadership experience and knowledge (Lord & Hall, 2005). A

longitudinal research design can also inform how LFWS evolves during the leadership

development process (Miscenko et al., 2017). Similarly, individuals' perception of leaders

can also change across time (Epitropaki & Martin, 2004). Additionally, although no

methodological biases were found identified in this thesis, a longitudinal design could better

minimise this risk (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Such design can also better capture the changes in

individuals' LFWS and perceptions of leaders.

Regarding the measurement of IST/ILT congruence, future research could further

clarify the differentiation between ideal leaders' and effective leaders' characteristics in the

ILT survey. The ILT measure was designed based on the match between leadership

characteristics and followers' prototypes of leaders (Avolio et al., 2020). Nevertheless, there

may be differences in individuals' perceptions about ideal leaders' and effective leaders'

characteristics (Schyns & Schilling, 2011). Moreover, anti-prototypical characteristics (e.g.,

masculinity and tyranny) are not necessarily ineffective leadership characteristics (Schyns et

al., 2020), particularly if they match the perceiver's expectations of leadership behaviours

(i.e., ILTs) (Lord et al., 2020). Therefore, specifying the ILT survey questions, so that they

may better capture the effective leaders' characteristics, would clarify the IST/ILT

congruence results, particularly about the findings related to anti-prototypical characteristics.

5.6. Conclusion

The main purpose of this thesis was to provide insights into the roles of LFWS and

IST/ILT congruence for leadership development and leadership more broadly. In view of the

results which have been presented and discussed in the previous chapters, it can be concluded

that both LFWS and IST/ILT congruence play crucial roles in facilitating individuals'

leadership development process. LFWS represents the individuals' perceived future as

leaders and this can fuel them with positive future-oriented motivations for leadership development, especially when the hope elements are activated. Moreover, IST/ILT congruence can enhance individuals' perceived confidence to lead, through the matching of their self-views as leaders and their perceptions of ideal leaders. Future investigations will also benefit from adopting a longitudinal design and testing the concepts on samples from the different populations and groups.

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Appendix 1: Chapter 2 LFWS Themes and Coding Guideline

Themes definitions:

1. Behavioural strategies: It refers to all behaviours suggested by the participants to approach or avoid the hoped-for (i.e. desired) or feared (i.e. undesired) LFWS.
2. Company environment: It refers to the information about the companies' environments participants work for. Examples of elements included: company culture, company scale and reputation, workspace, work environment and workplace set up.
3. Compensation and benefits: It refers to the information about the compensation and benefits related to the job. Examples of elements included: employee benefits, income, job scope, job nature, reward system, working hours and workload etc.
4. Development: It refers to the information about the development of the participants. Examples of elements included: business travel as learning opportunities, career progression and promotion, changing jobs or career, expansion of job scope for new learning, learning from others, skills and knowledge learning etc.
5. Job performance: It refers to the information about job performance. It can be related to work in general or leadership. Different codes are used to specify the differences. Examples of elements included: different skills needed for demonstrating leadership performance, such as decision making, fostering positive culture, delegation, motivating followers, planning etc. It also includes competence, knowledge level, experience, personal success (e.g. personal achievement, fame) and collective success (e.g. achieve group goals, contribute to greater good).
6. Leadership choice: It refers to the preference shown by the participants about being leaders in the future.
7. Motivation: It refers to different motivations stem from the hoped-for (i.e. desired) or feared (i.e. undesired) LFWS. Examples of elements included: passion, enjoyment, fulfilment, stress and draining etc.
8. Personal life: It refers to the information related to the participants' personal lives. Examples of elements included: personal finance situation, personal hobbies, personal relationships, personal goals and work-life balance etc.
9. Work relationship: It refers to the information related to the work relationships with colleagues, external customers, followers and superiors. Examples of elements included: harmonious relationship, mutual understanding, respect, teamwork, trust, obedience from followers, and qualities of colleagues/customers/followers/superiors etc

