

THE EFFECT OF HONEST AND HUMBLE
LEADERSHIP ON SALES OUTCOME

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I dedicate my dissertation to my parents, William and Margaret Ryan, immigrants from the island of Montserrat, British West Indies, known as the Emerald Island of the West.

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Abstract: The role of leaders in shaping team outcomes is vital (Williams et al., 2010). As such, we know leaders play a significant role, influencing the attitudes and behaviors of their employees. It is widely believed that by influencing the values and priorities of their followers, leaders inspire them to perform beyond expectations (Ou et al., 2015). The leader-follower relationship lies at the heart of all transformations that are initiated and triggered by leaders (Owens & Hekman, 2016). Based on the role theory and social exchange theory, LMX theory helps to explain the exchange relationship between leaders and subordinates in terms of antecedents and outcomes (Liden et al., 1997). The exchange relationship between leader and followers depends upon the value they can offer each other, and LMX provides a framework to evaluate the larger network of such exchanges, which then help explain important organizational outcomes such as performance and customer orientation (Liden et al., 1997). Therefore, LMX theory can be leveraged as a basis of examination in order to establish and present the outcomes of this study. Based on the literature, it appears that humility theory is a part of servant leadership, but it is not clear how both are related. There is no evidence to examine whether humility is a component or an antecedent of servant leadership (Rego et al., 2017). In a similar fashion, we don't know what impact servant leadership has on honesty-humility leadership. This study intends to fill this gap in the leadership literature by investigating the influence of servant leadership on honesty-humility leadership. Using Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) theory, this study will advance the literature by exploring the impact of servant leadership on honesty-humility theory of leadership and what influence their combined impact will have on organizational outcomes such as performance and customer orientation.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The role of leaders in shaping team outcomes is vital (Williams, Parker, & Turner, 2010). Leaders play a significant role, influencing the attitude and behavior of their employees. It is widely believed that by influencing the values and priorities of their followers, leaders inspire them to perform beyond expectations (Ou, Waldman, & Peterson, 2015). The leader-follower relationship lies at the heart of all transformations that are initiated and triggered by the leader (Owens & Hekman, 2016). Several leadership theories, such as transformational leadership and servant leadership, argue that the leader-follower relationship is fundamental in materializing challenging goals and producing the highest level of performance (Hunter et al., 2013; Lehmann-Willenbrock, Meinecke, Rowold, & Kauffeld, 2015).

Several studies provide explanations for the way in which leaders create a difference by influencing their followers. The present study explores the two approaches to leadership: Honesty-Humility personality traits in leadership and servant leadership. Both approaches are distinct in their focus, yet they are believed to bring several positive organizational outcomes such as a rise in collaborative efforts and creativity among team members (Neubert et al., 2008). We do not know what effect leaders who are exercising both honesty-humility and servant leadership leave on their followers. Further, less is known about the impact that perceived sales quota difficulties exert on relationship quality and customer orientation. The present study intends to fill the gap in the literature by investigating the moderating effect of servant leadership on the

relationship between honesty-humility leadership and relationship quality. Similarly, the study explores the moderating impact of perceived quota difficulties on the relationship between relationship quality and the salesperson reported customer orientation.

The Honesty-Humility personality trait is based on personal characteristics of honesty and humility (Ogunfowora & Bourdage, 2014). Many believe that personality plays a key role in the emergence of leadership (Hunter et al., 2013). Research suggests that personality traits beyond the commonly used Big Five framework can effectively predict leadership emergence (Ogunfowora & Bourdage, 2014). A growing body of research points to an alternate six-factor framework known as the HEXACO Model, which includes Honesty-Humility as its sixth dimension (Ashton & Lee, 2008). A high Honesty-Humility score indicates a sincere, fair-minded, and modest personality, whereas a low score highlights a manipulative, insincere, and greedy individual (Ashton & Lee, 2008). In other words, individuals with a low Honesty-Humility score may have a greater propensity for involvement in unethical practices such as sexual harassment, delinquent work behavior, unethical business decision making, and criminal activities (Lee, 2008).

On the other hand, servant leadership theory presents a holistic approach where leaders engage employees in multiple dimensions such as relational, ethical, emotional, etc. and help them to reach their potential (Eva et al., 2019). By focusing on followers' development, the altruistic and ethically considerate leaders create a sense of reciprocity among their followers (van Dierendonck, 2011).

The comparison of honesty-humility leadership with servant leadership reveals that honesty-humility is assumed to exert an individual level influence where leaders prioritize subordinates' development and well-being. Although servant leaders are assumed to exert a group-level influence by prioritizing the interests of their followers, customers, and other stakeholders (Rego et al., 2017), honesty-humility leadership is based on a personality trait that may or may not involve a selfless motive. On the other hand, servant leadership is indicative of a leadership style that involves a selfless motive. The leaders under this approach tend to become servants to others and focus on serving the community and all other stakeholders (Eva et al., 2019). Servant Leaders are other-focused, and they

attempt to achieve their organizational performance targets by developing their subordinates. For example, a humble leader may listen to others' views, opinions, and ideas and reflect on this information to identify a future course of action, but he/she is not focused only on serving others. In contrast, Servant Leaders believe they can help their organizations grow by considering the interests of other stakeholders and in particular, they view development of their followers fundamental to accomplishing higher organizational outcomes.

Moreover, the two leadership dynamics differ on how a social influence process translates leaders' values into the attitudes and behaviors of followers. Leaders who demonstrate Honesty-Humility personality traits assume honest and humble leaders by exercising greater transparency and fairness, by exhibiting a greater tendency to admit their limitations, and by recognizing that others' strengths and contributions create a social influence through the individual. In the case of servant leadership, an altruistic desire to serve and make a difference for stakeholders generates a social influence that helps their followers to model their leaders' values and behaviors.

Finally, the two leadership approaches vary in their emphasis. The Honesty-Humility perspective emphasizes a willingness to evaluate one's strengths and weaknesses, a tendency to appreciate other merits and contributions, and openness to learning new things (Owens, Johnson, & Mitchell, 2013). Servant Leaders are focused on creating a sense of social identity among their team members (Chen, Zhu, & Zhou, 2015).

