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＜研究ノート＞

Antecedents and Outcomes of Followership: A Review and Future Agenda

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1. Introduction

Thirty years ago, Kelley's research article（1988）in Harvard Business Review and the book titled "The Power of Followership"（1992）received a lot of attention in the academic world and his research became an important benchmark for followership research（Baker, 2007）. Followers have been observed to contribute, on average, approximately 80 percent to the success of most organizations, which has brought attention to followership（Kelley, 1992）. Followership refers to followers' ability to support leaders and colleagues through proactive behaviors, aiming at realizing common goals（Agho, 2009; Kelley, 1992）. Followership and leadership are complementary rather than competitive. They both make significant contributions to the success of the organization.

However, there is much less attention given to followers and followership compared to leaders and leadership（Blom and Lundgren, 2020; Crossman and Crossman, 2011）. The lack of attention on followership can be attributed to the negative connotations of followers, as followers have often been regarded as recipients（e.g., automatically following leaders' instructions）in previous leadership studies（Agho, 2009; Bjugstad et al., 2006）. Due to the passive connotations, research has undervalued the role of follower/followership. Therefore, it is critical to call attention to followers and followership by exploring the effects/outcomes of followership in organizations.

Meanwhile, there is an incorrect assumption that the skill of leading needs to be learned, whereas the ability to follow is instinctive（Agho, 2009）. This assumption has led to insufficient research on improving followership. For example, current research has mainly regarded followers' characteristics, motivations, and personal resources as antecedents of followership（e.g., He et al., 2021; Jin et al., 2019; Xu et al., 2019）, which ignored the relational factors such as leader-follower relationships and the external factors such as work environments. Therefore, it is also vital to focus on the factors that encourage followership.

Given the research on followership's effects and antecedents is insufficient, the purpose of this research is to summarize the antecedents and outcomes of followership by reviewing published journal papers, providing directions for future followership research. This research is organized as follows. First, it started with the introduction of the basic background of followership（e.g., definitions, classifications, and measurements of followership）. Subsequently, a review of followership's antecedents and outcomes was conducted. In particular, we separated the general overview（i.e., definitions, classifications, and measurement）and the review of followership. The reasons are as follows: some important definitions,

classifications, and measurements of followership are drawn from books without peer review, which generally fall outside the scope of review. Notably, some books (e.g., Kelley's book published in 1992) serve as the cornerstone of followership research, playing an indispensable role in summarizing followership's foundational contents. To ensure the reliability of the review, we only selected papers that have undergone peer review. Besides, given that followership research is limited, it is necessary to clarify the basic contents of followership before exploring its antecedents and outcomes. Besides, to provide additional evidence for the aforementioned findings, we conducted the co-occurrence analysis. Finally, we summarized the conclusion and future research agenda.

2. Theoretical Backgrounds

2.1 Definition of Followership

Since there is far less focus on followership than on leadership (Uhl-Bien et al., 2014), it is not surprising that conceptual analyses, definitions development, and in-depth reviews of followership are rare (Crossman and Crossman, 2011). In such a situation, to better understand followership, Crossman and Crossman (2011) summarized previous research and found that the definitions of followership can be categorized as follows: 1) the opposite definition of leadership; 2) a role (or a group noun) that is influenced by a leader; 3) influential activities.

Given that leadership has been obfuscated with its various definitions (Crossman and Crossman, 2011), the definitions of followership as opposed to leadership are also vague. The definition of a follower's role (or a group noun) that is influenced by a leader is consistent with the leader-centric view, which considers followers as recipients of leaders' influence. An early definition from Hollander and Webb (1955: 166) considered followership as "the extent to which an individual is desired by potential leaders of a group functioning within a circumscribed institutional context." Likewise, Wortman (1982: 373) defined followership as follows:

followership is the process of attaining one's individual goals by being influenced by a leader into participating in individual or group efforts toward organizational goals in a given situation. Followership thereby becomes seen as a function of the follower, the leader, and situational variables.

