

LMX, LEADERSHIP STYLE, AND RETENTION

LMX, LEADERSHIP STYLE, AND RETENTION IN SOUTHEASTERN PENNSYLVANIA  
SOCIAL SERVICES ORGANIZATIONS

by

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Liberty University, School of Business

### **Abstract**

Organizations deal with employee retention (e.g., retaining employees, stemming attrition, mitigating intent to leave an organization) in a number of ways. Examining the relationship one has with his/her manager, and the leadership style of one's manager, are valuable factors in retaining employees. LMX (leader-member exchange) is the quality of relationship between leaders/managers and members/employees and is based on trust and reciprocity between parties. Passive leaders avoid management issues and only act when they have no other choices. Transactional leaders are exchange-based individuals that provide rewards (e.g., compensation) in exchange for work completed by employees. Transformational leaders go beyond this and view employees as individuals rather than organizational resources, often using motivation and charisma to accomplish organizational goals and objectives. Servant leadership looks at managers as servants first, and how serving others can contribute to positive job outcomes. This is evident in the social and human services industry where employees are considered key contacts for clients who have intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDDs). This study looks at two social services organizations (SSOs) located in Southeastern Pennsylvania. Out of 185 employees, 128 were examined via survey instruments from tested studies such as LMX, four styles of leadership, and retention/turnover intention. Using a quantitative correlational approach, findings suggest that LMX has a moderate negative correlation with turnover intention, as LMX increases, intent to leave decreases; that passive leadership is detrimental to LMX; and that three forms of leadership style, transactional, transformational, and servant, positively impact LMX and, therefore, contribute to increased employee retention.

*Keywords:* LMX, leadership style, passive leadership, transactional leadership, transformational leadership, servant leadership, retention

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**Approvals**

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**Dedication**

To my wife and best friend, Judy, and the sweetest children, Mandy and Lilly.

Your motivation and support provided me the ability to start my doctoral work, persevere during difficult times, and see it through to completion. Thank you.

Love, Dave/Daddy

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To my mother, Joan, you had the “enviable” task of proofreading my dissertation, making recommendations on wording and flow. This final version reflects the hard work you put into helping me.

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### **Section 1: Foundation of the Study**

The impact of employee turnover has far-reaching effects on organizations, particularly those in the social services industry. When employees leave social services organizations (SSOs), effects are felt not only on their teams but on clients who depend on stable services in order to function daily. In SSOs that provide continuous residential services to clients with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDDs), the loss of employees wreaks havoc for clients who rely on stable care. Clients with IDD require routine schedules and staff who are familiar with their daily regimens. Simple routines taken for granted by most people are struggles for those with IDD. Such routines as getting in/out of bed, bathing, dressing, feeding, and transportation to physicians become disrupted with the loss of support staff members and this loss leads to the behavioral regression of clients who are working towards daily maintenance or even levels of self-sufficiency. Filling these vacated positions is not as simple as it seems. It is not easy to “plug and play” members into impacted client houses. Clients with behavioral issues can exploit new staff members who are unfamiliar with their behaviors. The negative impact of staff turnover affects an organization’s performance, disrupts the continuity of care, and results in poor customer service (Tremblay et al., 2016). SSOs are left to fill the human resource gap that costs up to 150% of the vacating employee’s salary (Book et al., 2019). SSO turnover ranges from as low as 25% to as high as 60% in the United States (Tremblay et al., 2016). Such high rates of turnover leave SSOs having difficulty maintaining adequate service levels to their clients and customers, ultimately impacting the organization’s bottom line.

Leadership is a key to improving employee retention (i.e., how employees get along with their managers goes a long way in determining whether they stay at their organizations or leave). Gerstner and Day (1997) indicated an independent variable (IV) in the current study, leader-

member exchange (LMX), was negatively (moderate effect size) related to turnover intention, the dependent variable (DV) in this study. LMX, a variant of social exchange theory, is a means to assess the quality of relationship with one's manager. High LMX indicates a close relationship between a manager and employee based on trust and communication (Kim & Hopkins, 2015). Leadership style, a second IV in the current study, is not apparent in many managers who demonstrate, at best, a style of passive leadership (i.e., a failure to act or to lead; Holtz & Hu, 2017). However, all managers who have direct reports possess leadership styles (e.g., passive, transactional, transformational, or servant) and these leadership styles relate to the LMX relationship that managers have with their followers. The relationships of leadership style with LMX, and LMX with retention, are the cruxes of this study.

Section 1 provides a background of the problem including a problem statement, purpose statement, and nature of the correlative study between LMX, leadership style, and retention in two Southeastern Pennsylvania SSOs. Research questions set the direction of the study as do hypotheses. Next, a theoretical framework is provided showing the ties to social exchange theory, LMX theory, and leadership theories. Definitions of terms are provided along with assumptions, limitations, and delimitations. A reduction of gaps in the existing body of knowledge is illustrated along with implications for Biblical integration and the relationship to the field of study. Finally, an academic review of the literature on LMX, leadership style, and retention concludes this section.

### **Background of the Problem**

This section provides an overview of the problem being turnover in companies and the factors of LMX and leadership style related to retention in organizations today. First, voluntary turnover is discussed and includes factors contributing to turnover. Next, LMX is considered a

factor (Gerstner & Day, 1997) to mitigating turnover intention. Third, leadership style is a factor correlating with LMX and employees when considering turnover. Finally, recent research shows the issue of turnover continuing to be an organizational problem.

Voluntary turnover has plagued companies for decades and root causes focus on job dissatisfaction (Rothausen et al., 2017), but such dissatisfaction stems from myriad antecedents like employee performance (McEvoy & Cascio, 1987), organizational culture (Sheridan, 1992), emotional attachment to the organization (Taylor & Pillemer, 2009), and even the impact of supporting fun activities in the workplace (Tews et al., 2013).

More recently, leadership has gained prominence in management and retention research as relevant antecedents of job satisfaction. Mardanov et al. (2008) confirmed that LMX positively associated with job satisfaction in the banking industry and Yildiz (2018) supported this in a study of LMX and a mobbing effect in Turkish employees who provide sports and physical activity services. Wang et al. (2018) drilled down into LMX and parse members into in-groups and out-groups, suggesting leaders/managers provide favoritism treatment to those of the in-group and a carrot/stick approach to those in the out-group.

Within leadership is the subset of leadership style, as mentioned above, and the increasing role it plays with turnover and retention. Jang and Kandampully (2018) investigated the effect of one leadership style, servant leadership, on hospitality employee turnover and they point to affective organizational commitment (OC) as essential between servant leadership and employee turnover, suggesting intensive leadership training should be implemented at restaurants and development of servant leadership in managers is important to understand employee turnover. Another leadership style, transformational leadership, figures prominently in leadership research with Sun and Wang (2017) suggesting the style “has inherent advantages in

detering subordinates from making quitting decisions” (p. 1128). These and other types of leadership are discussed further herein relating them to LMX.

The connection between leadership style and LMX is important for organizations, particularly SSOs, when creating missions in serving their clients. As noted above, the connection between LMX and retention is seen in the meta-analytic work of Gerstner and Day (1997) who concluded that there was a moderately negative relationship ( $r = -.31$ ) between LMX and turnover intention, the variable used inversely to operationalize retention in this study.

Such extant research identified causes of turnover but, unfortunately, the problem continues to persist, three in four employees actively sought jobs per Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) in 2004 (Cloutier et al., 2015; Tse et al., 2014). In 2008, two in three employees were actively seeking jobs or went through the motions in their current jobs (Harkness, 2008). Maurer (2015) stated that the number of active job seekers increased to 71% in 2015.

### **Problem Statement**

The general problem addressed was the impact that leadership and leadership styles had in organizations struggling to retain employees, having resulted in higher allocations of financial resources in talent acquisition and operations. Johnson and Pike (2018) suggested staff replacement was as much as 60% of an employee’s salary while Book et al. (2019) stated replacement cost for jobs lost having been up to 150% of a position’s salary as noted above. Kim (2019) posited benefits of higher retention were linked to lower replacement costs and Rose and Raja (2016) found that higher employee retention led to greater retention of organizational knowledge and higher organizational performance. The specific problem addressed was the impact that leadership and leadership styles had in two Southeastern Pennsylvania SSOs with

clients who had IDD, having struggled to retain employees in their locations, and resulted in higher allocations of financial resources in talent acquisition and operations. Turnover in SSOs is much higher than the national average, nearly 10 times higher in U.S. organizations (Tremblay et al., 2016). Tremblay et al. (2016) indicated SSOs saw longer lengths of service by clients, implying a greater need for stable employment for those who provided care.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this quantitative correlational survey study was to extend leadership and retention research by examining the role of leadership style in the relationship between LMX and retention, thus identifying key variables to helping the study's SSOs retain employees. This topic explored these relationships via primary survey research and was conducted in two SSOs focused on serving IDD individuals and their respective locations in Southeastern Pennsylvania.

### **Nature of the Study**

Methods and designs vary depending on the goals authors seek to accomplish as well as procedures for conducting such research. For those conducting quantitative research, the researcher examines cause and effect (i.e., X causes Y) or relationships between variables (e.g., as X increases, Y increases or decreases; Lapan et al., 2011). Quantitative studies, for example, test the effect of treatment on test subjects or, as in the current study, the relationship between leadership, LMX and retention. Qualitative research, less concerned about the relationship or cause and effect among variables, is concerned with daily interactions, how situations occur, or the meanings of interactions involved to name a few (Lapan et al., 2011). While quantitative research often tests IVs and DVs by examining the relationship between said variables, qualitative research explores and learns to understand individuals, groups, and/or social and human problems (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Mixed methods research integrates quantitative



and qualitative approaches to provide information that could not have been achieved through quantitative or qualitative research alone (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

The nature of this study's method was quantitative because it examined the relationship among the variables of LMX, leadership style, and retention. Quantitative research was best utilized in this study because it tested the relationships (e.g., valence and strength) of LMX, leadership style, and retention. Further, most research on LMX-turnover (Byun et al., 2017; Clarke & Mahadi, 2017; Covella et al., 2017; Kim & Hopkins, 2015; Yildiz, 2018) and leadership-turnover (Jang & Kandampully, 2018; Sun & Wang, 2017) focuses on quantitative methods with correlational designs through surveys and questionnaires to test relationships of these variables.

### ***Discussion of Method***

The method of this study was quantitative and included testing hypotheses consistent with quantitative research. To elaborate on quantitative research noted above, true experiments, quasi-experiments, correlational research, and survey research are examples to measure interactions between complex variables (Lapan et al., 2011). Variables in these studies are often operationalized to closely approximate abstract constructs. Quantifiable data (e.g., numbers) helps researchers conduct analysis and form generalizations on certain populations based upon results (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Qualitative research is focused on non-quantifiable data (e.g., words and experiences or perceptions). Although various qualitative research methods (e.g., narrative, grounded, phenomenological, ethnography, and case studies) may be used in research on LMX, leadership style, and/or retention, they fail to measure relationships between these variables like the current study. Qualitative research stimulates conversation on topics previously unnoticed unlike the current study. Indeed, this study tested what had previously been

examined and explored in these fields of study. A mixed methods approach, while possible, was not appropriate for this study because of the qualitative component associated with this sort of study. This approach brings together any shortcomings in quantitative or qualitative research, thus bridging any gaps experienced by one method or the other. Though mixed methods was intriguing to use, such as gathering the *why* to go along with the data via surveys, this convergent approach was better suited for future research than the current study. Therefore, it was only natural for quantitative research to be used in studying the relationship of LMX with leadership style, and LMX with retention (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

### ***Discussion of Design***

Quantitative research employs ways to collect data such as descriptive, correlational, experimental, and quasi-experimental (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). A correlational design was appropriate for research in this study because of the constructs having been measured (i.e., quantified) in LMX, leadership style, and retention. While descriptive components were included as well (e.g., showing mean scores for each question answered in the surveys) testing hypotheses came from correlational analysis of the surveys completed by employees. Because the study did not suggest causation, it could not use experimental designs either. Of course, neither qualitative designs nor mixed methods designs like convergent parallel approaches were appropriate for this study because of the inability to measure the variables involved (qualitative) or lack of need in diving deeper into the results expected (mixed).

### ***Summary of the Nature of the Study***

The above section provides a nature of the study conducted within, as well as discussions of, the method and design utilized for this study. As detailed above, quantitative correlational

research was the appropriate method/design for this study and reasons for not having employed qualitative or mixed methods were provided.