The above discussion shows that honesty-humility leadership significantly differs from servant leadership. We know less about how each perspective coalesces and what influence together they exert on organizational outcomes. The present study intends to fill this gap in the leadership literature by investigating the influence of servant leadership on honesty-humility leadership. Using the Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) theory, the present study advances the literature by examining the moderating impact of servant leadership on the relationship between leader Honesty-Humility and relationship quality. Specifically, this research seeks to address the following research questions:

- When examining the impact of Honesty-Humility in leadership on relationship quality, how does servant leadership impact that relationship?
- Can a positive effect on relationship quality impact performance and customer orientation?
- If customer orientation is positively influenced by relationship quality, how do sales quotas impact the relationship?

LMX theory helps to explain the exchange relationship between leaders and subordinates in terms of antecedents and outcomes (Liden, Sparrowe, & Wayne, 1997). The exchange relationship between leader and followers depends upon the value they can offer each other, and LMX provides a framework to evaluate the larger network of such exchanges, which helps explain important organizational outcomes such as performance and customer orientation (Liden et al., 1997). LMX provides an explanation of leaders' relationships with individual followers, and it views leader-follower relationships as a series of individual relationships (Burkus, 2010).

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Studies examining the leader-follower connection explain how this relationship works to produce required organizational outcomes. Most studies focus on leaders who create a climate that encourages and motivates employees to work in the direction set by the leader (Eva et al., 2019). Both researchers and practitioners alike are interested in finding out how leaders can create such enabling organizational environments. Several leadership perspectives, such as servant leadership and honesty-humility leadership, argue that leaders set an example that inspires their followers to model required behavior and practices (Van Dierendonck, 2011). Hunter et al. (2013) argue that leaders' attitudes of care and concern for their subordinates and outside stakeholders translate into employees' behaviors and practices.

The idea of honesty-humility leadership is based on personal characteristics of Honesty-Humility introduced by HEXACO model (Ashton & Lee, 2008). As noted earlier, honesty-humility is a personality trait-based perspective that argues it can effectively influence individuals' attitudes and behaviors (Ashton & Lee, 2008). The construct of humility refers to an inside-out individual view that stresses learning new things (Owens et al., 2013). By projecting honesty, humble leaders are assumed to exercise greater fairness and transparency while admitting their limitations, recognizing other strengths and contributions, and resorting to new ideas and feedback. This added fairness may affect team members positively, and it may have implications for organizational outcomes (McAllister, 1995). Previous studies argue that fairness

enhances trust, which promotes expectations that leadership's actions are beneficial or at least would not damage followers' interests (Robinson, 1996). This greater trust leads followers to reciprocate it with loyalty and commitment (Basford, Offermann, & Behrend, 2014). Evidence suggests that humility is a contagion trait; a leader's humility creates collective humility in the team, which promotes a collective focus (Owens & Hekman, 2016). Leadership exercising humble behavior has consequences for the team and for organizational outcomes. A humble leader promotes team integration and creates an empowering environment (Ou et al., 2014). By considering followers' growth and development (Owens & Hekman, 2012), humble leaders encourage followers' loyalty and commitment (Basford et al., 2014). Above all, humility moderates the harmful effects of leader narcissism and leads to enhanced employee work engagement, job satisfaction, and retention (Owens et al., 2013).

Broadly speaking, two themes are most often the subject of exploration within the honesty-humility or HEXACO stream of research. The first discusses the mechanisms that link leader behavior to team performance (Owens & Hekman, 2016). The evidence shows that humble leaders exert their influence over team functioning through a different path than traditional leadership styles such as transformational leadership (Owens & Hekman, 2012). The humble leader involves a social influence process under which direct subordinates adopt the leader's modeled values (Owens & Hekman, 2016). In other words, humble leaders affect team performance by a distinctive path of behaviors that shape the specific teamwork and regulatory aspect of team functioning (Owens & Hekman, 2012). There are specific contexts in which a humble leader is most effective. For example, under extreme pressure and stress, humble leaders may not work well. During every-day challenges characterized by low to moderate levels of stress, challenge, pressure, or threat, humble leadership works quite well (Owens & Hekman, 2012). Under extraordinary circumstances, when stress goes beyond normal levels and challenges seem insurmountable, the humble leader may fail to produce desired outcomes.

The second theme is growth: researchers focus on exploring the link between humility in leadership and organizational growth. With the awareness of their own weaknesses and the strengths of others, humble leaders identify what their growth needs are and how they can assist their followers to achieve growth objectives. In fact, self-reflection, in which one views his/her weaknesses and others' strengths, creates a window of learning. By reflecting on their positions in relation to the world, to others, and to what new information is available, leaders create a growth orientation (Ou et al., 2014; Owens & Hekman, 2016). By sending a message of collective striving over personal status seeking, the humble leader creates a cooperative and caring work environment (Ou et al., 2014).

The literature has treated humility as an individual-level leadership trait (Ou et al., 2014) as well as a characteristic of teams (Owens & Hekman, 2016). A humble leader promotes team output (Owens & Hekman, 2016) by influencing the individual team members' performance (Owens et al., 2013). The evidence suggests that performance improvement both at individual and group levels comes in incremental steps in which individuals continuously strive to reach their highest potential (Owens & Hekman, 2016). The leader's humility promotes collective humility within the team, which creates a collective promotion focus that in turn leads to team performance (Owens & Hekman, 2016). To summarize, honesty-humility is a personality trait-focused perspective that asserts fair, modest, altruistic, and sincere leaders who are willing to listen to others, they appreciate their strengths can promote a performance-focused environment in the team. This leadership perspective assumes that these personal traits of leaders reflect collectively in team behavior when followed by the subordinates.

Obviously honesty and humility can be important in transforming employees to achieve positive organizational outcomes by discouraging involvement in unethical practices such as sexual harassment, delinquent work behavior, unethical business decision making, and even criminal activities (Lee, 2008). Still, critics find the underlying assumptions problematic in explaining the emergence of leadership. By considering leadership a personal characteristic engage in by individuals

by exhibiting specific behaviors, the critics argue, this perspective ignores the dynamic and social processes that underlie the patterns of leading and following (Grint, 2005).