The definition of followership as influential activities focuses on the behaviors or activities done by followers. As the pioneering work of followership, Kelley (1988: 146–147) defined followership as follows:

People who are effective in the follower role have the vision to see both the forest and the trees, the social capacity to work well with others, the strength of character to flourish without heroic status, the moral and psychological balance to pursue personal and corporate goals at no cost to others, and, above all, the desire to participate in a team effort for the accomplishment of some greater common purpose.

Similarly, Bjugstad et al. (2006: 304) argued that "Followership may be defined as the ability to effectively follow the directives and support the efforts of a leader to maximize a structured organization." This way of defining is consistent with one of the two newly emerging followership views, i.e., role-based views. Role-based views consider how followers work with leaders to contribute to leadership and organizational successes (Carsten et al., 2010; Oc and Bashshur, 2013), focusing on followers' styles, behaviors, follower role orientations, and implicit followership theories (Carsten et al.,

2010; Sy, 2010; Uhl-Bien et al., 2014). Additionally, role-based views are also regarded as the "reverse the lens", which considers followers as causal agents of leadership and organizational outcomes (Shamir, 2007).

The other newly emerging followership view is the constructionist view, which considers how individuals participate in a social process to co-create leadership and followership (DeRue and Ashford, 2010). Constructionist views regard followership as a necessary element in the co-construction of leadership, suggesting the difficulty of disentangling followership from leadership (Uhl-Bien et al., 2014).

Based on the two followership views, this research concurs with Crossman and Crossman's (2011: 484) definition of followership. They described followership as "a relational role in which followers have the ability to influence leaders and contribute to the improvement and attainment of group and organizational objectives." In this definition, followership is regarded as a role, which is consistent with the role-based view (Uhl-Bien et al., 2014). Besides, Crossman and Crossman (2011: 484) defined followership as "complementing leadership", which is consistent with constructionist views. As such, this definition seems to be aligned with the two views.

2.2 Classifications of Followership

Kelley (1988, 1992) conducted significant research in the field of followership. Specifically, he divided followers into five types based on two dimensions (i.e., active engagement and independent critical thinking): alienated, passive, conformist, exemplary, and pragmatist followers (Figure 1). Alienated followers are critical and independent in their thinking but passive in carrying out their roles. They lack engagement and tend to avoid sharing information, being deeply unhappy about their work situation. Contrary to alienated followers, conformist followers are active but lack critical thinking abilities; they are dependent on their leaders for inspiration. Pragmatist followers "question their leaders' decisions, but not too often or too critically. They perform their required tasks, but seldom venture beyond them"

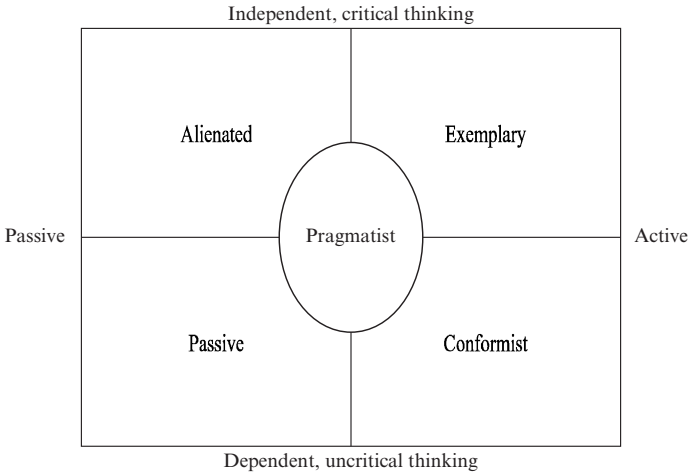

Figure 1 Kelley's (1992) Followership Styles (p. 97)

(Kelley, 1992: 117). As the smallest minority in an organization, passive followers lack initiative and responsibility, and require monitoring when performing the tasks given to them. Exemplary followers are well-balanced and responsible employees who can succeed without strong leadership (Kelley, 1988).