### **Research Questions**

1. What is the relationship between LMX and employee retention, or turnover intention, in two Southeastern Pennsylvania social services organizations?
2. What is the relationship between leadership style and leader-member exchange (LMX) in two Southeastern Pennsylvania social services organizations?

### **Hypotheses**

To test the research questions posed above, hypotheses were developed to address each research question (see Appendix A for theoretical framework as well as Theoretical Framework section for details):

- H*<sub>01</sub>. LMX does not correlate with retention, or turnover intention, in the Southeastern Pennsylvania social services organizations
- H*<sub>11</sub>. LMX correlates with retention, or turnover intention, in the Southeastern Pennsylvania social services organizations

These hypotheses tested the relationship between LMX and retention in the SSOs used in the study. Here, the null suggests no relationship while the alternative suggests a relationship though no valence (e.g., positive, negative) was presumed. The remaining hypotheses looked at relationships between leadership style and LMX:

- H*<sub>02</sub>. Passive leadership does not correlate with LMX in the Southeastern Pennsylvania social services organizations
- H*<sub>12</sub>. Passive leadership correlates with LMX in the Southeastern Pennsylvania social services organizations

- H*<sub>03</sub>. Transactional leadership does not correlate with LMX in the Southeastern Pennsylvania social services organizations
- H*<sub>13</sub>. Transactional leadership correlates with LMX in the Southeastern Pennsylvania social services organizations
- H*<sub>04</sub>. Transformational leadership does not correlate with LMX in the Southeastern Pennsylvania social services organizations
- H*<sub>14</sub>. Transformational leadership correlates with LMX in the Southeastern Pennsylvania social services organizations
- H*<sub>05</sub>. Servant leadership does not correlate with LMX in the Southeastern Pennsylvania social services organizations
- H*<sub>15</sub>. Servant leadership style correlates with LMX in the Southeastern Pennsylvania social services organizations

These hypotheses examined each leadership style used and how they associated with the leader/member relationship and LMX. While alternative hypotheses suggested there was a relationship, the null hypotheses suggested no relationship between each leadership style and LMX.

### **Theoretical Framework**

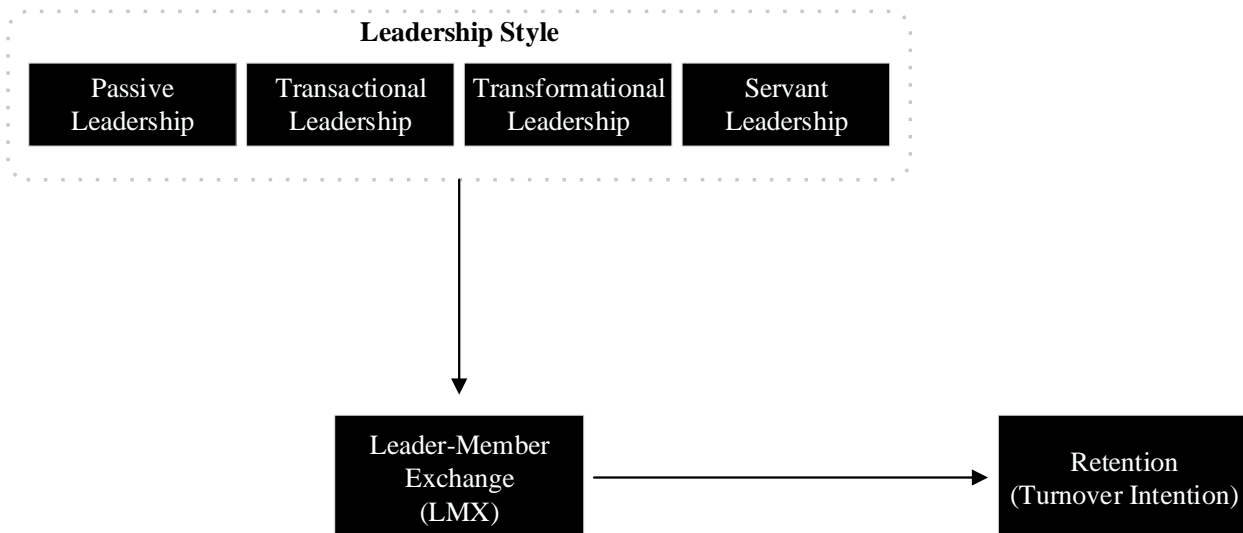
Social exchange theory encompassed much of the theoretical framework in this study with variants of the theory seen in LMX theory and current leadership theories: passive, transactional, transformational, and servant. This section covers how social exchange theory works to address research questions above. The first research question examined the relationship that LMX (considered the IV in this scenario) had with retention, or turnover intention, in Southeastern Pennsylvania SSOs. The second question related to the importance of explaining

how the IV, leadership style, theoretically related to the DV in this scenario, LMX, in Southeastern Pennsylvania SSOs. Here, leadership style was based on leadership theories – passive, transactional, transformational, and servant, and each theory addressed how leadership style was theoretically important in this study. For example, passive leadership, quite common in organizations, is based on a leader’s inaction or lack of engagement and willingness (Holtz & Hu, 2017).

In Appendix A, and below, the theoretical framework illustrates variables and hypothetical interactions between them. LMX shows a similar relationship with turnover intention such that as LMX increases, turnover intention correspondingly increases or decreases. Based on each hypothesis regarding leadership style (see Hypotheses), each correlates with LMX positively or negatively. Leadership style and LMX have an association, namely, as one leadership style increases in intensity, there is a corresponding increase or decrease in LMX.

**Figure 1**

*Leadership Styles and Retention*



### *Discussion of Social Exchange Theory and LMX Theory*

Social exchange theory is based on the exchange of tangible and/or intangible obligations between parties, in this case the leader and member (Covella et al., 2017). Examples of exchanges are the conspicuous (e.g., compensation to a member in exchange for work provided to the leader or organization) and inconspicuous (e.g., a member staying late in an unconscious exchange for the leader having publicly recognizing him/her for good work in a team meeting previously). LMX theory has similar exchanges between leaders and members, relationships develop between parties and an ongoing mutual exchange of support and roles/responsibilities occurs (Byun et al., 2017). LMX relationships can be high-quality (e.g., strong relationships built on trust, reciprocity, faith and respect that go beyond job descriptions or contracts) or low-quality (e.g., impersonal, formal, often at work to *just do their jobs* and nothing more; Estel et al., 2019). For instance, if a leader has a tight deadline for a special project, they will delegate it to a high-LMX employee because of the trust they have in the individual to do the job correctly and on time. Daily in-role behavior is managed by high- and low-LMX members, but high-LMX members exhibit extra-role behaviors and go above and beyond their normal job duties (Sias & Duncan, 2019) such as participating in special project teams or committees. Reciprocity, a common pillar of LMX, was important in this study's LMX-retention dynamic because it was based on exchanges and, per Stafford (2015), these were based in terms of rewards and costs (Sias & Duncan, 2019). Reciprocity is exemplified in retention of a member in exchange for rewards (e.g., public recognition, special tasks, compensation, etc.) received from a leader, hence the concept that the higher LMX increases, so does the likelihood of retaining employees; high-LMX results in lower turnover intention (Ahmed et al., 2013; Tse et al., 2014). Per Sun and Wang (2017), social exchange theory illustrated interpersonal relationships whereby employees

repaid organizations in positive ways such as having remained with the organizations. SSOs are no different than other organizations though they do have expectations to provide high-touch services to clients. Any sub-optimal performance translates to negative firm performance.

Because positions in SSOs are inherently relational, social exchange theory and LMX theory are prominent in leader-member dyads; however, even in relational positions, cost-benefit analyses are prevalent and considered as leaders or members of an SSO (Martin et al., 2012).

### *Discussion of Leadership Theories*

A leadership style that is reactive at best is passive leadership which demonstrates difficulty in managers making decisions, thus resulting in poor leadership and member performance, burnout, particularly in SSOs where overtime is frequent, and even physical symptoms (Che et al., 2017). This leadership style in an SSO is detrimental to the lives of employees as well as clients and customers, and is destructive in such organizations (Kelloway et al., 2017). The delicate services provided to IDD clients are impacted if the wrong leadership style is present in a department/house or the organization itself. Prevalent passive leadership styles of management in organizations take years to change, particularly if not readily identified.

Transactional leadership's primary focus is the exchange behavior between leaders and members (Rinfret et al., 2018) and the members are rewarded or punished by the leaders for completion (or lack thereof) of tasks on time (Maaitah, 2018; Saeed & Mughal, 2019). Many employees work overtime in SSOs and this reward is for additional hours worked, but burnout is more problematic leading to higher turnover rates (Thomas et al., 2014). Transactional leadership is effective in industries like banking (Maaitah, 2018) and self-interested SSO members appreciate this style of leadership (e.g., being compensated proportionately for the work they do). Compensation is amplified by overtime work, so this additional work done by

SSO employees is rewarded with additional compensation higher than their normal rates of pay. However, SSOs agree that the focus of employees must be more on clients and customers (e.g., parents of clients) and less on themselves. Management, positions exempt from overtime compensation, pushes other leadership styles because of client benefits received by these approaches.

Transformational leadership inspires members and motivates them to succeed for reasons other than their own self-interests per Sun and Wang (2017). Through inspiration, empowerment, and encouragement, transformational leaders garner higher retention rates from their employees. Transformational leaders care more about *individuals* employed and these affective commitments (ACs) result in broader ACs by these individuals to the SSO. Management supports transformational leadership in many organizations and SSOs are no different, particularly needing to focus on sensitive clients. With high-touch customer service needed in SSOs, transformational leadership is critical to imparting selfless behavior toward members in the leader-member pairing, resulting in overall better firm performance (Sun & Wang, 2017).

Servant leadership is principled on being a servant to others and considers stakeholder concerns before self-interests, relying on interpersonal communication and persuasion instead of authoritative power (Thacker et al., 2019). In SSOs, servant leaders positively relate to employees who work significant amounts of overtime and/or work with difficult clients. Theoretically, servant leadership is ideal in SSOs so long as both leaders and members understand their roles in serving clients and the organization. Jang and Kandampully (2018) suggested social exchange theory and the acts of one individual toward another were reciprocated and these were evident in servant leadership.



### *Summary of the Conceptual Framework*

The above theoretical connections to the variables in this study demonstrated the importance of leadership style and LMX as well as LMX and retention. Social exchange theory and LMX theory play vital roles in the success of employees, managers, and organizations. Leadership theories play important roles in explaining why the quality of leadership is important when considering LMX. Next, a section on the definition of terms is included to properly illustrate words commonly used in this study.

### **Definition of Terms**

Throughout this study, terms are utilized to express concepts that are more concise. For example, LMX is more succinct than saying “the quality of relationship an employee has with their manager.” Below are a few key terms beneficial in this research.

*Correlational:* It is worth noting this study focused on the correlations between leadership style, LMX, and retention, but does not suggest that a particular leadership style caused LMX or that LMX caused retention. Rather, it simply suggests that the variables were related to a degree. Correlational research did not indicate causal influence of the variables (Field, 2013).

*LMX:* LMX has a rich and extensive history originating from social exchange theory. In this study, LMX refers to the perception of the quality of relationship with one’s manager based on the LMX-7 survey (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995; Scandura & Graen, 1984) as completed by employee respondents (Tse et al., 2014). High LMX signifies high levels of trust, respect, reciprocity, emotional support, and greater access to information (Tse et al., 2014).

*Leadership style:* Leadership style varies between industries, companies, and even departments. The motivational style used in leadership spells the difference between success and

failure. What works in one company may not work in another. Leadership is not always tied to management; it is found in several places or roles within an organization. However, leadership style in the current study ties solely to a manager's style of leadership. Gandolfi and Stone (2018) defined leadership style as a means "by which a leader influences a group of people in an organization to a widely understood future state that is different from the present one" (p. 264).

*Passive leadership:* Passive leaders lack true leadership skills, and this is on display with those who avoid responsibility and making decisions per Che et al. (2017). Not only do they avoid such instances, they only involve themselves when it is otherwise unavoidable. Passive leadership in SSOs is problematic because of the level of care needed for clients and the harm that occurs with such leadership (Che et al., 2017).