On the other hand, Servant Leaders view followers' development as a way to achieve organizational performance targets (Sendjaya, 2015). The emphasis servant leadership places on others sets it distinctively apart from other leadership theories (Eva et al., 2019; Graham, 1991). For example, servant leadership focuses on addressing the psychological needs of followers, whereas transformational leadership attaches more importance to organizational objectives and considers followers' needs as secondary (van Dierendonck, 2011). In fact, Servant Leaders' altruistic desires to serve and make a difference to others set them distinctly apart from leaders under other perspectives (Sendjaya, 2015). The social influence that Servant Leaders exert on their followers facilitates the translation of their values and characteristics into followers' attitudes and mindsets (Hunter et al., 2013). Servant Leaders initiate a social influence process that inspires their followers to engage in a cycle of service (Eva et al., 2019). By building teams around a spirit of kinship where team members assist and build their colleagues capacity (Yoshida, Sendjava, Hirst, & Cooper, 2014), Servant Leaders create a sense of social identity among their team members (Chen et al., 2015). Previous studies show that servant leadership is linked to engaged, effective, and productive employees (van Dierendonck, 2011). Servant Leaders tend to achieve performance goals through their followers' development (Sendjaya, 2015).

The discussion above suffers from certain theoretical assumption drawbacks. By ignoring the multiple and shared leadership efforts in which both supervisors and employees contribute to the emergence of leadership, the above discussion reduce leadership to a unidirectional process and overlooks the mutual interdependencies involved in the leadership process (DeRue, 2011). Further, these theories struggle to explain the phenomenon of "leading up" and "leading across." Treating leadership as an individual characteristic can be a problematic concept (House, 1999). Specifically, the act of leading requires multiple roles that subordinates can then reciprocate (Yukl & Mahsud,

2010). Therefore, leadership is a social interaction process by which individuals co-construct identities and relationships (DeRue, 2011).

Studies exploring the relationship between leaders and followers use various theoretical lenses to shed light on the processes that result in behavioral transformation. These theories emphasize that particular environments can exert great influence over individual learning. They argue that individuals are influenced by the role models present in the environment, and they attempt to mimic these role models' behavior, attitudes, and values (Brown & Treviño, 2006). Equally important, leaders must be regarded as credible role models. The literature describes several characteristics associated with leaders who create a desire among followers to model them. Among such characteristics are altruistic motivations (Brown, Treviño, & Harrison, 2005) in which leaders are viewed as contributing without expecting service in return. This behavior may well be mimicked by followers (van Dierendonck, 2011). A reciprocation process may ensue where followers attempt to return what they have received (Hunter et al., 2013). In this way, leaders trigger what several scholars describe as a "cycle of service" where followers reciprocate by engaging with the organization and inspiring other followers (Hunter et al., 2013). This leads to the development of a service climate that results in positive organizational outcomes (Eva et al., 2019). A review of relevant literature suggests that leaders with altruistic motivations serve as role models, and reciprocation by followers leads to a social process that develops desired characteristics in followers. On the other hand, Adaptive Leadership Theory holds that leadership is a dual social process and reduces it to an individual unidirectional process that may fail to explain any of the phenomena of leadership (DeRue, 2011).

Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) Theory provides an important lens in explaining the influence of leaders. LMX Theory recognizes various workplace relationships. It is based on Role Theory (Kahn et al., 1964), which assumes that roles are developed by written job descriptions as well as shaped by leaders through process called "role-making." Another explanation of the leader-follower relationship is provided by Social Exchange Theory, which argues that social exchanges between individuals is shaped by their self-interests and interdependence. According to this theory, social

exchanges occur when social actors have something of value to offer each other (Liden et al., 1997). Several studies employing LMX find that leaders' performance, competence, and personal traits serve as potential determinants of the leader-follower relationship (Liden et al., 1997). Various conceptualizations of LMX contend that leaders' influence in shaping the relationship is powerful and decisive. These studies use various leadership characteristics, such as leader power, and contextual factors, such as organizational policies, as antecedents to explore their effects on the leader-follower relationship. In the similar fashion, various studies use LMX Theory to predict different organization-related outcomes such as job satisfaction (Major, Kozlowski, Chao, & Gardner, 1995); organizational commitment (Green, Anderson, & Shivers, 1996); and autonomy, recognition, and encouragement (Dunegan, Duchon, & Uhl-Bien 1992). LMX Theory posits that the quality of the leader-follower exchange can predict several job-related employee attitudes (Liden et al., 1997).

Thus, LMX Theory can inform how both leadership perspectives—honesty-humility and servant leadership—can interact as antecedents and what outcomes they can produce as a result of established relationships. The exchange relationships between leaders and members are based on the valued resources each offers the other (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). LMX Theory provides a useful framework to evaluate the larger network of exchange and ultimately the relationship between leaders and members that shapes various organizational outcomes such as customer orientation. For example, leaders can provide support to members who in turn exert extra effort and show commitment to the leader and the organization (Liden et al., 1997). Further, the LMX framework can be used to integrate Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 2017), which can provide an understanding of the reciprocity in exchange relationships between leaders and members (Liden et al., 1997). In other words, the quality of the leader-follower relationship can be of great help in evaluating effects on followers and organizational outcomes, when leaders exhibit both servant leadership and honesty-humility leadership styles. This discussion leads to the following hypothesis.

H1: *Honesty-humility leadership will be positively related to the quality of the manager-subordinate relationship.*

Servant leadership is described as a “core company value” by several top U.S. companies (Ruschman, 2002). Servant leadership consists of seven characteristics. First, servant leadership requires leaders to spending quality time bonding with followers. The second-dimension stresses employee empowerment. The Servant Leaders’ tendency to help followers grow and succeed makes its third characteristic. Fourth, Servant Leaders behave ethically. Fifth, these leaders possess high skills, allowing them to direct their daily efforts in line with their future vision. Finally, Servant Leaders strive to deliver value to others outside the organization through engagement in community service opportunities (Ehrhart, 2004). Several advantages are associated with servant leadership. Servant Leaders enhance collaborative efforts and creativity among employees, which can lead organizations to achieve a competitive edge (Neubert et al., 2008). With their focus on morality-centered self-reflection, servant leadership can promote ethical values within the organization (Hunter et al., 2013). Studies show that servant leadership enhances job satisfaction (Jenkins & Stewart, 2008) and strengthens the organizational commitment of employees (Jaramillo, Grisaffe, Chonko, & Roberts, 2009). It is believed that Servant Leaders garner positive organizational outcomes by paying attention to their followers’ needs and treating them fairly (Mayer, Bardes, & Piccolo, 2008).