Appendix 2: Chapter 2 FWS Themes and Coding Guideline

Themes definitions:

1. Behavioural strategies: It refers to all behaviours suggested by the participants to approach or avoid the hoped-for (i.e. desired) or feared (i.e. undesired) FWS.
2. Company environment: It refers to the information about the companies' environments participants work for. Examples of elements included: company culture, company scale and reputation, workspace, work environment and workplace set up.
3. Compensation and benefits: It refers to the information about the compensation and benefits related to the job. Examples of elements included: employee benefits, income, job scope, job nature, reward system, working hours and workload etc.
4. Development: It refers to the information about the development of the participants. Examples of elements included: business travel as learning opportunities, career progression and promotion, changing jobs or career, expansion of job scope for new learning, learning from others, skills and knowledge learning etc.
5. Job performance: It refers to the information about job performance. Examples of elements included: competence and skills, knowledge level, experience, personal success (e.g. personal achievement, fame) and collective success (e.g. achieve group goals, contribute to greater good).
6. Motivation: It refers to different motivations stem from the hoped-for (i.e. desired) or feared (i.e. undesired) FWS. Examples of elements included: passion, enjoyment, fulfilment, stress and draining etc.
7. Personal life: It refers to the information related to the participants' personal lives. Examples of elements included: personal finance situation, personal hobbies, personal relationships, personal goals and work-life balance etc.
8. Work relationship: It refers to the information related to the work relationships with colleagues, external customers and superiors. Examples of elements included: harmonious relationship, mutual understanding, respect, teamwork, trust, obedience from followers, and qualities of colleagues/customers/superiors etc

Appendix 3: Chapter 2 and 3 – Survey (Part 1)

<u>Employment status (for participants screening purpose):</u>

What is your current employment status (select more than one option if applicable)?

Student

Full time employment

Part time employment

Unemployed (and job seeking)

Unemployed (and not currently looking for work)

Self-employed

Not in paid work (e.g. homemaker, retired or unable to work)

Thank you very much for your interest in this study! We are only recruiting participants with student status for this study and we are sorry that you do not fulfil this key criterion according to your answer. Please feel free to sign up for our other future studies!

<u>Imagination of FWS:</u>

We all think about the future to some extent, and we imagine what may happen. For this study, we are asking you to imagine the **future of your work life**. We will call this your **Future Work Self**. Imagine you could travel in time and can take a look at your future work self. Try to go as far ahead into the future as possible, so that you still have a clear image.

When responding to the questions, please focus on your future **work life** only, not life as a whole.

With that image of your **future work self** in mind, now please focus on your **hopes** for your future work self. Imagine that **what you have hoped for** in your future work life has become true. Keep that image in mind. What is your future work self like? What does your future work self do? Please write below in at least 100 words what you have imagined and be as detailed as possible.

Please write about your future **work life** only, not life as a whole.

Note: 100 words = approximately 520 characters

With that image of your **future work self** in mind, now please focus on your **worries** for your future work self. Imagine that **what you are worried about** in your future work life has

become true. Keep that image in mind. What is your future work self like? What does your future work self do? Please write below in at least 100 words what you have imagined and be as detailed as possible.

Please write about your future **work life** only, not life as a whole.

Note: 100 words = approximately 520 characters

<u>Envisioned age:</u>

What was the age you envisioned yourself to be when imagining your **future work life**?

<u>FWS Strength:</u>

Thinking of your future work self, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the below statements?

This future is very easy for me to imagine

The mental picture of this future is very clear

I can easily imagine my Future Work Self

I am very clear about who and what I expect to become in my future work

What type of future I expect in relation to my work is very clear in my mind

How I might act in my future work is very clear in my mind

This image of my future work self is a main part of my identity

This image of my future work self is important in defining who I am

Response anchors: Strongly disagree (1) Somewhat disagree (2) Neither agree nor disagree (3) Somewhat agree (4) Strongly agree (5)

Thinking of your future work self, does that image include being someone who will **supervise, manage, or lead others**?