*Retention:* Retention is often referred to as turnover intention in this study. Retention is commonly used in practical applications by organizations. Turnover intention is commonly used in academic studies. In this study, the inverse of turnover intention is retention (i.e., lower turnover intention is equal to higher rates of remaining at organizations), hence, the interchangeable nature of this variable in the study.

*Servant leadership:* Thacker et al. (2019) best described a servant leader as a servant first – echoing Greenleaf (1977) – and this began with a concern for "stakeholders, including employees and executive leadership, before satisfying personal needs" (p. 64). Servant leaders take transformational leadership to a new level by doing deep dives with employees and other groups to learn what motivates them, but also to learn what these groups need to be successful. As a result, and for the purposes of this study, employees feel appreciated and supported by their leaders through consistent and frequent communications and one-on-one meetings regarding performance (Thacker et al., 2019).

*Social services organizations:* The SSOs in this study refer to two Southeastern Pennsylvania SSOs that served clients with IDD. Often, these clients needed 24-hour care and the settings for clients were in homes where employees completed their shifts in the homes. The needs of clients focused on personal care and hygiene, transportation to doctors, clothing and food, and emotional stimulation such as daily entertainment activities (e.g., parks, zoos, shows, destinations, etc.).

*Transactional leadership:* With transactional leadership, a leader's exchange of rewards (e.g., compensation) is made for an employee's performance in his/her job, a simple exchange of wants between leaders and members (Maaitah, 2018). While motivational, this type of leadership deals with tangible rewards for employees and does not go deeper into employees as individuals. When leading by inputs and outputs, member loyalty or retention is impacted more so than the following two leadership styles, transformational and servant leadership.

*Transformational leadership:* A leader who expresses more than transactional exchanges and shows charisma and motivation to meet or exceed goals demonstrates transformational leadership. Gilbert et al. (2016) suggested that a transformational leader exhibited behavioral charisma such as a sense of mission and purpose as well as ethical and moral traits (Maaitah, 2018). Transformational leaders exude intellectual stimulation that emerges in challenging the status quo and showing emotional concern for employees as individuals (Maaitah, 2018). In essence, transformational leaders embody human spirit to drive employees and organizations. The result is higher individual and firm performance, and employees having greater senses of belonging in organizations.

### **Assumptions, Limitations, Delimitations**

This section provides assumptions commonly accepted but not verified. Limitations are provided with potential mitigators. Delimitations set the parameters of the study by providing what was in scope and what was out of scope.

#### ***Assumptions***

This study carries assumptions, and each is provided along with risk mitigation. The first assumption is that all participants in the study cared directly for individuals with IDD. Tse (2008) used a similar approach in studying almost 500 call center employees to evaluate leadership and LMX in their respective leaders. Through this, TSE (2008) generalized to call center employees instead of having trouble doing so by including non-call center employees in the organization. Administrative positions such as human resources (HR), IT, management, and finance should not have been considered as participants of this study. Great care was utilized to exclude these positions from the study by way of interaction with the SSOs' points of contact.

A second assumption is that participants used in the study responded truthfully. Using surveys that have been utilized in other research mitigated this risk because of the reliability of such surveys. Further, Preisendörfer and Wolter (2014) suggested mail surveys (comparable to email surveys because of the privacy when taking them) resulted in more truthful responses versus those done in person.

A third assumption is that the job market was competitive enough to attract employees to leave an SSO or any organization. As an example, when the national unemployment rate hovered near 10% in 2009 (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2019), employees were less likely to leave their positions because of quality talent saturation for open positions in the job market. The demand for job resources was in short supply resulting in an employer market (Akhmetshin et al., 2019).

If they sought other job opportunities, they competed against individuals with more education and/or experience. It was an employer's market because few employees wanted to risk leaving and the few jobs that were available provided applicant pools full of individuals with significant education and/or experience. Therefore, retention rates may have been artificially inflated due to economic conditions in the country. Contrast this with the Coronavirus pandemic where unemployment rates were also near 10% (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2019) until the past six months. However, because this figure was artificially higher due to a disincentive effect of the additional \$600 weekly federal unemployment compensation, the job market was actually an employee's market that was rich with job positions, demand for resources exceeding supply (Akhmetshin et al., 2019), and employees were able to leave for other opportunities more readily. This is similar to when the unemployment rate is near full employment (4%) like it is currently. It was assumed in this study that the job market was not only rich for employees nationally, but that the same existed for the SSOs' employees in Southeastern Pennsylvania.

### ***Limitations***

Like many studies, this study carried limitations that weakened the results found. One limitation was the potential size of the sample used. In order to analyze the effect of LMX, it was essential to get sufficient participation from employees within the SSOs used in the study. It was possible that proper participation was difficult to achieve given the high sample size needed to generalize to the study population. To mitigate this potential weakness, effective communication with HR was needed.

A second limitation was the sample size of each leadership style. The proportion of leadership styles may have resulted in inadequate sample sizes in any given leadership style. Therefore, a way to mitigate this limitation was to have each employee rate management on each

leadership style having resulted in a subset score for each style. Results found there were traits of all leadership styles found in management, the important part was determining if any style resulted in higher retention.

A third limitation was the sample size itself with the population having focused on Southeastern Pennsylvania SSOs. According to Henry (2019), a small sample size prevented one from generalizing to larger populations such as all SSOs in Pennsylvania, nationally, or globally. However, the results were applicable to the organizations used in the study because the sample size was adequate relative to the population of direct-care workers in the SSOs; these results can provide pathways to conducting similar surveys with subsequent organizations. There were an estimated 185 workers in the Southeastern Pennsylvania SSOs used in the study. With this in mind, a sample size of at least 125 would meet the 95% confidence level threshold.

### *Delimitations*

This study's boundary focused on two SSOs in Southeastern Pennsylvania. Because funding for social services can vary from state to state, this study only focused on these services in select counties in Southeastern Pennsylvania. This study's results are not meant to be generalized to other industries or organizations, only the study's SSOs in Southeastern Pennsylvania. LMX was determined by results from the LMX-7 survey only and did not include operationalization by other measures. Turnover intention of employees was determined only by the 3-question turnover intention survey and did not include operationalization by other measures. Leadership style was determined primarily by select questions from the multifactor leadership questionnaire (MLQ) and operationalized passive, transactional, and transformational leadership. The General Measure of Servant Leadership (GMSL) operationalized servant leadership with select questions. Other leadership styles (e.g., authentic, authoritarian, etc.) were

not in the scope of this study. Finally, out of scope for this study was the suggestion that any variable moderated or mediated a relationship in the study.

### **Significance of the Study**

This study adds to the increasing bodies of research on leadership and retention, specifically the practical application of leadership style in SSOs. Because SSOs are essential in serving populations like those with IDD, retention plays a critical role in the continued success of the Southeastern Pennsylvania SSOs. To retain employees at higher rates, understanding which leadership styles work best for SSOs, and organizations in general, provides organizations with financial benefits like reduced replacement costs and targeted training programs for managers by offering employees greater appreciation for their employers, and enhanced client stability in services provided to them. While this study did not attempt to generalize to these broader populations, the results could directionally guide future research.

### ***Reduction of Gaps***

This study fills gaps in understanding LMX and retention, or turnover intention, as well as the knowledge of leadership style and LMX. Leadership style is found in all organizations, but certain leadership styles are more effective than others depending on the industry. What works in one industry (e.g., transactional leadership in accounting) and contributes to increased retention, other industries employing the same leadership style in their management ranks find their retention results disheartening. In the health services industry, it is no different. This study attempted to find optimal leadership styles that related to LMX and the relationship that LMX had with retention or turnover intention in the Southeastern Pennsylvania SSOs. From here, the findings from this study can be replicated in other SSOs and industries.

### *Implications for Biblical Integration*

The Bible is rich with illustrations of leadership and relationships between leaders and followers. Leadership in the Bible is done by example and not by authority: “Not domineering over those in your charge but being examples to the flock” (1 Peter 5:3, ESV). Good leadership is not found in all managers, but leadership, good or bad, *is* present in all. A poor leader may be passive and avoid conflict and this results in predominantly low-LMX relationships with followers, leading to detrimental results: “‘Woe to the shepherds who destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture!’ declares the Lord” (Jeremiah 23:1, ESV). Through such leadership, the flock scatters and leaves an organization left to find more sheep and incur greater costs (e.g., hiring and training). Although LMX is built upon authority of a leader/manager because of organizational structure, only through reciprocity and leadership style will the quality of LMX truly be defined. It is through this relationship that followers develop into good performers. Through God, followers gain skills and strengths to develop into leaders themselves: “I can do all things through Him who strengthens me” (Philippians 4:13, ESV).

Leadership style is prominent in the Bible with servant leadership being most recognized. As noted above, passive leadership is destructive and leads to decimation of one’s followers through conflict avoidance and a sheer dislike for making decisions. Transactional leadership proponents suggest the goals of an organization are most important, and each employee has a role to play in fulfilling these goals. The manager ensures goals are being met and members/followers ensure they are completing tasks to meet such goals. Employees must trust leadership and the vision set forth, similar to Psalm 37:5 (ESV): “Commit your way to the Lord, trust in him, and he will act.” Much like one relies on the Lord to act, followers in transactional



leadership dynamics trust organizations to set goals and for managers to meet them along with employees.

Transformational and servant leadership are positive leadership sources align with Biblical perspectives. Friedman and Langbert (2000) suggested that Abraham was not only a transformational leader exemplified in the Bible, but was the most successful transformational leader in history based on him (1) having had a vision, (2) having had courage and confidence, (3) having cared about people and having had a strong sense of justice, (4) having been humble, (5) having had charisma, (6) having been willing to make sacrifices for his belief, and (7) having dared to be different (i.e., was a change agent). Examples like Abraham being ready to sacrifice his son, Isaac, for God, and welcoming strangers into his home and waiting on them, demonstrate transformational leadership in a well-known figure from the Bible.

While Abraham illustrates transformational leadership from the Bible, Jesus represents all that is embodied in servant leadership. Servant leaders think of others before themselves, clearly similar to how Jesus conducted himself. As noted in the Bible by Ebener and O'Connell (2010) describing servant leadership, "But whoever would be great among you must be your servant" (Mark 10:43, ESV). This is not the only reference to servant leadership or serving others in the Bible, continuing with Mark 10:45: "For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." It is through Jesus Christ that servant leadership is best demonstrated.

### ***Relationship to Field of Study***

This study is relative to the strategic management field of study and focuses on such topics as financial resource management through increased retention, thus operating effectively and accomplishing tasks, objectives, and goals set by organizations. The ability to do so for the

SSOs in this study is severely compromised when retention rates suffer because it impacts the service levels provided to IDD clients and customers like families of clients. Clients depend on stability in their homes in order to live comfortably and without stressors like disruptions in staffing of those who care for them. This study helps the participating organizations learn more about how they can best improve retention rates through examination of LMX and leadership style.

### ***Summary of the Significance of the Study***

The significance of this study has ramifications for more than just the participating SSOs. Findings will lead to future studies in other organizations and industries. This section clarifies the significance of the study, the reduction in gaps found in literature today, implications for Biblical integration, and relationship to the field of strategic management. The next section provides a thorough outline of the studies used in the literature review of the current study.

### **A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature**

Organizations, including SSOs, have difficulty retaining employees resulting in financial drains of resources through higher allocations to acquire talent and conducting operations (Book et al., 2019). The study's outcomes are important in the fields of LMX, leadership style, and retention theoretically and practically. This section provides a comprehensive and thorough review of literature related to the main variables of this study: LMX, retention, and leadership style. While many of the articles are within the past 5 years, seminal articles are also provided and reviewed. First, a review of LMX includes seminal articles such as Scandura and Graen (1984) and Graen and Uhl-Bien (1995). Of the eight articles reviewed in this section, four (50%) are current (past 5 years). Second, retention and turnover intention literature is reviewed involving 14 articles of which nine (64%) are current. Third, sufficient literature is provided

covering LMX and retention/turnover intention and warrants its own section here. Of the six articles reviewed, four (67%) are current. Fourth, leadership style is divided among the four leadership styles covered that includes a review of leadership style in general. Within the entirety of leadership style, 20 articles reviewed had 19 (95%) within the past 5 years. Overall, 36 of 48 (75%) articles in the review are from 2015 and later. The section concludes with a summary of the findings.