Studies show that servant leadership is different from other styles such as transformation leadership (Liden, Wayne, Zhou, & Henderson, 2008; Parolini, Patterson, & Winston, 2009) as well as from ethical and authentic leadership (Neuber et al., 2008). Despite sharing some common characteristics with these leadership styles, servant leadership’s wider scope that focuses on all stakeholders gives it a clear distinction (Neuber et al., 2008). Servant leadership is a descriptor, indicative of the style of leadership, which involves a selfless motive. Servant leadership places emphasis on servitude toward others with a focus on followers, the community, and all stakeholders (Eva et al., 2019).

The literature describes humility as an interpersonal construct (Rego et al., 2017) comprised of three components: willingness to evaluate one’ strengths and weaknesses, appreciation of other strengths and contributions, and readiness to learn new things (Owens et al., 2013). Honesty-humility

leadership relies on an individual, trait-based approach to fairness and the well-being of subordinates (Ownes et al., 2013),

The servant and honesty-humility leadership styles are clearly distinctive in their target and approach to leading. The focus of the honest-humility perspective is to model learning and development for followers (Rego et al., 2017), whereas servant leadership has other focuses, including community, customers, and employees (Walumbwa, Hartnell, & Oke, 2010; Eva et al., 2019). In both perspectives, leaders set inspiring examples for their followers who in turn personify leaders' attitudes and behaviors. Through a social process that underpins both leadership styles, leader-follower interactions result in positive outcomes for the organization (Hunter et al., 2013). Therefore, under a combined influence of honesty-humility and servant leadership, the quality of the leader-follower relationship will be stronger. When team relationships are characterized by modesty, fairness, and transparency, organizations provide an enabling environment where employees care about customers and remain committed to the organization (Lytle & Timmerman 2006). Ferres, Travaglione, and O'Neill (2005) argue that altruistic and conscientious behavior makes individuals tend to be more reliable and helpful. At its best, this influence can lead to a spirit in which employees seek to serve others and benefit society at large (Liden et al., 2008).

Altruistic behavior of leadership promotes organizational citizenship behaviors that tend to create a climate where employees are concerned about the well-being and interest of others (Kanungo & Mendonca, 1996). Marshall, Moncrief, Lassk, and Shepherd (2012) demonstrate that organizational citizenship behavior is positively related to sales performance. Drawing on this discussion, I propose the second hypothesis of this study.

H2: *Servant leadership will moderate the relationship between honesty-humility and relationship quality, such that it will be stronger for higher levels of servant leadership.*

According to Social Exchange Theory, actors evaluate benefits and rewards against perceived costs before engaging in social interactions (Blau, 2017). When they perceive that rewards outweigh cost, they actively engage in social exchange by modifying their attitudes and behaviors. By

exercising honesty-humility, leaders offer rewards and benefits by giving their followers convincing reasons to reciprocate their behavior. The evidence suggests that when leaders express care for their followers, their followers not only attempt to reciprocate but also extend this spirit of well-wishing to customers (van Dierendonck, 2011). In this way, followers model the attitude and behavior of care they perceive from leadership (Owens & Hekman, 2016).

Strong leader-follower relationship quality demonstrates followers' tendency to reciprocate leaders' behavior of concern (Schwepke & Schultz, 2015). It points to a leader-follower relationship that is marked by trust, respect, and responsibility (Ng, Koh, & Goh, 2008). The positive work behaviors and attitudes that result from strong relationship quality can play a significant role in achieving higher organizational performance (Russel & Stone, 2002). By exhibiting the ethical values of fairness, justice, care, and responsibility, followers build greater customer trust (Pučėtaitė & Lämssä 2008). This strong relationship quality may influence employees to find ways to better serve customer needs and requirements. Through this greater wish to understand customers and assist them to make the best purchase decisions leads organizations to increasingly adopt a customer orientation (Saxe & Weitz, 1982). This in turn may help the organization develop long-term relationships with customers (Schwepker & Good, 2011). Therefore, strong leader-follower relationship quality is believed to play a vital role in creating a climate that enables employees to deliver greater value to customers (Liden et al., 2008).

Leader-follower relationship quality plays a significant role in providing an enabling climate for salespeople in which they attempt to reciprocate what they receive from the leadership, thus improving their performance (Dirks & Ferrin 2002). Schwepker and Schultz (2015) find that leaders create an ethical climate where care and concern for others is valued. This leads subordinates to respond with similar sentiments to the leadership as well as to customers. As a result, salespeople attempt to raise their performance. Leadership provides salespeople with a standard to model attitudes and behaviors, which encourages them to continuously strive to add value to their customers by effectively addressing their needs (Schwepker & Schultz, 2015). Therefore, I argue that strong

relationship quality enhances customer orientation. This leads me to propose the third hypothesis of this study.

H3: *Leader-follower relationship quality is positively related to customer orientation and salesperson performance.*

The stresses of achieving sales goals while maintaining customer relationships is one of the many challenges of sales professionals (Jaramillo et al., 2009). The achievement of these goals calls for the establishment of what Anderson and Oliver (1987) refer to as a system of set procedures that allow an organization to monitor, direct, evaluate, and compensate its sales employees. Within these systems lie sales quotas, which provide management with a tool through which it can influence the behavior and activities of the sales force while ensuring that they achieve the desired outcomes (Schwepker & Good, 2012). Schwepker and Good (2011) indicate that sales quotas are positively linked to customer-oriented selling and sales performance but that we do not fully understand how. There is always a risk that salespeople may ignore the customers' interest to increase their chances of making an instant sale (Schwepker & Good, 2012). Given the focus of quotas on results, a tendency may be created among sales teams to pursue immediate results even sometimes at the expense of long-term interests of the organization (Anderson & Oliver, 1987). Therefore, sales quotas are likely to promote shortsightedness that may bring inadvertent results for the organization (Schwepker & Good, 2011).