Following Kelley, Chaleff (1995: 6-8) developed the widely accepted courageous followership model, which includes the following five dimensions: (1) courage to serve or support, (2) courage to assume responsibility, (3) courage to challenge, (4) courage to participate in transformation, and (5) courage to take moral action. Based on two of the five dimensions— the courage to serve or support and the courage to challenge—, Chaleff identified four followership styles: the resource, individualist, implementer, and partner styles (Figure 2). Tending to defer to leaders, resource followers do their best to retain their position but no more than that. Individualist followers are willing to challenge policies and procedures. Leaders value that Implementers always give their full support to leaders, and they will not take any action against their leaders. Partners provide strong support for the leader as well as maintain the right to challenge the leader if needed.

Besides Kelley and Chaleff, Kellerman (2008) proposed a five-type followership model (i.e., the isolates, bystanders, participants, activists, and diehards) based on the level of engagement (Figure 3). Isolates are completely detached from the group. Diehards, by contrast, exhibit unfettered devotion to their leader and group.

Figure 2 Chaleff's (1995) Followership Styles (Adapted from Chaleff, 2009)

Figure 3 Kellerman's (2008) Followership Styles

2.3 Measurements of Followership

In the prior section, different researchers have categorized followership in terms of different dimensions. Generally, after identifying the dimensions, the next step is to operationalize the dimensions, i.e., develop the scale. However, among the above followership researchers, only Kelley developed a followership scale.

Kelley's (1992) conceptualization of followership is the starting point of measuring followership. A number of scholars have adopted Kelley's followership scale in empirical research (e.g., Chiang et al., 2022; Du Plessis and Boshoff, 2018; Khan et al., 2020). Based on the behaviors observed from proactive followers, Kelley divided followership into two dimensions, namely active engagement and independent critical thinking. Each dimension has 10 items.

Although Kelley did not empirically validate the reliability and validity of this scale, several scholars have adopted and validated it. For example, to test Kelley's scale, Blanchard et al. (2009) used data from 331 faculty members at a large university. The results showed that two dimensions extracted from Exploratory Factor Analysis were related to Kelley's conceptualization. However, the items of these two groupings (i.e., dimensions) are not exactly as Kelley predicted. Blanchard et al. (2009) also found a third dimension, which was associated with attitudes or affect, not behaviors. Stemming from Kelley's behavior-based conceptualization, this dimension was considered inappropriate and was therefore removed. As a result, active engagement with nine items and independent critical thinking with four items were extracted. Besides, Gatti et al. (2014) collected data from 610 employees in Italy through a self-report questionnaire, testing the Italian version of Kelley's scale. The results showed that two dimensions, i.e., active engagement and independent critical thinking, were extracted, which is consistent with Blanchard et al.'s (2009) work.

Following Kelley, some scholars also developed some followership measurement instruments. Brumm and Drury (2013) developed the followership scale using the inductive approach. Through the literature review, followership concepts were extracted, sorted, and grouped by similar concepts. Three leadership scholars and three authors of related books and journal articles were invited to refine the list or approve the followership items, resulting in seven items of good followership emerging. Focused on supply chains, Defee et al. (2009) reviewed previous research and proposed a followership scale with four dimensions, namely thinking, responsibility, collaboration, and commitment. The scale included items adapted from existing followership research and newly developed items. After the pilot study of testing the validity, a 29-item followership scale emerged. Besides, Gajendran et al. (2022) developed a new variable (i.e., Managing Your Boss) with 10 items as a proactive followership behavior. Different from the previous work, Baird and Benson (2022) assessed followership by the relative percentile method. Participants were provided a definition of followership, and required to evaluate the extent to which each teammate demonstrates effective followership on a 101-point sliding scale.