### ***LMX***

Within the literature of LMX, two articles must be included to provide a sufficient review of literature regarding this topic. Scandura and Graen (1984) begin this section's review with the development of LMX through experimentation of 83 computer-processing employees in a large organization. Having sought to compare low-LMX employees with high-LMX employees, the authors hypothesized that leadership intervention affected low-LMX employees when compared to their high-LMX peers on variables like overall job satisfaction, supervision satisfaction, and productivity. Having used a before-and-after field experiment and employed the LMX-7 questionnaire, members met with leaders for ~30 minutes in order to establish the reciprocal understanding each brought to the LMX partnership and discussed job issues if any (Scandura & Graen, 1984). This intervention of leadership led to increases in the key measurables noted above. Results showed that the impact of leadership was integral not only in improving performance and overall job satisfaction, but it was assumed that these variables were positively related to retention. The role of LMX-7 to measure the quality of leadership employees have with their managers is integral as it concisely measures the quality of this dyadic relationship. As with many studies measuring LMX, low-LMX performers are not poor performers, they simply

recognize that the costs of greater performance are not equal to, or better than, the benefits (Scandura & Graen, 1984).

Graen and Uhl-Bien (1995) built upon existing LMX theory at the time and developed it into a more-mature relationship-based theory, above that of vertical dyad linkage (VDL) from years earlier. Having used a Venn diagram, the article illustrated three domains, leader, follower, and relationship, attributed to leadership where all three domains overlapped each other. Leader-based leadership focuses on behavior of the leader exhibiting a vision and inspiring others while follower-based leadership focuses on the ability to manage one's performance and empowering or coaching others. But the authors argued that the relationship-based domain demonstrated trust, respect, and reciprocity between parties and built strong relationships between leaders and followers. It is here where LMX-7 is identified as the preferred measurement for LMX because of high correlations with other LMX measurement tools and the concise nature of the survey itself. The article delved into LMX being transactional and transformational rather than one or the other. The current study links to the recommendation for future studies in the article that LMX and organizational outcomes (e.g., retention rate or turnover intention) should be conducted (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995).

LMX research exhibits global implications on a number of geographical locations, industries, and participants. Qian et al. (2017) examined the effect of LMX relative to ethical leadership and feedback-seeking from ethical leaders and co-workers in China. With a group of 64 supervisors/managers and 265 followers, the authors tested the moderating effect of emotional intelligence (EI) and work-unit structure on the mediating relationship of ethical leadership and feedback from others. While feedback is inherent in LMX, feedback-seeking by followers/members is different as it contains two distinctions from LMX: (1) the seeking of

feedback by the employee, and (2) the aspects of feedback including job performance rating, technical job aspects, values and attitudes of the organization, role expectations, and social behaviors (Qian et al., 2017). Having used the LMX-7 scale from Scandura and Graen (1984), the authors found that EI and work-unit structure moderated the mediated positive relationship. The relationship was optimal when EI was high and the work-unit structure was organic. LMX mediated the relationship between ethical leadership and feedback-seeking of employees. LMX is seen elsewhere like Byun et al. (2017) and their research on soldiers and platoon leaders in the South Korean army. They sought to determine the effect of leader trust and competence on in-role activities performed by members. The authors posited that LMX (using the LMX-7 survey) mediated the trust-performance relationship while leader competence moderated LMX in the same relationship. Byun et al. (2017) theorized that the relationship of member performance and leader trust was complicated, that the relationship between leaders and members was overlooked by many organizations, and that the use of leader competence in the framework filled a gap in the literature. These articles demonstrate the breadth of LMX theory and the role it plays in organizations internationally.

Domestically, LMX has a presence in the literature and is best shown in two articles viewing LMX as a means to impact employees in a deeper and sensitive manner. First, Kim and Hopkins (2015) illustrated the cross-level interaction of LMX in an SSO via online surveys of 435 child welfare workers from 23 departments in the United States. Having measured the impact of LMX on the relationship between OC and safety concerns and unsafe climate, the authors used the LMX-7 survey to measure LMX consistent with this study. Discussed is how high-LMX acted as a buffer against the relationship between unsafe climate and OC. The article indicated that there was higher OC from staff who had concerns about their safety when they

were supported by their managers/leaders. While this study's Southeastern Pennsylvania SSOs did not have frequent examples of safety concerns from staff, behavioral issues of some clients and the linkages to the Southeastern Pennsylvania SSOs and this study are worthy of their inclusion in this literature review (Kim & Hopkins, 2015).

Second, Sias and Duncan (2019) studied the effect of ERTs (extra-role tasks; e.g., picking up dry cleaning and purchasing gifts for spouses) on low- and high-LMX dyads. The authors claimed that high-LMX employees sought to do favors for their managers, but that low-LMX employees were more likely to have received menial tasks embedded within ERTs. In fact, regarding requests from managers to potential ERT employees, rationale was provided to high-LMX employees while face-threatening acts and power games were provided to low-LMX employees. Testing this claim, the authors worked with 130 online participants from different industries, presumably all within the United States. LMX-7 was used to measure LMX quality among participants per the authors. With high-LMX employees, ERT requests come in the form of favors or questions, whereas low-LMX employees receive ERT requests as orders or rhetorical questions at best. The relationship to the current study is that the LMX leader role has influences on subordinate employees. Therefore, leadership style likely impacts the relationship with employees similarly to how LMX impacts ERTs with employees (Sias & Duncan, 2019).

The last two articles in this LMX section focus on alternative perspectives of LMX. Wayne et al. (1997) studied the effects of perceived organizational support (POS) and LMX, having stressed that research had treated both constructs differently. The authors related how POS was based on the support one received from the organization, not entirely from one's manager/leader, while LMX was based on the reciprocal relationship one had with one's manager/leader. The article listed turnover intention a POS outcome, but not LMX. The current

study seeks to remedy this and show turnover intention is related to LMX. Two hundred fifty-two leader/member dyads participated in the study and various measurement tools were used including LMX-7 per the authors. Results showed that LMX positively impacted performance ratings, organizational citizenship behavior (OCB), and favor-doing, and was strongly associated with POS. Wayne et al. (1997) posited that both constructs influenced one another though LMX appeared to influence POS more so. This article provides support for LMX as a valid theory and one worthy of distinct research from POS. Next, Liden and Maslyn (1998) examined the multidimensionality of LMX and suggested that the LMX measure used at the time, LMX-7, did not account for psychometrics (i.e., psychological measurements). The authors presented support for a unique LMX measure and validated it through data of working students and organizational employees. Liden and Maslyn (1998) concluded the multidimensional measure of LMX (LMX-MDM) was supported through the test and four factors, affect, loyalty, contribution, and professional respect, showed high reliability though contribution required further scale development. LMX-7 is used, in part, during the study and continues to remain a valid measurement for LMX despite suggestions by the authors.

### ***Turnover, Turnover Intention, and Retention***

The literature review on turnover intention and retention must include the addressing of the problem, turnover itself. In this section, studies discuss the reasons why turnover occurs, how turnover intention is studied and the findings that occur, and the overall concept of retention.

Within this section, the first review is on turnover followed by turnover intention and retention.

**Turnover.** Turnover impacts organizations globally. Beyond the United States, turnover has similar negative results on organizations' bottom-lines. Attempting to understand employee turnover in India, Arekar et al. (2016) examined the individual determinants associated with job

satisfaction, one of the best predictors of employee turnover. Having studied 386 IT employees, participants responded to a survey based on individual determinants such as job motivation, autonomy, job stress, routinization, and social support. The authors sought to measure the relationships between eight determinants and job satisfaction. In having done so, the authors suggested that impacting job satisfaction through these determinants would, therefore, impact employee retention. A problem (low job satisfaction) was identified as having caused turnover in Indian IT firms and listed promotional chances and routinization as having had negative impacts on job satisfaction. The study's focus on the problem of turnover relates to this study inasmuch as it indicates the need for close examination of variables that relate to turnover or, in the case of this study, turnover intention (Arekar et al., 2016).

Humanitarian organizations rely on stable workforces, especially during times of crises like hurricanes, earthquakes, and Coronavirus. They conduct logistical operations effectively during these events, and turnover is the most important factor impacting such operations per Tomasini and Van Wassenhove (2009). Dubey et al. (2016) studied the impact of employee turnover on the Indian National Institute of Disaster Management (NIDM). The authors conducted factor analysis and studied three factors – external, work-related, and personal – associated with employee turnover. External factors (e.g., unemployment rate, union presence, and accession rate [hire rate]) were beyond the control of individual employees. Work-related factors included pay, pay satisfaction, role clarity, overall job satisfaction, among others. Finally, the authors stated that personal reasons included education, marital status, gender, and age. Although the sample size ( $n = 59$ ) was lacking per the authors, findings showed all external variables, save employment perception, had little impact on the turnover of NIDM employees. Not surprisingly, work-related variables had positive impacts on turnover while personal factors



predominantly had little. This confirms turnover is a concern manifested in work-related issues and is related to this study as such. LMX is a work-related variable as well and has an impact on turnover intention (Dubey et al., 2016).

As noted throughout this study, turnover creates issues for organizations because of the costs associated with losing employees, hiring new replacement employees, and training new hires. Smith and Macko (2014) studied the relationship between employee engagement – an employee's sense of purpose in helping an organization meet its goals – and turnover. Employee engagement is similar to LMX but is more abstract with such examples as motivation and loyalty. Its ties to the current study are important and the findings are revealing. Employee engagement in organizations (nearly 40% in the article are not engaged) are related to LMX with many employees indicating low-LMX relationships with their managers. This article helps identify the problem of turnover and the possible association directly with employee engagement (Smith & Macko, 2014).

Back in the United States, most research on turnover addresses the *what* and the *how*, but not the *why* per Rothausen et al. (2017). Reasons included why employees left their respective organizations. Having conducted a qualitative grounded theory examination of why turnover occurred, the authors completed in-depth interviews with 59 informants who left a manufacturing company ( $n = 9$ ), employee services company ( $n = 8$ ), insurance company ( $n = 15$ ), publishing company ( $n = 12$ ), and other miscellaneous companies ( $n = 15$ ). Findings indicated those who left their organizations did so when there were perceived threats from their jobs and personal well-being that resulted in strain. These findings explain the impact that LMX and leadership style have on employee retention. Strain occurs when poor leadership, or no visible leadership, is present in managers. Strains on employees in SSOs mimic those found here,

and it suggests that outcomes for SSO employees are similar to those in the article (Rothausen et al., 2017).

Turnover in SSOs has deleterious effects on vulnerable clients where continuity of care is a requisite for these organizations per Tremblay et al. (2016). Research was provided on turnover in SSOs, particularly residential SSOs where staff provided 24-hour daily support to clients. Having examined the effect of turnover on adolescents' length of service and stays in Quebec, the authors conducted a predictive correlational design with the turnover rate (IV) predicting the length of services (DV) and length of stay (DV). Length of services was the amount of time between the beginning and end of care suggesting that higher staff turnover meant greater discontinuity of service quality for the client. Length of stay was the time between arrival and departure though care may not have been necessary. Results showed that clients who experienced high turnover tended to have shorter lengths of stays, but more stays in the future. The impact of turnover in residential settings is relevant to this study which was also set in residences (Tremblay et al., 2016).

**Turnover Intention.** Frontline employees are under-appreciated in many organizations today, but they are the first line of contact with customers, clients, and other stakeholders. Afsar et al. (2018) examined social exchange regarding high-performance work practices (HPWP; e.g., empowerment, reward, and training) and job embeddedness relative to turnover intentions of frontline hotel employees. The authors reasoned that HPWPs translated to inclined reciprocity by frontline employees and reduced turnover intention. Related to LMX in this study, it was suggested that trust in one's supervisor impacted not only turnover intention but also motivation, exertion of efforts, and engagement in extra-role behavior. When trust was high, these behaviors emerged for employees, and when they were low, these behaviors were less likely to occur. A

solid argument was made that turnover intention did not necessarily mean turnover, and they referenced the point made by Hom and Griffeth (1991) that turnover intention accounted for 25% of turnover variance. This supports the current study's point of association, not causation, of turnover based on LMX and leadership style. Collection of data from 450 employees in 17 locations of an international hotel chain found that HPWPs positively impacted frontline hotel employees regarding social links, fit, and sacrifices in the organization, thus having increased job embeddedness. Frontline hotel employees have similarities with residential staff in SSOs – long hours, inflexibility, low wages, and few opportunities for professional growth. The main takeaway is the need for HPWPs in organizations that are geared to empower, train, and reward frontline employees. Further, the authors suggested that annual surveys from employees could help management gain the necessary feedback regarding job embeddedness and trust (Afsar et al., 2018).