Response anchors: Definitely will (1) Probably will (2) Might or might not (3) Probably will not (4) Definitely will not (5)

<u>LFWS strength for the group who write about FWS:</u>

Being a leader in the future is very easy for me to imagine

The mental picture of myself as a leader in the future is very clear

I can easily imagine my future work self as a leader

I am very clear about what kind of leader I might become

What type of future I expect as a leader is very clear in my mind

How I might act as a leader is very clear in my mind

The image of myself as a future leader is a main part of my identity

The image of myself as a future leader is important in defining who I am

Response anchors: Strongly disagree (1) Somewhat disagree (2) Neither agree nor disagree (3) Somewhat agree (4) Strongly agree (5)

Intention for leadership development (LI):

The next questions are about whether you are considering undertaking activities to develop your leadership knowledge and skills in the future.

Such leadership development activities can include, for example, seeking out leadership development training/ seeking out mentors and coaches/ asking others for feedback on your leadership/ seeking work assignments to stretch or challenge your current leadership capabilities/ developing your network with other leaders/ shadowing other leader(s)/ self-directed learning (e.g. readings books and using internet research for leadership development purposes).

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the below statements?

If I were completely free to choose, I would prefer to determine and direct my own leadership development

If I had no constraints (e.g., financial, time, etc.), I would perform self-development activities to become a better leader

In the next 12 months, I have plans to develop my leadership knowledge, skills and experience through self-directed leadership development

I will take initiative to take part in leadership development activities when such opportunities are available

Response anchors: Strongly disagree (1) Somewhat disagree (2) Neither agree nor disagree (3) Somewhat agree (4) Strongly agree (5)

Need for achievement and power:

Please read the following statements regarding your **personal needs**. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the below statements?

I want other people to act in my way (1)

I love to lead and be in charge (2)

I love to compete and win (3)

I will argue with someone if I disagree with him/her (4)

I love to confront challenges of the job (5)

In order to fulfil tasks, I would like to take risks (6)

I am willing to set and achieve realistic goals (7)

I would like to seek satisfaction from accomplishing a difficult task (8)

Response anchors: Strongly disagree (1) Somewhat disagree (2) Neither agree nor disagree (3) Somewhat agree (4) Strongly agree (5)

Big 5 personality test (short version):

How well do the following statements describe your personality?

 I see myself as someone who…

is reserved

is generally trusting

tends to be lazy

is relaxed, handles stress well

has few artistic interests

is outgoing, sociable

tends to find fault with others

does a thorough job

gets nervous easily

has an active imagination

Please select 'Strongly disagree' for this question

Response anchors: Strongly disagree (1) Somewhat disagree (2) Neither agree nor disagree (3) Somewhat agree (4) Strongly agree (5)

Demographic questions:

Gender

Male

Female

Other

I prefer not to answer

Your country of origin (the country where you grew up)?

Your age (years)

Have you had any previous working experience (full time / part time / self employment)?

Yes. Please indicate year(s) of working experience you have had

No

Have you had any previous experience in supervising, managing or leading others? This can be at work, or in non-work groups or associations (e.g. student union / volunteer / community service / sports / religion / scout etc)

Yes

No

How many years of supervisory/ managing/ leading experience do you have at work and in other non-work related contexts?

Year(s) of leadership experience at work

Year(s) of leadership experience outside of work

What is the highest level of education you have completed?

No formal qualification

Secondary Education (GCSE/O-Levels)

Post-Secondary Education (College, A-Levels, NVQ3 or below, or similar)

Vocational Qualification (Diploma, Certificate, BTEC, NVQ 4 and above, or similar)

Undergraduate degree (BA/BSc/other)

Graduate degree (MA/MSc/MPhil/other)

Doctorate degree (PhD/MD/other)

<u>Leader self-efficacy (LSE):</u>

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the below statements?