Although many scholars have proposed their own measurements, these have only been verified by the scholars themselves and have not been tested by other scholars in other contexts. Thus, the validity and reliability of these scales need to be verified in the future. Besides, given that Kelley's scale has been tested extensively, it seems reliable to adopt his followership scale in future research.

The development of measurement instruments is fundamental to empirical studies. In order to further

understand a construct, it is important to explore the causal mechanisms associated with the construct, which is also a vital goal of empirical studies (Imai et al., 2011). Currently, empirical research has paid attention to the antecedents and outcomes (i.e., causality) of followership. For example, Uhl-Bien et al. (2014) summarized the theoretical constructs and variables for the study of followership, which is consistent with followership's antecedents and outcome. However, summaries and discussions of factors (i.e., the antecedents and outcomes of followership) in empirical studies are lacking.

3. Method

To obtain a comprehensive picture of antecedents and outcomes of followership, we performed searches on the academic database Web of Science (SCI, SSCI, ESCI) by using the keyword followership. The articles with publication dates before January 2023 were searched. Paper screening and selection were divided into two rounds (Figure 4). In the first round, we conducted a quick screening that focused on checking the titles, abstracts, and keywords of the articles, and 88 articles were left. The screening and selection criteria were as follows: 1) Since followership behaviors are not general employee behaviors (Uhl-Bien et al., 2014), we removed papers that misused the term followership to describe general employee behaviors; 2) We removed some articles with different meanings of followership, such as following behaviors in Social Network Services. In the second round, we checked the main body of the remaining papers, and 49 papers were left. As mentioned above, the papers that expressed general employee behavior as followership were deleted. In addition, the papers that paid little attention to followership and did not explain or analyze followership (e.g., primarily focusing on leadership) were deleted. Moreover, Bastardoz and Adriaensen (2023) have argued that followership research needs to focus on actual followership behaviors. Given that implicit followership (individuals' assumptions about the traits and behaviors) is different from actual followership behaviors, we neglected implicit followership studies. Finally, 31 empirical studies of followership behaviors were left.

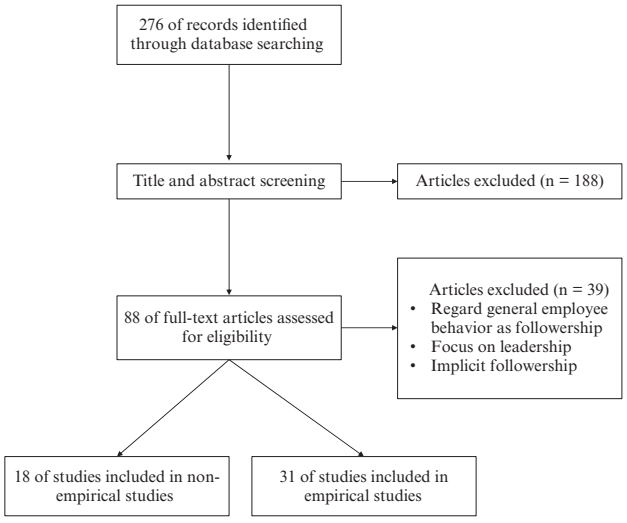

Figure 4 Flow Diagram of Review

4. Results

4.1 Antecedents of Followership

In terms of the categorization of followership antecedents, we divided them into three categories, i.e., individual, relational, and work-unit level, based on the research from Uhl-Bien et al. (2014). The result is summarized in Table 1.

As for the individual level antecedents, current empirical studies have focused more on leaders, which is probably rooted in the traditional leader-centric views. In the leader-centric views, followers were always regarded as recipients of leaders' influence (e.g., followers can be affected by leaders' strategic planning behaviors; Brumm and Drury, 2013). Besides, Carsten et al. (2010) also suggested that leadership style could affect followership. As such, many scholars have tested various leadership styles, such as participative leadership (Kim and Schachter, 2015), authentic leadership (Du Plessis and Boshoff., 2018), paradoxical leadership (Jia et al., 2018), team temporal leadership (Yuan and Lo, 2018), transactional leadership (Li et al., 2020), transformational leadership (Alegbeleye and Kaufman., 2020; Li et al., 2020), authoritarian leadership (Wang et al., 2022). Besides, Wang and Guo (2022) indicated that Narcissistic leaders could affect followership. When followers perceive a leadership style or a leader type that suits them, they are more willing to utilize followership to support the leaders.