Working under the idea that one's identification with one's job will make one less inclined to leave that job, Sjöberg and Sverke (2000) studied the mediating role that turnover intention played with employee turnover in a Swedish urban emergency hospital. Utilizing 535 questionnaires from nursing staff where employee turnover was problematic, it was suggested that low job involvement and OC in jobs led to turnover intention and turnover. As noted earlier, the authors' use of their turnover intention survey provides uncertain results as the questions themselves, as a whole, lack certainty. For example, the first question, *I am actively looking for other jobs*, is certain in how it is positioned. A respondent does not waiver in the interpretation of this question. However, the remaining two question, *I feel that I could leave this job* and *If I was completely free to choose, I would leave this job*, lack the same assertion that the first question contains. Here, there is room for ambiguity and, thus, a blurring of the definition of turnover

intention. This does not suggest the use of these questions invalidated any part of the research conducted, rather, it conveyed passive interpretation that led to similar responses by participants. They determined that job involvement and OC were negatively related to turnover intention and turnover. Interestingly, like Afsar et al. (2018), turnover intention was not a proxy for turnover. In fact, though job involvement and OC were negatively associated with turnover intention, they did not contribute to any prediction of actual turnover. This article in the current study is important regarding the usage of an alternative turnover intention survey, it offers a contrasting perspective of measuring turnover intention in organizations (Sjöberg & Sverke, 2000).

Looking at turnover intention closer to home, Taylor and Pillemer (2009) studied nursing staff and certified nursing assistants (CNAs) in nursing homes to measure affect, or emotion, towards the organization and the role of turnover intention and turnover in a longitudinal study. CNAs assist nurses in the care of long-term patients in nursing homes. Both groups experience job stress and burnout as well as low job satisfaction. Similar to SSOs, frontline employees like CNAs and some nurses are paid low salaries and endure burdensome jobs in nursing homes, but these employees enjoy serving clients because of the social good that is produced. Taking pride in their work and providing quality care is important in choosing to work for a nursing home. Compared to other studies like Sjöberg and Sverke (2000), the operationalization of turnover intention creates a gap in interpretation. For example, having measured turnover intention, the authors used one question, *Estimate the likelihood that you will quit your job in the next twelve months*, and this question was too concise to use in the current study. The question pinned down a participant to make a turnover decision instead of understanding if there were any doubt (i.e., turnover *intention*) in the participant. While that question did measure some turnover intention, it did not properly capture those who were merely thinking about leaving. For this reason, the

operationalization of turnover intention here did not seem thorough enough to use in the current study in SSOs. The authors suggested employees with positive affect towards organizations were less likely to leave in the next 12 months. Further, they found that positive affect towards nursing homes was greater for nurses than CNAs. This is important as most employees at the Southeastern Pennsylvania SSOs are residential staff and are considered frontline like CNAs in nursing homes (Taylor & Pillemer, 2009).

Turnover involves risk assessment by employees, and this results in it being impactful, positively or negatively, to both employees and organizations. Vardaman et al. (2008) found that risk perceptions and risk propensity played roles in turnover at organizations. They suggested employees were impacted because of lost close relationships with co-workers, a gap in benefits between jobs, and lost seniority with organizations. Continuing, organizational impacts of turnover included losses of efficiency and continuity, losses of organizational memory and knowledge, and the risk of such knowledge having gone to competitors (Griffeth & Hom, 2001, 2004). It was suggested that reasons for leaving may have been push-based such as job dissatisfaction and/or pull-based such as promotional opportunities elsewhere. Two studies were conducted, the first was whether risk impacted turnover decisions and the second was related to social factors, risk perceptions, and turnover risk propensity when making decisions to leave. The first study involved 155 new employees of a large U.S. entertainment and gaming organization. Data were collected one year later to determine turnover during that time. The authors found that risk propensity and perceptions influenced the willingness of employees to actually act on their intentions to leave. The second study identified 222 undergraduate students at a large university in the United States who had work experience and may have experienced turnover. A turnover scenario was created and presented to students along with instructions and

measurements focused on risk propensity and risk perceptions. It was concluded that turnover decisions were not taken lightly and that social influences increased risk propensity and perceptions. This is relevant to the current study because the reasons for turnover intention by SSO employees are well-thought and not impulsive, that many factors are considered before one leaves (Vardaman et al., 2008).

**Retention.** Employee retention is prevalent in all industries and organizations. Cloutier et al. (2015) provided reasons for employee turnover and offered recommendations such as improved managerial communication, training and development, and increased focus on job fit. While reasons were provided for employee turnover, contrary to the current study, they did not suggest that management was among them. In fact, citing SHRM (2004), most employees quit because of poor professional development, compensation, work/life balance, and/or job stress and unfair treatment. However, leadership embodies many antecedents related to these reasons. For example, poor professional development is not only a failure attributable to the organization and the employee, but the manager bears responsibility for not dedicating enough time and resources to professionally develop the employee. Another example is that job stress and unfair treatment, as noted above, are closely related to the relationships employees have with their managers depending on perceptions (e.g., low-LMX) of employees indicating such unfair treatment. Employees are less likely to leave if employers provide and invest in employee training. This is true for management as they are likely to benefit from increased professional development for their employees (e.g., less turnover, more employees developing into leaders, employees who see the whole process rather than just their own roles, etc.). Relating the article to strategic management, employee retention is part of the annual review and budget processes in organizations and such a strategy should be incorporated within an organization's vision,

mission, values, and policies. Further, all employees should commit to these strategic management tools for the firm to develop a competitive advantage. Interestingly, person-organization fit is considered when discussing retention but only in the sense of the employee, not the manager per se. Managers with wrong leadership styles result in employee turnover, particularly when leadership styles are different than those preferred by senior management. Organizational culture must be understood to attract, develop, and retain employees. There is agreement here with the current study, retention is increased when employees are given leadership roles in projects or have positive relationships with their managers. Employees with high-LMX are more likely to engage in these activities and have positive manager relationships. It was concluded that having incorporated retention strategies into organizational strategic plans reduced costs to search and recruit employees to fill vacancies and orient/develop new hires to remain skilled (Cloutier et al., 2015).

An article about accounting firms focused on employee engagement and how it impacted retention in large firms. Johnson and Pike (2018) examined the relationship of employee engagement and retention. With 775 participants, engagement increased throughout the organizational hierarchy with partners (83% engaged), nearly doubling the engagement rate of all other groups in the study. It was contended that large firms focused on annual surveys of job satisfaction should focus on engagement, especially those questions that received high scores. This was counterintuitive and the authors rationalized it by stating that survey questions that received low scores may have been inconsequential because they did not have a strong impact on employee engagement. While possibly true, surveys are designed with each question having purpose. To use an old proverb, *many a mickle makes a muckle*, the small things add up. Though it may not have any consequence with employee engagement, failing to address questions at all

is problematic in the long term. Further, insignificant scores for some questions may increase in subsequent surveys. It is better to address all issues sooner rather than later. This article has relevance to the current study but uses engagement as a retention tool when it can simply be mediated by job satisfaction (Johnson & Pike, 2018).

Two articles on retention in the international domain occurred in India with both having focused on impacts to employee retention. Compensation has long been related to increased retention in organizations, though it is clear that increased compensation is not always an option for most firms. In the first of these articles, Michael et al. (2016) examined the relationship of compensation and retention in India by having surveyed 71 employees. They presumed that compensation (i.e., money, benefits, incentives, etc.) was the only factor impacting retention. While considerable, other factors weigh into decisions to leave organizations such as personal and work-related reasons. It is unclear what type of organization was used in the study, only that multiple departments were considered from the sample. Interestingly, while employees were satisfied overall with their compensation packages, employees were not encouraged to improve their performances. This is considerably problematic as organizations are providing compensation for performance but are not coaching employees up to increase productivity. The study lacks substance beyond the obvious retention tool of compensation; indeed, it was suggested that raising bonuses and allowances were good ways to keep employees. The problem with organizations not coaching employees to perform better becomes an issue for employees who are being paid generously yet are not reciprocating with increased productivity. In other words, there is no incentive for employees to increase productivity if compensation is not connected to it (Michael et al., 2016).



The second study from India centered on three variables impacting retention. Having studied the roles of HR practices, job satisfaction, and organization commitment on retention in an Indian IT company, Rose and Raja (2016) hypothesized that organization commitment positively impacted retention. While all three hypotheses in the article were supported through the analysis of data, the results were not interpreted thoroughly enough. They incorrectly implied causation between organization commitment and retention when, in fact, the two were merely considered to be associated and nothing more (Rose & Raja, 2016).

Burnout is common in organizations, particularly when firms are pressed to cut expenses and manage their budgets austerely. According to Thomas et al. (2014), in the human services industry, burnout rates had increased due to higher caseloads, role ambiguities, low wages, and limited promotional opportunities. The authors examined job burnout in 288 human services workers in California and identified work-related factors like caseload and experience, and personal factors (e.g., age, gender, and education) as significant. Through this, they suggested higher levels of education brought greater responsibilities, thus a factor in subsequent burnout. Burnout takes physical and emotional tolls on human services workers, similar to those employed at the current study's Southeastern Pennsylvania SSOs. However, the study was completed in a rural California setting compared to the suburban, more populated, Southeastern Pennsylvania SSOs in the current study. The implication here is that burnout may have been less prominent in the current study's workers because they had more employment alternatives if they became burned out. A limitation noted by the authors was their convenience sample having not been generalizable to larger populations. Similar to this, the current study employed a convenience sample of the Southeastern Pennsylvania SSOs' employees. Recommendations from the authors included the need for a supportive workplace relevant to the current study. With

proper leadership styles implemented at the Southeastern Pennsylvania SSOs, support to employees was expected to come from styles embracing transformational and servant views. Employing passive and/or transactional leadership could have resulted in poor support and, thus, increased likelihood of burnout (Thomas et al., 2014).

### ***LMX and Turnover, Turnover Intention, and Retention***

There is select research done on the association of LMX and turnover, turnover intention, and/or retention. In this section, six articles are reviewed relative to the current study. One article focused on turnover, four focused on turnover intention, and one focused on retention. Half of the articles took place internationally in Malaysia and Turkey, while the other half occurred in the United States.

High LMX results in favorable work outcomes such as performance, job satisfaction, and retention. Ahmed et al. (2013) studied the association between LMX and turnover intention through organization commitment (OC) in Malaysian state legislative employees. Having hypothesized that LMX was negatively associated with turnover intention, they contended an organization could reduce turnover intention through OC. The article differentiates exchange relations in two ways: (1) with an organization (i.e., perception of organizational support, or POS) and (2) with a leader or supervisor (i.e., LMX). These two constructs influence turnover intention via mediation by OC, resulting in a statistically significant model. Provided is a clear path to reducing turnover intention through LMX and OC; further, POS mediates the LMX-turnover relationship. Utilizing correlational analysis, multiple regression, and structural equation modeling (SEM), it was concluded that POS and LMX contributed to increase OC, thus having reduced turnover intention in Malaysian state legislative employees. This is relevant to the current study through its examination of the LMX-turnover relationship (Ahmed et al., 2013).

While LMX is primarily associated with the relationship between leaders and followers, little research has been done on the emotional component of leadership. Clarke and Mahadi (2017) provided a view of EI as it related to LMX and turnover intention, having noted a connection with followers on an emotional level translating to higher levels of trust. They utilized the LMX-12 survey instead of the LMX-7 used in the current study, but they used the same turnover intention survey (see Landau & Hammer, 1986). Similar to Ahmed et al. (2013), the study took place in Malaysia but focused on a large insurance organization while having utilized a self-administered survey. Results showed that dyad LMX – an average of LMX by the leader and the follower, was nearly unrelated ( $r = -.01$ ) to turnover intention when examining correlations and this nearly ran contrary to results in the current study. However, while dyad LMX is appropriate for a study on EI, LMX, and turnover intention, follower LMX is more appropriate when relating to the current study because of its focus on followers and their turnover intentions, regardless of how leaders relate their levels of LMX with followers. Follower LMX in the SEM by the authors showed a small, but statistically significant, negative relationship with turnover intention and this is in line with the current study. It was concluded that follower EI was important in understanding LMX theory and suggested that dyadic measures of LMX were better at predicting follower performance, well-being, and turnover intention than follower measures of LMX (Clarke & Mahadi, 2017).