Customer-oriented selling refers to the extent to which salespeople help their customers make purchase decisions that will actually satisfy their needs (Saxe & Weitz, 1982). This customer-oriented selling focus on maintaining long-term customer relationships and opposes actions that damage customers' interest only to make an instant sale. Customer-oriented salespeople care about others while showing concern for themselves (Schwepker & Good, 2011). Organizations using sales quotas as a measure of success tend to focus on results while ignoring the methods used to achieve those results. This may encourage a lack of attention to customer satisfaction, which may constitute harmful sales behaviors in the long run (Anderson & Oliver, 1987). Under such circumstance, salespeople may feel tempted to pursue immediate payoffs rather than putting additional effort in selling new

products or providing a necessary service (Schwepker & Good, 2012). Robertson and Anderson (1993) found that outcome-based drivers to incentivize sales may influence salespeople to behave less ethically .

What encourages a salesperson to indulge in an ethical behavior is trust. Trust can play a role that ensures that salespersons' actions are beneficial or at least not detrimental to customers (Robinson, 1996). It rests on a belief that the trustee is reliable, predictable, and honest and will act fairly (McAllister, 1995). Trust as a critical influencer in relationships shapes the behavior of partners towards one another (Robinson, 1996). Organizational trust develops when the relationship is characterized by the belief that one party would not benefit from the vulnerabilities of the other party; under such circumstances, self-interests are balanced with the interests of others. A salesperson picks the clues from his/her organization's commitment on outcomes, which is in place to provide support and manifest the organization's caring intentions (Atuahene-Gima & Li 2002). Trust in the organization gives rise to the organizational citizenship behaviors that involve altruism and conscientiousness (Ferres et al., 2005). Individuals who practice altruism and conscientiousness are concerned about others' interests and well-being (Kanungo & Mendonca, 1996) and tend to be helpful and reliable (Ferres et al., 2005).

Cravens, Shipp, and Cravens (1993) explain how Goal-Setting Theory suggests that goals (such as quota goals) may motivate salespeople to achieve their sales targets and to focus on activities that help accomplish those goals. Specific and challenging goals may enhance the performance of the sales team (Lunenburg, 2011). Along with setting appropriate goals, adequate feedback helps members to know how well they are performing. Effective leaders assist employees in matching their goals to their performance. For example, CEOs of large organizations such as IBM and Microsoft are evaluated based on achieving growth, profitability, and quality goals (Lunenburg, 2011). The effectiveness of goals can also be raised by attaching deadlines to them, which provides another control mechanism and influences the motivational elements associated with the goals. A compatible

combination of group and individual goals greatly helps organizations to improve performance both at individual and group levels (Lunenburg, 2011).

Difficult goals may or may not necessarily produce greater sales performance. Performance shortfalls can be attributed to the complex nature of selling, which requires greater information processing than simple tasks (Schwepker & Good, 2011). Seeing that individual goals are compatible with the team goals may result in greater sales performance. Performance diminishes when conflict arises in goal attainment (Seijts & Latham, 2000). Given the complex nature of the sales profession, goals must be individually assigned and rewards should be made on the achievement of those goals. Therefore, of course, sales professionals tend to prefer easy goals that can bring them larger benefits and recognition. Organizations, on the other hand, tend to set challenging targets to achieve maximum returns. This points to the dynamic nature of selling: measurement of successful sales performance effects achievement of goals in other areas such as production (Schwepker & Good, 2012).

Schwepker (2003) discusses how various conceptualizations of the construct of customer-selling are used, such as selling style, an aspect of performance, and an antecedent of performance. Jaramillo et al. (2009) shows that evidence suggests that there exists a positive relationship between customer-oriented selling and performance in the long-run. Schwepker and Good (2012) also show that perceptions about quota difficulty may produce unintended negative consequences instead of motivating and directing desired sales behavior and thus result in actual declines in sales performance.

Through their encounters and strategic relational interactions, salespeople can create value for customers (Blocker, Cannon, Panagopoulos, & Sager, 2012). Salespeople are influenced by various environmental and organizational factors during their endeavors to create customer value (Schwepker & Schultz, 2015). The role of the leadership to support the sales team (Ingram et al., 2005) in order to create positive organizational outcomes is vital (Schwepker & Schultz, 2015). But there is no specific evidence to suggest which leadership behavior can encourage customer value creation among salespeople (Schwepke & Schultz, 2015). The implications for sales organizations that emphasize

sales quotas and individual performance are to reconsider and reshape their management styles if they are looking to develop a customer centered salesforce. In other words, the use of quotas and emphasis on individual performance can lead salespeople to obsessively make sales even at the cost of customers. However, organizations can balance and complement such outcome-based approaches to build a customer-centered salesforce. This discussion leads me to propose the following hypothesis.

H4: *Perceived quota difficulty will moderate relationship quality and customer orientation.*

There will be negative relationships when quotas are perceived as unattainable.

Theoretical Model

Given the above discussion and consequent hypotheses, this study will explore the following relationship between the variables of this study.