As for the followers' individual level antecedents, some scholars have focused on followers' motivation, such as regulatory focus (Xu et al.,2019) and public service motivation (Jin et al., 2019). Based on the self-determination theory (Deci and Ryan, 2008), growth-oriented followers with autonomous motivation are inclined to proactively perform tasks and support leaders to accomplish common goals. Similarly, high levels of person-organization fit perceptions could motivate followers to engage in proactive behaviors (Yu, 2009), such as followership behaviors (Jin et al., 2018). Besides, some scholars have focused on personal resources such as psychological capital (Du Plessis and Boshoff, 2018) and self-efficacy (He et al., 2021). Based on the job demands-resources model, personal resources such as self-efficacy can help employees successfully cope with challenges and enhance work engagement, which is consistent with followership (e.g., active engagement). Additionally, Xu et al. (2019) proved that followers' personality was related to followership behavior, which is consistent with Uhl-Bien et al.'s (2014) conceptual model of "Reversing the lens."

As for relationship level antecedents, we did not find any existing variables in the 31 empirical studies. As for work-unit level antecedents, organizational climate (Carsten et al., 2010) and team political climate (He et al., 2021) were found to be associated with followership. It is consistent with Uhl-Bien et al.'s (2014) argument that climate is one of the important variables when studying followership.

Current empirical research has concentrated on the individual level antecedents, especially on leadership as followership antecedents. The focus on leadership seems to be influenced by the traditional leader-centric views, which is considered to cause the negative connotation of the term "subordinate" (Uhl-Bien et al., 2014). Furthermore, given the absence of the relationship level and the scarcity of the work-unit level antecedents, we call for future research to pay more attention to both of these two levels. Particularly, due to the current world trend of digitization, considering the digital technology-embedded environment is an important issue.

Table 1 Summary of Antecedents of Followership

Level	Specific Factors	Authors
Individual	Leadership style	Carsten et al.（2010）
	Participative leadership	Kim and Schachter（2015）
	Authentic leadership	Du Plessis and Boshoff（2018）
	Paradoxical leadership incongruence	Jia et al.（2018）
	Team temporal leadership	Yuan and Lo（2018）
	Transactional leadership	Li et al.（2020）
	Transformational leadership	Alegbeleye and Kaufman（2020）, Li et al.（2020）
	Authoritarian leadership	Wang et al.（2022）
	Leaders' strategic planning	Brumm and Drury（2013）
	Psychological capital	Du Plessis and Boshoff（2018）
	Person-organization fit	Jin et al.（2018）
	Followers' personality	Xu et al.（2019）
	Regulatory focus	Xu et al.（2019）
	Public service motivation	Jin et al.（2019）
	Self-efficacy	He et al.（2021）
	Narcissistic leaders	Wang and Guo（2022）
Relationship	None	None
Work-unit	Organizational climate	Carsten et al.（2010）
	Team political climate	He et al.（2021）

4.2 Outcomes of Followership

In order to explore the effectiveness of followership, many scholars focused on followership outcomes. Uhl-Bien et al.（2014）argued that followership outcomes may occur at the individual, relationship, and work-unit levels. Based on these three levels, we summarized the outcomes in Table 2.