Within the workplace, exchange relationships exist between organizations and employees, leaders and employees, and between employees themselves. Yildiz (2018) looked at the impact on turnover intentions within the Turkish sports industry by having studied LMX and mobbing. Mobbing occurs between individuals and their supervisors or co-workers and consists of repeated ill-treatment, threats, and even violence toward certain individuals over an extended

period of time. Mobbing has negative effects on victims such as psychological and social problems, high burnout, and low productivity (Vveinhardt & Streimikiene, 2015), and organizations see weakened social relationships, distrust, lower work output and quality, and turnover as well (Sperry, 2009). Having hypothesized that LMX had a negative influence on turnover intentions, mobbing mediated the LMX-turnover relationship. The instruments used for LMX and turnover intention were the exact same instruments used in the current study. The LMX-7 scale used by Graen and Uhl-Bien (1995) was the most appropriate scale with psychometric properties per the author. The turnover intention scale used by Landau and Hammer (1986) is, as stated above (see Nature of Study), the clearest set of questions intended to measure turnover desires. Having used a sample of 111 employees in a major public organization providing sports and physical activity services in Istanbul, Turkey, it clearly indicated that LMX was negatively correlated with turnover intention and was statistically significant. It was recommended that managers should delegate tasks equitably among employees to increase LMX and ensure more employees were represented in the in-group (Yildiz, 2018).

Covella et al. (2017) conducted research in the United States on the role of LMX as a mediating variable between person-job fit (i.e., related to work attitudes such as job satisfaction, quality of work life, and employee turnover) and turnover intention. Primarily having suggested that job fit played a role in a person's desire to remain with an organization, they employed LMX as a mediating variable because it filled a gap in the literature concerning person-job fit and employee work engagement. Person-job fit connected to turnover intention through LMX and employee work engagement in the hypothesized model. Having countered the work of Clarke and Mahadi (2017) and the assertion that dyad LMX was more important than follower LMX, the authors supported the current study that employees accepted leaders' expectations willingly

and voluntarily, and were able to accept, reject, or negotiate expectations. Further, they contradicted Clarke and Mahadi (2017) by stressing that LMX focused more on working relationships and less on interpersonal friendship or other roles (e.g., EI – via social exchange theory). Interestingly, the study employed Amazon Mechanical Turk to survey (via Qualtrics) full-time employees in the United States regarding the variables in the study with 402 respondents having participated. Per its website ([www.mturk.com](http://www.mturk.com)), Amazon Mechanical Turk is a crowdsourcing marketplace where processes and jobs can be distributed to a workforce whereby tasks are completed virtually. Results showed LMX having had a small, but negative, correlation with turnover intention that was statistically significant, consistent with the current study. The authors included in their summary that LMX demonstrated an indirect role in reducing turnover intention in employees (Covella et al., 2017).

Employee engagement in the hospitality field is critical for organizations because they rely on customer interactions with employees to build loyalty or repeat business according to Book et al. (2019). Having examined this industry in the United States, the authors provided a perspective of leadership satisfaction influencing intentions to stay through mediation of employee engagement. Curiously, the authors used leadership satisfaction instead of LMX, but the measurement used was the LMX-7 questionnaire of Graen and Uhl-Bien (1995) except for one question, *How well does your leader (follower) recognize your potential?* It is difficult to understand why this question was omitted from the study, but the remaining questions still provided more of a view of the leader/follower dynamic and less of the leadership satisfaction originally intended. Further, the authors employed intention to stay rather than intention to leave used in the current study. While the tool was adequate for the article, it did not reveal what turnover intention questions could reveal. It is akin to the adage, *a satisfied customer will tell a*

*few friends, a dissatisfied customer will tell a few hundred.* Employees who are satisfied with their jobs may not realize how much they want to stay with the organization, but employees who are not satisfied are very much aware of their desires to leave. The article is better suited using LMX and turnover intention though the results are similar. For example, the impact of leadership satisfaction on intention to stay ( $\beta = .13, p < .05$ ) was in line with other studies that measured the effect of LMX on turnover intention (Covella et al., 2017; Yildiz, 2018). The article concluded that engagement in hospitality organizations yielded dividends for these organizations such as higher retention (Book et al., 2019).

There is little disagreement that job satisfaction is highly related to satisfaction with supervision, but this does not translate to high-LMX being related to satisfaction with jobs per Mardanov et al. (2008). Here, the authors studied the banking industry and LMX on job satisfaction, a mediating variable, and turnover in a U.S. bank. They surveyed 122 participants – tellers, customer service representatives, loan officers, supervisors, branch managers, and marketing representatives, hypothesized that LMX impacted supervisor satisfaction and group members into *in-groups* or *out-groups* (i.e., high-LMX or low-LMX). From this, job satisfaction was impacted by group status and other motivators having resulted in turnover predictability per the article. By predicting an employee's place in an organization (i.e., in-group or out-group), the authors suggested that turnover could be predicted. To measure LMX, the study employed an LMX-12 scale and added a thirteenth question, *Overall, I'm very satisfied with my supervisor*, rather than having used the LMX-7 scale in the current study. Unlike other studies in this section that focused on LMX and turnover intention, the focus of the article was on predictability of turnover in the banking industry. Not surprisingly, results showed there was a strong relationship between LMX and satisfaction with supervision; and, that low-LMX was associated with higher

levels of turnover. The study relates to the current study through the use of LMX and the impact on turnover or, conversely, retention. It was suggested that managers in the banking industry should focus on negatively associated factors such as organizational procedures and systems, motivation, leadership style, and LMX. Two of these variables, leadership style and LMX, are primary variables in the current study (Mardanov et al., 2008).

### *Leadership Style*

The literature on leadership style has focused on particular styles such as transformational or servant leadership. This section begins with a brief general review of leadership style relative to various topics such as employee performance, engagement, and, of course, turnover intention. Next, each leadership style included in this study is presented beginning with passive leadership, transactional leadership, transformational leadership, and finishing with servant leadership.

**General Leadership Style.** In an ever-growing global economy, the roles of leaders motivating and supporting organizational missions and visions are important. Saad et al. (2018) examined the effect of leadership styles, personality attributes, and employee communication on employee engagement through 111 executives of a large Malaysian public utility company. High employee engagement offers organizations positive business outcomes such as reduced absenteeism, safety incidents, product defects, and increased retention. The study provided a theoretical framework with leadership style, personality attributes, and employee communication as IVs, and employee engagement as the DV. Relevant to the current study, leadership styles were measured using the MLQ and this instrument assessed passive, transactional, and transformational leadership. Employee engagement was operationalized as an employee's focus and attention in performing jobs. Findings suggested all three IVs, together, impacted employee engagement; however, leadership style was the least impactful of the three. In looking at the

intercorrelations among variables, leadership style showed a low to moderate correlation ( $r = .394, p < .001$ ), but the correlation was statistically significant (Saad et al., 2018).

Leadership style is essential in dealing with employee performance because of the organizational outcomes emerging from such performance. Iqbal et al. (2015) examined the impact of various leadership styles, autocratic, democratic, and participative, on employee performance in a Pakistani tractor factory. The autocratic leadership style was characterized by one-way communication between the leader and members and decision-making rested solely with the leader. A democratic leader, referred to as passive, includes team members in decision-making with each member having equal input, thus empowering members to decide what is best for the team. Participative leadership includes members and developing strategies for the team, though the final decision rests with the leader. Autocratic leadership prohibits and discourages employee input because the vision of the autocrat is the only opinion necessary. Interestingly, democratic leaders are, theoretically, the best leaders to have but, with the decision left in the hands of members, the role of the leader is essentially weakened, and this is problematic when quick or difficult decisions are needed. Further, workers forming groups can exert significant influence in decision-making. Participative leadership requires keeping members in the loop by communicating updates and/or changes, and members continue debating and altering long-term policies. Curiously, the authors provided few details on method and design. In fact, no data collection was evidenced despite the inclusion of hypotheses, and the remainder of the article formed conclusions based on no visible data. The authors described using focus group interviews which suggested a qualitative or mixed methods approach and this conflicted with the hypotheses provided. The article concluded that autocratic leadership had its place in organizations, particularly when there was little employee job knowledge or there was poor



employee compliance with policies and procedures in the organization. Democratic leadership was best when creative problem-solving was required in daily completion of tasks. Finally, participative leadership was best when organizations had competent employees, a need to motivate top performers, or a need for innovation and creative work. It is understandable why there was a place for autocratic leadership when employee performance was the only DV, but downstream employee variables were negatively impacted by this leadership style. For example, job satisfaction, employee engagement, long-term productivity, and turnover intention were negatively impacted by a lack of input by employees into policies and procedures of the organization (Iqbal et al., 2015).

In the final article of this section, Maaitah (2018) studied the effect of leadership styles, here, only transactional and transformational leadership were used, on turnover intention by having analyzed 172 directors and heads of departments of the Greater Amman Municipality in Jordan. Having posited that leadership helped with planning an organization's vision, the importance of the role of leaders was magnified due to the need to motivate and drive employee performance. The author provided regression analysis of the leadership styles on the DV of turnover intention, and results showed that leadership style explained 54% of the variance in turnover intention. While having suggested in the results section of the article that hypotheses for both leadership styles would be negative and statistically significant with turnover intention, the author partially reversed this by claiming that transactional leadership was positively, not negatively, associated with turnover intention (Maaitah, 2018).

**Passive Leadership.** When leaders show passive behaviors working with employees, the result is distrust by employees in those leaders as well as perceptions of distrust by employees of supervisors. Having suggested that passive leadership was negatively related to affect-based trust

(i.e., the emotional relationship between individuals), Adeel et al. (2018) collected surveys from 120 Pakistani employees in different public sector organizations. The authors used the MLQ to measure passive leadership, consistent with the current study. Through examination of intercorrelations among variables, passive leadership showed as statistically significant as well as moderately and negatively related to affect-based trust and four forms of justice: procedural, distributive, interpersonal, and informational. When employees trusted their supervisors, particularly with difficult tasks, the social bonding that occurred between employees and supervisors helped employees not only complete the tasks presented, but also provided a sense of fairness in employees. However, if supervisors were passive leaders, negative consequences impacted the affect-based trust among employees (Adeel et al., 2018).

Passive leadership has detrimental effects on the trust relationship between leaders and members. Holtz and Hu (2017) illustrated passive leadership as more prominent in organizations than originally suspected with one in five (21%) employees having experienced passive leadership behavior from managers as noted by Aasland et al. (2010). The authors investigated the direct impact of passive leadership on cognition-based trust and the indirect effect on justice. A total of 192 university students, who were working at least 20 hours per week, completed all three surveys, a passive leadership survey, cognition-based trust survey, and justice perceptions survey, via online. Comparable to the current study, passive leadership was measured using the MLQ of Bass and Avolio (1997) and correlations showed statistically significant, moderately negative relationships regarding passive leadership and turnover intention. The main finding was that passive leadership in supervisors caused serious harm to the trust they had with their employees. When cognitive-based trust was reduced through passive leadership, employees displayed perceptions of fairness issues in the workplace. Interestingly, passive leadership

resulted in poor selection on the part of the organization resulting in employees being promoted and experiencing the *Peter Principle* (Peter & Hull, 1969; i.e., having been promoted to one's level of incompetence). If organizations could assess leadership skills in potential supervisors, the prevalence of passive leadership was mitigated (Holtz & Hu, 2017).

Passive leadership fosters an uncivil workplace (Harold & Holtz, 2015). Examples of incivility in the workplace range from low severity such as looking at phones during meetings to high severity such as outright rudeness to others. Nearly all employees had experienced or witnessed incivility in the workplace (Porath & Pearson, 2010) and the authors suggested passive leadership led to a spiral effect of incivility. Passive leadership directly affected employee behavioral incivility and experienced workplace incivility and the authors conducted two studies using students from Syracuse University. In the first study, 122 employee-supervisor dyads successfully completed surveys, including the MLQ used in the current study, and measured supervisor and employee incivility experienced in the workplace. Specifically addressing correlations, passive leadership, measured by employees assessing their supervisors and self-assessed by supervisors, had a positive and statistically significant relationship with experienced workplace incivility and behavioral incivility. For the second study, the authors used 210 employees (105 dyads of members and peers) to measure their supervisors and concluded that passive leadership impacted the workplace in multiple ways implying it led to a contagious effect in incivility with employees themselves. Recommendations included training for managers to identify uncivil behaviors and how to have mitigated such behaviors in themselves (Harold & Holtz, 2015).