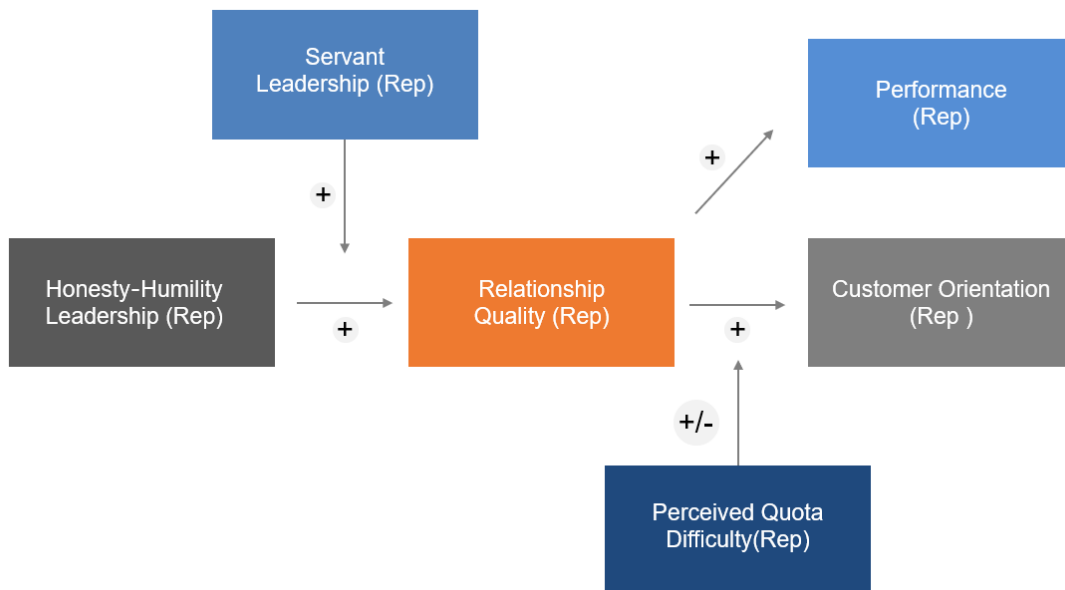


Figure 1. Leader-Member Exchange Theory

CHAPTER III

METHODS AND PROCEDURES

Sample and Procedure

There were two separate efforts of data collection for this study. Primary data was collected first from adult participants using the online electronic survey Qualtrics™. To provide answers to the proposed research questions and test my hypotheses, information was gathered from sales professionals from various business organizations. Participants were recruited via professional social media platforms and my professional networks. Those who consented to participate were issued an online Qualtrics™ survey link via e-mail with instructions on completing the survey. After reading the consent form, participants were asked to provide demographic information and answer the survey questions.

The survey included questions related to the honesty and humility of their leaders, performance, sales quota perceptions, customer orientation, servant leadership, relationship quality, and demographics. Recruitment for this research was conducted via LinkedIn, professional connections, and the OSU Center for Sales Excellence. The initial collection of data yielded 67 participants consisting of full-time sales representatives. Two participants were removed for incomplete survey responses. Of the remaining 65 participants, 54% were male and 46% were female. For diversity, 52% were White/Caucasian, 4% African American, 5% Asian, 4% Hispanic, 1% Native American, 3% other; 31% chose not to disclose their race.

A second data collection effort was launched using MTurk in order to increase the sample size for this study. MTurk participants were compensated \$5 each to participate; this produced an additional 110 responses. Among these participants, 70% were White/Caucasian, 11% African American, 14% Asian, 2% Hispanic, 2% Native American, 1% reported as other. The number of participants from both collections who constituted my final sample totaled 175. In both instances, Qualtrics™ was used to generate a survey link via e-mail with instructions to complete the survey. Among the combined respondents for this study, 46.9% were females, 53.1% male. The average age of the participants was 40 ($SD = 13.23$); the youngest was 21, and the oldest was 60. Beyond the compensation offered to MTurk participants, no additional rewards or incentives were offered to participants in this study.

Measures

Unless otherwise noted, all items were rated using a five-point, Likert-type scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). For the leader-related variables (servant leadership, honesty-humility), participants were instructed to rate their immediate supervisors.

Servant Leadership was operationalized using a multidimensional measure involving seven factors that were developed by Linden et al. (2008) to capture the essence of servant leadership: emotional support, efforts to create value for society, skills development, subordinate empowerment, follower growth and success, prioritization of followers, and ethical behavior. The measure consisted of seven items such as “My manager emphasizes the importance of giving back to the community,” and “My manager gives me the freedom to handle difficult situations in the way that I feel is best.” To evaluate the prevalence of servant leadership, this scale was adapted, in updating the term leader to manager for relevance, to better match the purposes of this study ($\alpha = 0.93$).

Customer Orientation of the participants was measured with a self-reported short form of the scale called “selling orientation-customer orientation” originally developed by Saxe and Weitz (1982) and later abbreviated by Thomas, Soutar, and Ryan (2001). Customer orientation is a multidimensional construct consisting of dimensions such as helping customers to assess their needs, avoiding deception, and using manipulative tactics. I used the shorter form of the original scale

presented by Thomas et al. (2001). The abbreviated scale was used in consideration of the time participants needed to complete the full survey. It consisted of a four- item questionnaire with items such as “I try to get my customers to discuss their needs with me,” and “A good salesperson has to have the customer’s best interest in mind” ($\alpha = 0.84$).

Honesty-Humility was operationalized using the measurement scale developed by Lee and Ashton, (2004) to evaluate four constituent factors: sincerity, greed avoidance, fairness, and modesty. The scale consists of 10 items such as “I wouldn’t use flattery to get a raise or promotion at work, even if I thought it would succeed.” This scale was adapted to measure the extent to which leadership exhibits honest and humble personality traits in their leadership approach ($\alpha = 0.89$). The scale was originally developed as a self-report of honesty and humility by leaders. We updated the instructions to make it clear that followers were rating the honesty-humility of their leaders.

Relationship Quality was measured using an inventory developed by Graen and Uhl-Bien (1995) consisting of seven items such as “You usually know how satisfied your leader is with your job” ($\alpha = 0.88$).

Sales Performance of the participants was measured using a scale developed by Balaji and Krishnan (2014). The scale is comprised of three items that allow respondents to rate their own sales performance on a five-point Likert scale ranging from (1) Strongly Disagree to (5) Strongly Agree ($\alpha = 0.70$).

Perceived Sales Quota Difficulty was measured using a three-item scale developed by Schwegker and Good (1999). Sample questions were designed to capture the perceived difficulty of sales quota by means of questions such as “I believe my assigned quota is very difficult” and “It is easy for me to achieve my assigned quota” ($\alpha = 0.74$).

Moderator Variables: Servant leadership and perceived sales quota difficulty were used as moderator variables. Hunter et al. (2013) highlighted servant leadership as a leadership style in which the main goal of the leader is to serve subordinates. Also, the literature supports that perception that

quota difficulty does *not* influence customers-oriented selling. I included these as criterion-related moderator variables when running my analyses.

Data Analyses and Results

I assessed the measurement model by running a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) with maximum likelihood using Mplus. This analysis ensured that participants in this study saw each construct as a distinct and separate factor. The measurement model consisted of six latent variables with 35 indicators: ten for humility-honesty, seven for servant leadership, seven for relationship quality, five for customer orientation, three for performance, and three for sales per person.