Individual level outcomes refer to leaders' or followers' individual outcomes（e.g., a follower' high potential, follower effectiveness, burnout; Uhl-Bien et al., 2014）. Followership generally refers to the behaviors of helping leaders, which can directly influence leaders themselves. As for leaders' individual level outcomes, current empirical research on followership mainly tested leaders' perceptions, motivations（Carsten et al., 2018）, and transformational leadership behavior（Khan et al., 2020）. Followers with high followership will behave in a way that supports leaders（e.g., providing ideas and suggestions）, making leaders feel supported and motivated（Carsten et al., 2018）. Besides, followership can enhance trust in leadership, ultimately affecting transformational leadership behaviors（Khan et al., 2020）.

In contrast, current empirical research focuses more on followers' individual level outcomes. Many scholars have demonstrated the positive impact of followership on job satisfaction（Blanchard et al., 2009; Gatti et al., 2017; Jin et al., 2016; Jin et al., 2018）. Followership behaviors always involve helping leaders, solving hard problems, making constructive suggestions, etc. According to the social exchange theory, followers are supposed to be rewarded for their helpful behaviors, which can make them feel that their efforts are worthwhile（Carsten et al., 2022; Jin et al., 2016）, and job satisfaction will also be increased as a result. Likewise, such behavior may cause leaders to provide support in return. When followers perceive support, their relatedness needs can be satisfied（Leroy et al., 2015）, and organizational commitment can be enhanced（Blanchard et al., 2009）. As such, they will have greater autonomous motivation, which could lead to organizational citizenship behavior（Nugraha et al., 2022）,

higher work engagement (Du Plessis and Boshoff, 2018), and job performance (Nugraha et al., 2022; Xu et al., 2019). Additionally, followership behaviors include independent critical thinking, which is related to coming up with constructive ideas or solutions that contribute to creativity (Chiang et al., 2022). As such, based on the principle of reciprocity, a virtuous circle is created between followers and leaders, which leads to a feeling that the fitness between individuals and organizations is good (Jin et al., 2019).

Relationship level outcomes mean that the outcomes can reflect the leader-follower relationships. Uhl-Bien et al. (2014) mentioned that trust and the leader member exchange theory are two important outcomes at the relationship level, which is consistent with the empirical tests done by Khan et al. (2020) and Gajendran et al. (2022). Besides, considering the reciprocal obligations and social exchange relationship between leaders and followers, when leaders feel supported (i.e., followership behaviors), they will provide support to followers as a reward (Howell and Shamir, 2005). It will also make followers feel supported (Jin et al., 2019), contributing to good leader-follower relationships and reducing conflicts (Baird and Benson, 2022).

Work-unit level outcomes mainly refer to organizational outcomes. Given that individuals' performance is related to organizations' performance, it is reasonable that followership can contribute to team performance (Yuan and Lo, 2018) and organization performance (Kim and Schachter, 2015). Besides, followership can reduce interpersonal conflicts, which can further contribute to reducing team conflicts (Baird and Benson, 2022).

Current research has concentrated on the individual level, with less focus on the relationship level and work-unit level. Through previous explanations, we found that relationship level outcomes are closely

Table 2 Summary of Outcomes of Followership

Level	Specific Factors	Authors and Research
Individual	Followers' Job Satisfaction	Blanchard et al. (2009); Gatti et al. (2017); Jin et al. (2016); Jin et al. (2018)
	Followers' Organizational Commitment	Blanchard et al. (2009)
	Followers' Basic Need Satisfaction	Leroy et al. (2015)
	Leaders' Perceptions	Carsten et al. (2018)
	Leaders' Motivation	Carsten et al. (2018)
	Followers' Work Engagement	Du Plessis and Boshoff (2018)
	Followers' Person-organization Fit	Jin et al. (2019)
	Followers' Work Performance	Nugraha et al. (2022); Xu et al. (2019)
	Transformational Leadership Behavior	Khan et al. (2020)
	Followers' Effort	Carsten et al. (2022)
	Followers' Creative Performance	Chiang et al. (2022)
	Followers' Organizational Citizenship Behavior	Nugraha et al. (2022)
Relationship	Perceived Leader Support	Jin et al. (2019)
	Trust in Leadership	Khan et al. (2020)
	Interpersonal Conflict	Baird and Benson (2022)
	Leader Member Exchange	Gajendran et al. (2022)
Work-unit	Organization Performance	Kim and Schachter (2015)
	Team Performance	Yuan and Lo (2018)
	Team Conflict	Baird and Benson (2022)