Dysfunctional leadership, per Che et al. (2017), is recognized as those who are verbally abusive towards employees, but dysfunction also exists in leaders who avoid making decisions or

simply are not engaged in the management of others. The authors probed the topic of passive leadership further by studying the effects of such leadership on work-related issues such as employee health (e.g., physical symptoms, burnout, work-family conflict) and employee work issues such as increased workload. Passive leaders lacked the ability to lead others and the negative environment that manifested impacts employees whose professional growth were limited. When passive leaders created stressors on employees, employees exhibited burnout or other physical symptoms (e.g., nausea and/or pain; per Spector & Jex, 1998) that ultimately harmed the organization. Workload was impacted by passive leaders because employees were left determining their responsibilities, coordinating efforts with others, and completing tasks that may not have been in their purviews or were simply not necessary. Work-family conflict was potentially related to workload as an increased workload caused an imbalance of work and family time management, and this impacted employees in SSOs. Often, schedules included overtime to make up for lower wages, and passive leaders in SSOs failed to consider the families of employees when making schedules per the article. Because passive leaders were ineffective by nature, employees were reduced to being ineffective as well due to a lack of resources or information from their leaders. The authors focused on full-time nurses attending classes in a large medical university in China along with their co-workers who had the same supervisor, the final sample being 274. Contrary to the current study's use of the MLQ by Avolio and Bass (2002) to measure passive leadership, the authors used a 10-item scale by Karakitapoğlu-Aygün and Gumusluoglu (2013) instead. The original source of the survey was limited in the sample size (ranging from 2 to 13 depending on the question) but appeared to measure passive leadership sufficiently (Karakitapoğlu-Aygün & Gumusluoglu, 2013). Results showed statistically significant and positive correlations between passive leadership and workload, work-

family conflict, burnout, and physical symptoms. It was recommended that organizations invest in improving the leadership skills (e.g., 360 leadership assessments) of those identified as passive leaders to promote a less stressful environment (Che et al., 2017).

Barling and Frone (2017) researched the effect of passive leadership on mental health and overall work attitude through mediation of role overload, role conflict, role ambiguity, and psychological work fatigue. Having conducted telephone interviews over a 2-year period, the authors enlisted 2,467 U.S. workers in the study. Passive leadership was measured by two questions from Den Hartog et al. (1997), two questions from Pearce and Sims (2002), and one question originally developed by the authors. In review of the intercorrelations among variables, passive leadership was positively and statistically significantly ( $p < .001$ ) related to role leadership, role overload, and role conflict, having shown low to moderate correlations. Further, passive leadership was negatively and statistically significantly ( $p < .001$ ) related to mental health and overall work attitude. In fact, 18% of the variance in overall work attitude was attributable to passive leadership in the study. It was concluded that passive leadership was harmful to employees regarding mental health and overall work attitude and was related to poor work environment. Practical recommendations included organizations helping leaders gain positive behaviors without bringing out their negative behaviors. Additionally, management and leadership development programs should have focused on what passive leadership was and how to avoid it, and those having led training sessions should have been aware of the poor effects that passive leadership brought to the workplace (Barling & Frone, 2017).

**Transactional Leadership.** While leadership and leadership styles have been researched regarding the effect they have on employee performance, little has been done to study the effect of leadership style on performance when considering corporate culture according to Saeed and

Mughal (2019). Having used the work of Avolio and Bass (2002) and the full range leadership model (i.e., transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire [or passive]), the authors examined the effect of transactional leadership in a Pakistani context, namely, the banking sector.

Transactional leadership was based on contingent rewards by leaders to employees based on the work they performed; in doing so, leaders controlled quality and maintained high standards of work. Participants were recruited from the Pakistani banking sector with a total of 319 successfully having completed and returned the surveys for analysis. To measure transactional leadership, the authors used the MLQ of Avolio and Bass (2002). The authors concluded that transactional leadership was weakly, but positively and statistically significantly, related to performance with this leadership style having explained three percent of the variance in performance. Transactional leadership was also weakly, but positively and statistically significantly, related to culture with the leadership style having explained seven percent of the variance in culture. Awareness of culture in the banking sector could have positive effects on employee performance as well. It is worth noting that the authors used the highly bureaucratic culture of banking to conduct research where transactional leadership was not only expected but possibly preferred. This presented limitations in generalizing to other sectors such as human services (Saeed & Mughal, 2019).

Similar to the highly bureaucratic sector of banking that Saeed and Mughal (2019) examined, Martínez-Córcoles and Stephanou (2017) researched the regimented military operations and the role that transactional leadership played with safety climate, safety compliance, safety participation, and risky behaviors. Safety climate illustrated the shared perceptions of employees about the work environment regarding safety. Some of the constructs had similarities in the corporate world; for instance, safety compliance was similar to task

performance, and safety participation was analogous to contextual performance (i.e., activities that contributed to social and psychological functions of organizations). Overall active transactional leadership and active management by exception, a form of transactional leadership by Bass (1998) that involved a leader carefully monitoring work, detecting errors, and making immediate corrections where necessary, had positive effects (direct and/or indirect) on safety climate, safety compliance, and safety participation, and had negative effects on risky behaviors. Paratroopers ( $n = 161$ ) from the Hellenic Armed Forces participated in the study with transactional leadership being measured through MLQ-5X by Bass and Avolio (1997) that focused on transactional leadership as well as its subscales of contingent rewards and active management by exception. Correlations showed overall transactional leadership was statistically significant and moderately positively related to the three safety variables and moderately negatively related to risky behaviors. Transactional leadership was portrayed as necessary in the military setting that relied on a strict hierarchy, regulations, and control. As opposed to SSO employees where noncompliance would not necessarily result in consequences, military personnel must have complied with orders or they faced the consequences of negative feedback, per the article. The authors concluded that transactional leaders in the military established the safety climate necessary and this had a positive effect on safety compliance and participation by followers (Martínez-Córcoles & Stephanou, 2017).

In the medical profession, residents endure excessive training while working long hours. Deng et al. (2019) suggested clinical teachers preferred transactional leadership styles and this was the subject of their study, specifically, the impact of transactional leadership style, either via contingent punishment or contingent reward, was moderated by an employee-orientation organizational culture on residents' self-efficacy (i.e., an individual's confidence to meet

behavioral goals), according to Schunk (1991) – and performance. A survey conducted on residents ( $n = 247$ ) in five tertiary hospitals in central and eastern China included measuring transactional leadership style in two ways. First, contingent-reward transactional leadership style was measured using Podsakoff et al. (1984) as well as Podsakoff and Organ (1986). Second, the authors used contingent-punishment transactional leadership style as measured using Podsakoff et al. (1984). Correlations were relevant to the current study; self-efficacy was weakly and positively related to contingent-punishment transactional leadership style while it was moderately, positively, and statistically significantly related to contingent-reward transactional leadership style. It was concluded that both forms of transactional leadership were effective in increasing resident training and self-efficacy. It was surprising to see that contingent punishment was effective, but such punishment was more of a corrective action and was an acceptable educational measure for clinical teachers. Of course, it was important for hospitals in China to consider the burnout of residents when having employed the contingent punishment method of transactional leadership, a lesson other organizations in other industries could learn (Deng et al., 2019).

Deng et al. (2019) studied where highly-educated medical residents were the participants. Bian et al. (2019) conducted a study where front-line workers in petroleum and construction, no participant had education greater than high school, were the participants. Correlations among variables showed transactional leadership was moderately, positively, and statistically significant with the overall DVs. Results found transactional leadership had a negative impact on employee safety behavior, and this was attributed to employees not having had self-efficacy regarding safety regulations in the workplace. Transactional leadership had its place in organizations, but when an organization's safety climate, psychological empowerment of employees, and safety



behavior by employees were influenced by deleterious leadership, such concerns for leadership style should have been further researched, especially in safety-cautious industries like petroleum and construction. In SSOs, transactional leadership may have similar effects on safety concerns, and this affects the serving of clients (Bian et al., 2019).

In the fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) industry (i.e., products sold quickly and cost-effectively; Deliya, 2011), such as soft drinks and skincare (Joghee & Pillai, 2013), the wrong kind of leadership had dire consequences for supply chains and organizations such as poor firm performance, declining competitiveness, and low profits (Lekhanya et al., 2017). Jacobs and Mafini (2019) studied the effect of three types of transactional leadership on supply chain quality and business performance in the FMCG industry. Supply chain quality (SCQ), according to Lin et al. (2013), was "a coordinated approach to having linked strategic leadership and operational activities of a supply chain system in an organized manner to prevent unsolicited deviations, and ensured accountability of supply chain cohorts with refined systems that build capable supply networks" (p. 3). Transactional leadership, active management by exception, contingent reward, and passive-avoidant, influenced SCQ in the FMCG industry. Managers and employees ( $n = 73$ ) of FMCG organizations in Gauteng, South Africa, were used as participants in the study and leadership styles, consistent with the current study, used the MLQ (Bass & Avolio, 2000). In review of the intercorrelations, active management by exception and contingent reward showed weak to moderate positive relationships, all statistically significant, with SCQ and business performance. To contrast this, passive-avoidant leadership was weakly and negatively related, though not statistically significantly with the same variables. Contingent rewards and active management by exception leadership resulted in a greater likelihood that SCQ was higher in FMCG organizations. Noting that all three transactional leadership styles were able to predict

approximately 25% of the variance in SCQ, it was concluded that leadership practices were important when determining SCQ in the FMCG industry (Jacobs & Mafini, 2019).

**Transformational Leadership.** According to Ohunakin et al. (2019), transformational leadership was comprised of four essential dimensions: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. Idealized influence was evidenced by high moral standards and integrity while inspirational motivation was seen as envisioning a future state for an organization or department. Intellectual stimulation was when a leader challenged the status quo or acted as a change agent, and individualized consideration was understanding the aspirations of others as well as their abilities and needs. The setting of this article, Nigeria, benefitted from transformational leadership in workplaces through the recognition of employees and the integration of employees' needs, abilities, and ideas, thus having generated positive work outcomes. As opposed to the current study having examined the overall construct of transformational leadership, the study considered each dimension of transformational leadership and the impacts they had on employee job satisfaction, turnover intention, and life satisfaction in the hospitality industry. Having focused on six universities' guesthouses, 324 employees were surveyed on these factors including the MLQ of Bass and Avolio (2006) to measure transformational leadership and its four dimensions. Similar to the current study, the authors employed the 3-item turnover survey of Landau and Hammer (1986) to measure intention to leave. Correlations among variables showed that each dimension of transformational leadership was weakly positively related to turnover intention. Findings suggested leaders in organizations should focus on the four dimensions rather than overall transformational leadership and that having focused on various dimensions would help leaders and employees overall. Further, organizations should focus on the dimensions not only to

improve employee job satisfaction, but to improve customer satisfaction as well (Ohunakin et al., 2019).

In human services, Rinfret et al. (2018) studied which leadership style worked best. They focused on transformational leadership only and it created an environment of organizational justice and, because of this fairness perception, employees identified with the organization and displayed a greater desire to work together. EI played an essential role in identifying transformational leadership (i.e., those who had high EI were likely to be transformational leaders) who engaged and worked with others on an interpersonal level. It was hypothesized that EI positively related to transformational leadership through a study of executive directors within institutions of the Quebec Health and Social Services network in Canada. A bias occurred by having relied on each of the executive directors to distribute surveys to four of their employees, with the resulting participant population of 167. The authors used the MLQ of Bass and Avolio (1995) to assess transformational leadership in executive directors. Transformational leaders were ideal role models, inspired and motivated others, demonstrated genuine concerns for others, and challenged employees to be more innovative. The intercorrelations showed EI as strongly positively related ( $r = .71, p < .01$ ) to transformational leadership and this leadership style was moderately positively related to other determinants such as justice, commitment, self-determined motivation, and job satisfaction. Stress ( $r = -.08$ ) and emotional exhaustion ( $r = -.30, p < .01$ ) were negatively related to transformational leadership as well. Relative to the current study, higher EI resulted in an inclination to have demonstrated a transformational leadership style but failed to consider other leadership styles and the relationships they had on the variables used in the study. The current study measured a variety of leadership styles so as not to create a confirmation bias with a particular leadership style (Rinfret et al., 2018).