The model fit is derived from the covariance among the items to the covariance expected by the model being tested. For this study I used chi square (χ^2), root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), comparative fit index (CFI), and Tucker-Lewis index (TLI) to evaluate model fit. χ^2 with lower value indicates better fit, RMSEA with low value (< 0.08) indicates better fit, and CFI with high value (> 0.80) indicates better fit.

The model with six factors is the base model; it consists of all the items (honesty-humility, servant leadership, relationship quality, customer orientation, perceived quota difficulty, and salesperson performance). The model with two factors consists of customer orientation, perceived quota difficulty, and salesperson performance. The model with one factor consists of the combination of honesty-humility, servant leadership, and relationship quality. Based on comparisons of χ^2 s of the two alternative measurement models to the baseline model, the hypothesized six-factor model is the strongest fit to the data (see Table 1).

The means, standard deviations, and intercorrelations among the study variables are shown in Table 2. An examination of bivariate correlations provides preliminary evidence for Hypothesis 1. The correlation between relationship and honesty-humility is positive and statistically significant ($r = 0.50, p < 0.01$). To further test my hypotheses, I estimated the full mediation model by obtaining point estimates of all the effects with 95% confidence intervals around the effects using a

bootstrapping method (cf. MacKinnon, Lockwood, & Williams, 2004; Shrout & Bolger, 2002). The results are presented in Table 3.

Table 1: Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Model	χ^2	<i>df</i>	$\Delta\chi^2$	Δdf	RMSEA	CFI	TLI
6-Factor Model ¹	1115.85*	545	--	--	0.08	0.82	0.80
2-Factor Model ²	1643.63*	560	527.78*	15	0.11	0.65	0.63
1-Factor Model ³	1946.80*	560	830.95*	15	0.12	0.55	0.53

¹Combining All Items, ²Combining Customer Orientation, Perceived Quota Difficulty, Salesperson Performance, ³Combining Honesty Humility, Servant Leadership and Relationship Quality
**p* < 0.05

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics, Reliability Estimates, and Study Variable Intercorrelations

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6
Honesty-Humility	3.32	0.95	(0.89)					
Servant Leadership	3.83	0.86	0.66*	(0.83)				
Relationship Quality	4.20	0.69	0.50*	0.81*	(0.88)			
Perceive Quota	2.66	0.95	-0.05	-0.09	-0.18*	(0.70)		
Customer Orientation	4.68	0.46	0.16*	0.23*	0.35*	0.01	(0.84)	
Sales Per Person	4.13	0.60	0.13	0.22*	0.31*	-0.05	0.41*	(0.74)

Note. *N* = 175 Cronbach's alpha are shown on the diagonal.

* *p* < .05 level.

Hypothesis 1 states that honesty-humility leadership will be positively related to relationship quality. My results demonstrate that the relationship between relationship quality and honesty-humility leadership is positive and not statistically significant ($B = -.003, p > .05$) (see Table 3), supporting Hypothesis 1.

Hypothesis 2 proposed that servant leadership moderates the positive relationship between relationship quality honesty-humility leadership such that this relationship is stronger at higher levels of servant leadership. As shown in Table 3, Hypothesis 2 is not supported because the interaction term is not statistically significant ($B = -0.03, p > .05$), indicating that servant leadership is not a significant moderator of the relationship between honesty-humility and relationship quality.

Hypothesis 3 stated that relationship quality will be positively related to customer orientation and sales performance. My results demonstrate that the relationship between relationship quality and customer orientation ($B = .25, p < .05$) is positive and statistically significant (see Table 3), supporting Hypothesis 3. Also 11% of the variation in customer orientation is explained by the model.

Hypothesis 4 proposed that perceived quota moderates the positive relationship between relationship quality and customer orientation such that this relationship is negative when moderated by perceived quota. As shown in Table 3, Hypothesis 4 is not supported because the interaction is not statistically significant ($B = -0.02, p > .05$), indicating that perceived quota difficulty is not a significant moderator of the effect of relationship quality on customer orientation.

Table 3. Moderated Mediation Analysis

	Mediator		Dependent		Dependent	
	Relationship Quality		Customer Orientation		Salesperson Performance	
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>
¹ Constant	0.010*	0.37	-0.01	0.04	-0.02	0.05
Honesty Humility	-0.003	0.04				
Servant Leadership	0.630*	0.06				
Honesty Humility × Servant Leadership	-0.030	0.05				
² Constant			4.67*	0.04	4.12*	0.04
Relationship Quality			0.25*	0.08	0.29*	0.08
Sales Quota			0.04	0.04		
Relationship Quality × Sales Quota			-0.02	0.06		
R ²	0.65		0.13		0.11	
					Relationship Quality	
Moderator: Servant Leadership		Effect			Lower CI	Upper CI
-1 <i>SD</i> Servant Leadership		0.05			-0.03	0.04
Mean Servant Leadership		0.00			-0.02	0.02
+1 <i>SD</i> Servant Leadership		-0.01			-0.03	0.02
					Customer Orientation	
Moderator: Sales Quota		Effect			Lower CI	Upper CI
-1 <i>SD</i> Sales Quota		-0.01			-0.03	0.03
Mean Sales Quota		-0.01			-0.02	0.02
+1 <i>SD</i> Sales Quota		-0.01			-0.02	0.02

Note. N = 175, Variables were mean centered prior to computing interactions.