associated with individual level (e.g., trust in leadership can affect transformational leadership; Khan et al., 2020) and work-unit level outcomes (e.g., the relationship between interpersonal conflict and team conflict). Additionally, since the nature of followership is in relation to leaders or the leadership process (Uhl-Bien et al., 2014), relationship level outcomes are fairly important. Therefore, future research should be conducted by centering around the relationship level, and linking the relationship level outcomes to the individual level or the work-unit level outcomes.

4.3 Co-occurrence Analysis of Empirical Research

To provide additional evidence for the aforementioned findings, we conducted the co-occurrence analysis by VOSviewer software, aiming at constructing and visualizing relations of the 31 empirical studies. VOSviewer is a software tool for creating maps based on network data and for visualizing and exploring these maps. Given that the number of publications is relatively low (31 empirical studies), the minimum occurrences for analysis was set to 2. Besides, some keywords such as "moderating role", "model", and "impact" were removed. Finally, three clusters were obtained from the co-occurrence analysis (Figure 5). In Figure 5, the node area and font size depend on the weight value of the keyword. When the weight value is greater, node area and font size will be larger. Besides, the line between nodes indicates that a keyword appears in common with another. The thickness of the connection line indicates the co-occurrence strength between the two keywords.

"Followership", "leadership" and "job performance" were the most highlighted nodes within Cluster 1. This cluster showed that the relationships between leadership and followership are the most widely discussed in previous studies. Meanwhile, given that leadership was always used as the antecedent of followership in past empirical studies (see Table 1), followers have always been seen as recipients. Additionally, the cluster also indicated that performance is one of the most tested consequence factors

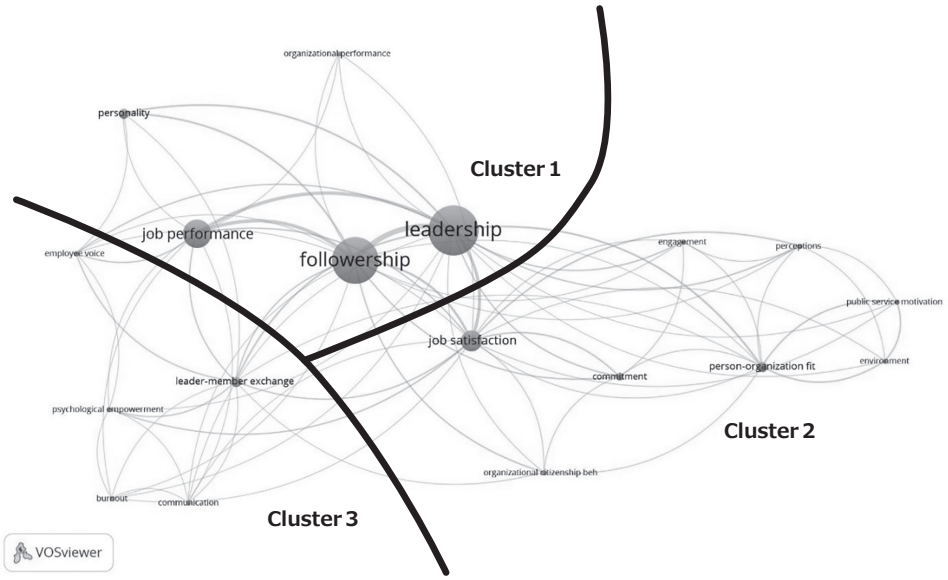

Figure 5 Result of Co-occurrence Analysis

(see Table 2). As such, Cluster 1 mainly focused on the factors that were closely related to followership.