I feel that I know a lot more than most leaders about what it takes to be a good leader

I know what it takes to make a work group accomplish its tasks

In general, I am not very good at leading a group of my peers

I am confident in my ability to influence a work group that I lead

I know what it takes to keep a work group running smoothly

I know how to encourage good work group performance

I feel comfortable allowing most group members to contribute to the task when I am leading a work group

Overall, I doubt that I can lead a work group successfully

Response anchors: Strongly disagree (1) Somewhat disagree (2) Neither agree nor disagree (3) Somewhat agree (4) Strongly agree (5)

<u>Worries about COVID-19:</u>

How worried are you about the current Covid-19 Coronavirus pandemic affecting the **future work self** you imagined at the start of this survey?

How worried are you about how the Covid-19 Coronavirus pandemic may affect your life **right now**?

Response anchors: Not at all worried (1) Slightly worried (2) Moderately worried (3) Very worried (4) Extremely worried (5)

Appendix 4: Chapter 2 and 3 – Survey (Part 2)

Note: The following overlapping information or questions of Part 1 and Part 2 survey will not be listed here again:

- FWS Strength
- LFWS Strength
- LSE
- LI
- Demographic questions
- Need for achievement and power
- Worries about COVID-19

<u>FWS intervention group:</u>

We all think about the future to some extent, and we imagine what may happen. For this study, we are asking you to imagine the future of your work life. We will call this your Future Work Self. Imagine you could travel in time and can take a look at your future work self. Try to go as far ahead into the future as possible, so that you still have a clear image.

When responding to the questions, please focus on your future work life only, not life as a whole.

With that image of your **future work self** in mind, now please focus on your **hopes** for your future work self. Imagine that **what you have hoped for** in your future work life has become true. Keep that image in mind. What is your future work self like? What does your future work self do? Please write below in at least 100 words what you have imagined and be as detailed as possible.

Please write about your future **work life** only, not life as a whole.

Note: 100 words = approximately 520 characters

With that image of your **future work self** in mind, now please focus on your **worries** for your future work self. Imagine that **what you are worried about** in your future work life has become true. Keep that image in mind. What is your future work self like? What does your future work self do? Please write below in at least 100 words what you have imagined and be as detailed as possible.

Please write about your future **work life** only, not life as a whole.

Note: 100 words = approximately 520 characters

LFWS (Hope and Fear) intervention group:

We all think about the future to some extent, and we imagine what may happen. For this study, we are asking you to imagine the **future of your work life**. Imagine yourself as a **supervisor, manager or leader of others** at work. We will call this your **Future Leader Self**. Imagine you could travel in time and can take a look at your Future Leader Self. Try to go as far ahead into the future as possible, so that you still have a clear image. (Note: This introduction is used in all LFWS intervention groups)

With that image of your future **leader self** in mind, now please focus on your **hopes** for your future leader self. Imagine that **what you have hoped for** in your future work life as a **supervisor, manager or leader of others** has become true. Keep that image in mind. What is your future leader self like? What does your future leader self do? Please write below in at least 100 words what you have imagined and be as detailed as possible.
Please write about your future **work life** only, not life as a whole.

Note: 100 words = approximately 520 characters

With that image of your future leader self in mind, now please focus on your worries for your future leader self. Imagine that what you are worried about in your future work life as a supervisor, manager or leader of others has become true. Keep that image in mind. What is your future leader self like? What does your future leader self do? Please write below in at least 100 words what you have imagined and be as detailed as possible.
Please write about your future work life only, not life as a whole.

Note: 100 words = approximately 520 characters

LFWS (Hope) intervention group

With that image of your future leader self in mind, now please focus on your hopes for your future leader self. Imagine that what you have hoped for in your future work life as a supervisor, manager or leader of others has become true. Keep that image in mind. What is your future leader self like? What does your future leader self do? Please write below in at least 200 words what you have imagined and be as detailed as possible.
Please write about your future work life only, not life as a whole.
Note: 200 words = approximately 1040 characters

LFWS (Fear) intervention group:

With that image of your future leader self in mind, now please focus on your worries for your future leader self. Imagine that what you are worried about in your future work life as a supervisor, manager or leader of others has become true. Keep that image in mind. What is your future leader self like? What does your future leader self do? Please write below in at least 200 words what you have imagined and be as detailed as possible.
Please write about your future work life only, not life as a whole.
Note: 200 words = approximately 1040 characters

Checking of possible self changes during the two-week gap period:

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the below statement?