*** $p < .001$ level, ** $p < .01$ level, * $p < .05$ level.

Table 3 reveals that the relationship between honesty-humility and relationship quality is not statistically significant. It can also be inferred that relationship quality and servant leadership are positively related ($B = 0.63, p < 0.05$), and that 65% of the total variation in relationship quality is explained by the model. Also, the results indicate that customer orientation and relationship quality are positively related ($B = 0.25, p < 0.05$), and 13% of the total variation in customer orientation is explained by the model (Table 3). In addition, the relationship between customer orientation and perceived quota difficulty was not statistically significant. Last, the results of the study reveal that salesperson performance and relationship quality are positively related ($B = 0.29, p < 0.05$), and 11% of the total variation in sales performance is explained by the model. Thus, Hypothesis 1 and Hypothesis 3 are supported. Conversely, based on my analysis, Hypothesis 2 and Hypothesis 4 are not supported.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSIONS

The present study investigated the extent to which servant leadership and perceived quota difficulty moderated the indirect effect of honesty-humility → relationship quality → customer orientation and sales performance. It is clear from the results that neither servant leadership nor perceived quota difficulty moderated the indirect effects. Nevertheless, I conducted a follow-up analysis in which I estimated only the indirect effect, which was statistically significant (effect = 0.09 [95% confidence interval (CI) = 0.04 to 0.14]). This is important because a growing body of research points to honesty-humility (from the HEXACO Model of Personality) as important in predicting various personal outcomes. There is reason to believe that honesty-humility could guide customer orientation and sales performance (Ogunfowora, & Bourdage, 2014). I posited that these relationships would be explained through relationship quality. As such, one contribution of my study is to the relationship quality literature by examining the effect of honesty-humility on the relationship quality between managers and their sales representatives. It is interesting that the bivariate relationship between honesty-humility and relationship quality was statistically significant and strong ($r = .50$), yet the regression coefficient reported above in the results section from the full moderated mediation model was not statistically significant. In addition, when servant leadership was not in the model and I estimated only the indirect effect (no moderators), the regression coefficient between honesty-humility and relationship quality was strong and statistically significant ($B = .35, p < .05$). These findings suggest that honesty-humility

is indeed a statistically significant predictor of relationship quality but shares variance with servant leadership.

A second potential contribution to the literature was to examine the extent to which servant leadership moderated the relationship between honesty-humility and relationship quality. Although prior research is limited, I assumed that leaders lead through service and motivate by modeling appropriate behaviors for those who report to them. Dierendonck (2011) points out that leaders who combine their motivation to lead with a need to serve display servant leadership. Nevertheless, the result of the present study indicate that servant leadership is not a significant moderator of the relationship between honesty-humility and relationship quality.

Third, I contributed to the literature by examining the effect of relationship quality on customer orientation and sales performance. According to past research, LMX Theory can provide a useful framework to evaluate the larger network of exchanges between leaders and followers that shape various organizational outcomes, such as customer orientation. (Liden et al., 1997). My findings indicated that the correlation between relationship quality and customer orientation is positive and statistically significant. This effect is statistically significant in the bivariate relationship, the moderated mediation model, and the simple mediation model. These findings are consistent with research from Dirks and Ferrin (2002) and others in which leader-follower relationship quality tends to foster a supportive and nurturing climate that results in stronger customer orientation. Employees find ways to offer greater value to customers.

A final potential contribution to the literature was to examine sales quotas as a moderator of the relationship between leader-member relationship quality and customer orientation. It was my contention that a critical boundary condition for the relationship between leader-member relationship quality and customer orientation is a situation in which sales quotas are too difficult. It was clear from the literature that perception of quota difficulty does not influence sales performance; I assumed it would influence customer orientation because difficult sales quotas would focus on short-sighted immediate sales. Nevertheless, my supposition was not supported, and we might conclude that sales

quotas do not influence sales performance or customer orientation (e.g., Downes, Kristof-Brown, Judge, & Darnold, 2017).

My results contribute to the literature by showing that leaders displaying honesty-humility leadership and servant leadership may effectively address the risk of salespeople ignoring customers' interest to increase their chances of making an instant sale (Schwepker & Good, 2012). In fact, the reciprocation behavior is based on a social process under which leaders' concern for their followers' development and growth is reciprocated with loyalty and commitment (Basford et al., 2014; Owens & Hekman, 2012). My results support Owens and Hekman (2016), who find that leaders' humility enhances team performance by creating a collective focus. My findings support the argument that servant leaders create a sense of social identity among their team members (Chen et al., 2015) and build teams based on a spirit of kinship where team members assist and build the capacity of others (Yoshida et al., 2014).

Limitations

My study is not without limitations, and thus we must consider these limitations in interpreting the results. Because data were gathered using all self-report surveys administered at one point in time, there is a possibility for common source bias and other measurement errors. For example, as the respondents of the study are sales professionals, it is possible that they overstated their opinions regarding customer care and achievement of their sales targets. Although recruitment of sales managers and representatives willing to complete surveys to obtain data from different sources may be difficult, it would be advisable to help triangulate results and reduce potential common source bias.

Another potential limitation is the strong correlation between honesty-humility and servant leadership. Clearly these two constructs shared variance, either because they share the same referent (the leader) or because the two constructs overlap (or both). Although a CFA of the measurement model confirmed discriminant validity of the two constructs, the bivariate relationship between servant leadership and relationship quality ($r = .81$) is strong and may accounted for some of the

variance between honesty-humility and relationship quality since all three were correlated and the former was no longer statistically significant in the full regression involving the moderators.

As for another potential limitation, personality is often measured in self-reports such that managers may be the best source for the measurement of the honesty-humility construct. Thus, a dyad study whereby managers provide data on their honesty-humility and direct reports provide information on their leaders' servant leadership would help to alleviate concerns of common source bias. In addition, sales performance is often measured with dollars or by manager ratings. The best source for customer orientation is likely the customers.

Future Research

My results reveal several potential areas for future research. For example, an interesting research question would be how the dynamic of relationship quality changes over time and in turn influences customer orientation and sales performance. It may be the case that relationship quality fluctuates over time. Based on the logic presented herein, this would lead to fluctuations in customer orientation and performance. This research question could be addressed with a longitudinal design in which we track leader-direct report dyads over time.

It may also be the case that honesty-humility as a personality variable is a more distal predictor of relationship quality than servant leadership, which is often conceptualized as a behavioral construct and thus more proximal to relationship quality. Indeed, I estimated a serial mediation model with the data obtained in the present study (honesty-humility → servant leadership → relationship quality → customer orientation) that was statistically significant (effect = .11 [95% CIs .04-.19]). Therefore, I present evidence of an alternative model to explain the link between honesty-humility and customer orientation. Finally, I propose investigating honesty-humility and its impact on relationship quality, considering proximal factors such as the salesperson perspective of warmth and competence. We know that honesty-humility personality traits in leaders influence the quality of the relationship, but is that influenced by the representative's perception of warmth, or competence, or both?

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