Cluster 2 has "job satisfaction" as the highlighted node and groups together other keywords such as "person-organization fit", "engagement", "commitment", and "perception". This cluster is related to positive work-related psychological consequences/ antecedents of followership, suggesting that job satisfaction is an important factor in previous research.

The node area, font size, and thickness of the connection line in Cluster 3 are the smallest and thinnest among the three clusters, which indicates the lack of occurrence (co-occurrence) of a keyword. As such, it is possible to find the underlying correlations by focusing on the big nodes and thick lines. Cluster 3 has "leader-member exchange" as the highlighted node and groups together other keywords such as "communication", "psychological empowerment", and "employee voice". This cluster mainly focuses on the relationships between followers and leaders.

Based on the result of the co-occurrence analysis, the relation between followership and leadership is the closest. According to Table 1, followership has been regarded as a recipient of leadership influence in many previous studies. However, according to the definitions of followership, followers can influence leaders through proactive behaviors (Crossman and Crossman, 2011; Kelley, 1992), which is consistent with the "reverse the lens" (Uhl-Bien et al., 2014). Therefore, it is necessary to focus on followers as the key drivers instead of recipients in future research. Besides, the number of nodes in Cluster 2 is more than that of the other clusters, but the size is small. Therefore, in order to increase the size and tighten the connections between nodes, we can explore some variables like job embeddedness, which partly overlaps with some factors, such as "person-organization fit" and "commitment" in future research. Finally, Cluster 3, with small nodes and weak links, showed that explorations on relationship level factors were limited, which is consistent with the analysis results from Table 1 and Table 2.

5. Conclusion

Based on the results of the review and co-occurrence analysis, we summarized the research problems and future directions about the antecedents and outcomes of followership. First, as for followership antecedents, previous research has concentrated on leadership as a causal agent. In contrast, few work-unit level variables have been studied, and even relationship level variables are absent (see Table 1). Thus, the focus on relationship level antecedents is urgent. In followership research, relationship level variables are consistent with the quality of organizational relationships, particularly leader-following relationships. Currently, especially after the COVID-19 pandemic, the transformations in work styles (e.g., remote work) and work environments (e.g., digital-embedded environment) have changed the organizational relationships, particularly the leader-follower relationship (Varma et al., 2022; Wang et al., 2022), which ultimately could affect followership. Based on the results of review and co-occurrence analysis, research on work-unit level variables is limited. Thus, it is necessary to test the effects of the current work environment (i.e., digital-embedded environment) as a work-unit level variable on followership in future research.

Second, as for followership outcomes, individual level outcomes have attracted the most attention. Figure 5 shows that job performance and job satisfaction are the two most popular outcomes of followership, and job performance has a larger node area than job satisfaction. However, based on Table

2, there are fewer empirical followership studies on job performance (2 studies) than on job satisfaction (4 studies), which is consistent with the argument that the exploration of job performance in followership research is inadequate (Nugraha et al., 2022). Besides, there is a "black box" between followership and job performance (i.e., the pathway is unclear). Based on the social exchange theory, there should be an exchange process between followership and job performance, while the direct link between followership and job performance ignores the exchange process. Aiming at supporting leaders and colleagues, followership behaviors are directed at others (e.g., supervisors) and not at followers themselves (e.g., followers' job performance). Thus, past research (e.g., Nugraha et al., 2022; Xu et al., 2019) focusing on the direct effect between followership and job performance is insufficient. Furthermore, Table 2 (the number of relationship level outcomes) and Figure 5 (the node and links of leader-member exchange in cluster 3) also show the research on relationship level outcomes is limited, which illustrates the necessity to focus on variables related to the leader-follower relationship.

Finally, based on the above discussions of followership's antecedents and outcomes, we argue that the relationship level factors are indispensable in followership research, which is consistent with the nature of followership. Therefore, future research on followership outcomes as well as antecedents cannot focus solely on followers themselves but needs to emphasize the relationship level factors such as leader-follower interactions.

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