'In the past two weeks, something has happened that drastically changed my view of myself in the future'

Response anchors: Strongly disagree (1) Somewhat disagree (2) Neither agree nor disagree (3) Somewhat agree (4) Strongly agree (5)

Appendix 5: Chapter 4 – Survey

Note: Same survey was used for Prolific and MBA data collections

Implicit self-theories:

This section is about your perception of **YOUR OWN LEADERSHIP STYLE**. Use the numbers 1-9 to indicate how characteristic you consider the following traits to be of **YOUR OWN LEADERSHIP STYLE.**

Understanding

Sincere

Helpful

Intelligent

Clever

Knowledgeable

Educated

Motivated

Dedicated

Hard-working

Dynamic

Strong

Energetic

Domineering

Pushy

Manipulative

Conceited

Selfish

Loud

Masculine

Male

Response anchors: 1 : Not at all characteristic 9 : Very characteristic

Implicit Leadership Theories:

This section is about your perception of an **IDEAL LEADER**'s style. Use the numbers 1-9 to indicate how characteristic you consider the following traits to be of an **IDEAL LEADER**'s style.

Understanding

Sincere

Helpful

Intelligent

Clever

Knowledgeable

Educated

Motivated

Dedicated

Hard-working

Dynamic

Strong

Energetic

Domineering

Pushy

Manipulative

Conceited

Selfish

Loud

Masculine

Male

Response anchors: 1 : Not at all characteristic 9 : Very characteristic

Leader self-efficacy:

This section is about your views of **YOURSELF AS A LEADER**. Please read each statement carefully. Then indicate on the scale the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the statements.

I feel that I know a lot more than most leaders about what it takes to be a good leader

I know what it takes to make a work group accomplish its tasks

In general, I am not very good at leading a group of my peers

I am confident in my ability to influence a work group that I lead

I know what it takes to keep a work group running smoothly

I know how to encourage good work group performance

I feel comfortable allowing most group members to contribute to the task when I am leading a work group

Overall, I doubt that I can lead a work group successfully

Response anchors: Strongly disagree (1) Somewhat disagree (2) Neither agree nor disagree (3) Somewhat agree (4) Strongly agree (5)

Demographic questions

Gender

Male

Female

Other : Please describe if you wish

I prefer not to answer (4)

Your country of origin (the country where you grew up)

Your age (years)

What is your current employment status ?

Full time employment

Part time employment

Unemployed (and job seeking)

Unemployed (and not currently looking for work)

Self-employed

Student

Not in paid work (e.g. homemaker, retired or unable to work)

How long have you been working for your current organisation? (years)

How long have you been taking up a supervisory role in your current organisation? (years)

How many years of supervisory role experience do you have in total (not just in the current/latest organisation)? (years)

Which of the following best describes your current role at work? (click in a box to select) (provide your latest role if you are not employed now)

Senior Executive - Please provide your job title

Middle Management - Please provide your job title

Junior Management - Please provide your job title

Non Management - Please provide your job title

What is your current work function within the organisation (regardless of your actual position)? (provide your latest work function if you are not employed now)

What is the current industry you primarily work in? (provide the latest industry if you are not employed now)

What is the highest level of education you have completed?

No formal qualification

Secondary Education (GCSE/O-Levels)

Post-Secondary Education (College, A-Levels, NVQ3 or below, or similar)

Vocational Qualification (Diploma, Certificate, BTEC, NVQ 4 and above, or similar)

Undergraduate degree (BA/BSc/other)

Graduate degree (MA/MSc/MPhil/other)

Doctorate degree (PhD/MD/other)