Shabane et al. (2017) examined the relationship between transformational leadership, retention, and remuneration satisfaction, specifically among military artisans (e.g., mechanics, boilermaker, sheet metal worker, welder, etc.). Though the method was quantitative, and the design was correlational, the study lacked explicit hypotheses and, instead, the research purpose statement must have been relied upon when analysis was reviewed. To measure transformational leadership, the authors used the Transformational Leadership Questionnaire of Bass and Avolio (2004), which was used to measure participants on transformational leadership skills.

Participants represented military artisans of the South African National Defense Force (SANDF) located in the north east section called Pretoria. Correlations among variables showed leadership as moderately positively related to remuneration, compensation and benefits, motivation, and the relationship with one's supervisor. These correlations were all statistically significant. Despite the focus of the study, the recommendations offered by the authors appeared to be outside the scope of the article. For example, they recommended that the SANDF should recruit more women and recruiting/developing officers with qualifications beyond a Grade 12. Further, they suggested working conditions should be improved and that the South African Army should revise its promotion policy. These recommendations were not confirmed by the data and were simply observations based on the sample used. In fact, only one recommendation – providing more training interventions aimed at transformational leadership development – was within the scope of the article and was considered legitimate (Shabane et al., 2017).

**Servant Leadership.** A natural setting for servant leadership is the non-profit sector because of the focus not only on revenue but also on mission and altruistic traits in helping others. Allen et al. (2018) provided an analysis of 128 non-profit employees in the United States and the effect of servant leadership on OC as well as structural and psychological empowerment.

Structural empowerment is the extrinsic power provided by organizations in the form of information, support, resources, and opportunities. Psychological empowerment, per Spreitzer (1995), was the intrinsic motivation in employees referring to one's competence, impact, meaning, and self-determination. Servant leadership positively influenced structural empowerment and, through this increased empowerment, psychological empowerment increased and had a positive effect on OC. Servant leadership was measured using a 10-item Essential Servant Leadership Behaviors (ESLB) scale compared to the current study that used the GMSL of Ehrhart (2004). Correlations showed servant leaderships being positively strongly associated with structural empowerment ( $p < .01$ ) and positively moderately associated with OC ( $p < .01$ ). Regarding psychological empowerment, servant leadership had mixed results, impact and self-determination showed positive and moderate associations; and, competence and meaning were not significant and were weak at best. The authors concluded servant leadership's strong relationship with the structural empowerment of non-profit organizations empowered such organizational structures (Allen et al., 2018).

A second article examining servant leadership and OC was Jang and Kandampully (2018), but they focused on affective OC. Distinctions were provided between servant leadership and other types like transformational leadership. As noted by Allen et al. (2018), servant leaders considered others before themselves, but they also emphasized development of followers; other leadership styles focused on motivation or inspiration for followers to share the same vision. Another distinction, per Russell (2001), was servant leaders were embodiments of integrity, honesty, and personal values whereas other leadership styles did not necessarily take on these traits. The authors hypothesized servant leadership, namely, employee perceptions of servant leadership relative to their managers, was positively associated with affective OC and indirectly

and negatively to turnover intention. The authors used 213 questionnaires from restaurant employees at 22 casual dining restaurants in the Midwestern United States. Servant leadership was measured using the scale by Ehrhart (2004). Turnover intention was measured using the work of Cammann et al. (1979) rather than the current study's use of Landau and Hammer (1986). Having analyzed correlations among variables, servant leadership was positively strongly related to affective OC ( $p < .01$ ) and positively weakly related to turnover intention. It was determined that servant leadership impacting affective OC reduced turnover intention and the employment of servant leaders in restaurants gave these firms competitive advantages in the restaurant market (Jang & Kandampully, 2018).

The last two articles to review in this section are qualitative analyses of servant leadership beginning with Thacker et al. (2019). The authors interviewed eight employees of a solid waste management organization to learn how servant leadership tenets impacted employees and employers, particularly regarding turnover. To reiterate, servant leadership was best stated by the authors: "[a] servant leader is a servant first" (p. 64). Servant leadership was quite prominent in private and public sector jobs due to more (e.g., better goods and services), but also being great social assets Greenleaf (1977) – being asked of organizations. Servant leadership was not focused on organizational vertical hierarchy, but rather on people-centered members of teams who walked among them. The qualitative approach in the study asked the eight participants seven main questions related to servant leadership. The first two questions asked about perceptions of participants regarding servant leadership in their workplaces and, if it existed, the impact servant leadership had on individuals personally and professionally. The next two questions centered on servant leadership compared to other leadership models and what parts of servant leadership appealed to participants. The fifth and sixth questions asked participants to

focus on how servant leadership played a role in recruiting and keeping employees in their organizations, with the final question being open-ended for additional comments. The authors summarized by illustrating four themes from the study centered on culture, accountability, support, and commitment. Culture was selfless leadership and this leadership set the tone for others in organizations. Accountability was leaders owning issues rather than projecting them onto others, avoiding any blame. Support was quite evident with servant leadership since it was based on supporting others and serving others in order to serve the organization. Finally, commitment was showing others how to lead with a servant-like personality based on integrity, ethics, and concern for others professionally and personally (Thacker et al., 2019).

The second article focusing on more of a mixed methods approach was by Carter and Baghurst (2014) who studied servant leadership in the restaurant/service industry and how it influenced employee engagement. Conducting a qualitative phenomenological study at Celebration Restaurant in Dallas, Texas, 11 veteran (5 years or more) employees of the restaurant participated in focus groups and the information gleaned from these focus groups were triangulated with quantitative surveys provided by the organization measuring employee satisfaction and servant leadership. Per the authors, the first question focused on a description of servant leadership experiences from participants and they mentioned the golden rule in Matthew 7:12 (NIV): "So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets." Participants added examples where the owner of the restaurant was taking trash out for employees and how that resonated with them (i.e., being willing to serve and leading by example). The second question centered on how Celebration Restaurant differed from other companies for whom they were employed and participants indicated how servant leadership was ideal, but was not always possible when things were moving at a faster pace;

however, despite this pace, servant leadership was not cast aside for another philosophy. The next question asked one thing taken away from their servant leadership experiences and one person summed it up as a need to commit oneself personally, that one must commit to work better not only for oneself but for others on the team. Next, when asked what servant leader qualities were important, participants' referenced leading by example and compassion, but also with kindness and being open-minded. The next question focused on how servant leadership motivated participants, and responses varied from stronger people connections to the servant heart of the owner and how the owner's values were aligned with this type of leadership. The final question asked how servant leadership inspired participants to accomplish more, and responses included personal growth, professional development, commitment to oneself and to others, and leading by example. The authors referenced five emerging themes from the study: servant leadership experience, why people stayed, servant leadership traits, impact of servant leadership, and application of servant leadership. Servant leader experience was personal meaning, managing meaning, and meaning to the culture of the organization, but was also leading by example, personal growth, and relationships. With the second theme, people stayed because the restaurant was a fun place to work and the atmosphere was enjoyed by all participants. A majority of participants indicated that forgiveness, kindness and compassion, learning, service, and responsibility exemplified servant leadership traits, the third theme. The fourth theme of servant leadership impact was commitment of employees to the company and how this commitment translated to interactions with customers. Finally, the application of servant leadership was best when employees apologized to others for having bad attitudes or to customers when mistakes were made during the serving of food/drinks. In sum, servant leadership strongly influenced employee engagement such as commitment, loyalty, and



accountability, and that peer relationships were stronger than the relationship one had with the manager, a surprise to the authors (Carter & Baghurst, 2014).

### *Variables in the Study*

In this section, each variable is reviewed relevant to the literature in order to provide clear explanations for the use and operationalization of said variables.

**LMX.** LMX researchers (Byun et al., 2017; Covella et al., 2017; Kim, 2019; Yildiz, 2018) often employ quantitative research methods and correlational designs through use of the LMX-7 item survey first developed by Scandura and Graen (1984) and later by Graen and Uhl-Bien (1995). While others (Clarke & Mahadi, 2017; Mardanov et al., 2008) use LMX-12 with or without modifications of their own, this study employs the LMX-7 survey because of its usage being common for research. Graen and Uhl-Bien (1995) explained that the LMX-7 was most appropriate and that the question, “‘How effective is your working relationship with your leader?’ was the most appropriate and recommended measure of LMX” (p. 236). In order to compare results with past research, and to build on past research, a quantitative correlational approach was best suited to accomplish this in the current study.

**Leadership Style.** Specific leadership styles are measured primarily using quantitative methods and correlational designs (Saad et al., 2018; Saeed & Mughal, 2019; Sun & Wang, 2017) and most often using the MLQ developed by Avolio and Bass (2002). It is available and accessed via Mind Garden and measures transactional, transformational, and passive leadership by employees. Measuring servant leadership was done by conducting a survey of questions based on the GMSL developed by Ehrhart (2004).

**Retention.** Turnover intention has been measured in quantitative correlational approaches by a turnover intention scale, however the source of the scale has varied. For

instance, Vardaman et al. (2008) utilized a 2-item turnover intention scale from Hom and Griffeth (1991) while Wang et al. (2018) used a 5-item scale from Wayne et al. (1997) that included the 3-item scale originated by Landau and Hammer (1986). A 3-item scale approach is appropriate for this study, though the questions themselves must be chosen carefully. For example, Jang and Kandampully (2018) used the popular work of Cammann et al. (1979) but the questions employed were vague, even by turnover-intention standards (e.g., *if I may choose again . . . and it is very possible that*) in the questions themselves. Covella et al. (2017) used the work of Sjöberg and Sverke (2000) and their 3-item scale, but the questions conveyed uncertainty (e.g., *I feel that I could . . . and If I was completely free to choose*) on behalf of the respondent. Rather, the work of Landau and Hammer (1986) displayed questions with greater certainty: *I am actively looking for a job outside [company name], As soon as I can find a better job, I'll leave [company name], and I am seriously thinking about quitting my job* (p. 404).

The use of surveys developed by others involved obtaining permissions to use these surveys from the authors via their professional (e.g., academic) email addresses. The exception noted is the MLQ as that was available for purchase via Mind Garden.

### ***Summary of the Literature Review***

Within the literature review, variables relevant to the current study were identified and extensive review of related literature had identified articles that both supported and challenged the theoretical framework in this study. In review of the above literature, little is in dispute that LMX and leadership style have positive effects on retention (or, alternatively, negative effects on turnover and turnover intention). Not only has the literature illustrated studies that showed the impact of LMX or leadership style on retention, turnover, and turnover intention, but it showed other benefits and work outcomes originating with LMX and/or leadership style, particularly

transformational and servant leadership. The current study found precedence in numerous studies that supported conducting research with the above-stated hypotheses on employees at the study's Southeastern Pennsylvania SSOs.

### **Transition and Summary of Section 1**

Retention is problematic in many industries in the United States and internationally. Although LMX and leadership styles have been researched showing benefits of each on turnover, turnover intention, and retention, the problem continues to persist. In SSOs, strong LMX and positive leadership styles are needed to retain solid employees who are top performers, but also to provide the seamless service necessary to serve clients with IDD who depend on the stability of staff to have as little disruption in their fragile schedules each day.

Section 2 of the current study involves the project itself, particularly data collection and analysis. This section includes the role of the researcher, details of the participants used in the study, the data collection itself, and data analysis using statistical tools.

## **Section 2: The Project**

This section of the study focuses on important foundational facets like the role of the researcher and participants when considering survey administration and completion. It is important to the ethical integrity of this study to provide details regarding participant access, how the researcher contacted and interacted with participants, and the protection of identities for participants.

Next, the research and design of the study are expanded upon from Section 1 and include details on the population and sample from the Southeastern Pennsylvania SSOs used in the study. The study population is identified as well as the intended sample being provided. This part of the study enables the researcher to provide guidance on sampling method and eligibility criteria needed for participation in the study.

Third, data collection (e.g., instruments, how data were collected and organized, and the techniques used) is provided to demonstrate clarity and transparency on how the study was conducted. This study used existing instruments to measure LMX, leadership style, and retention or intention to leave. Techniques are provided to show how data were collected and organized and how the data were secured.

Fourth, data analysis is discussed and begins with the variables used in the study; further, data are thoroughly reviewed as well as the level (e.g., nominal, ordinal, etc.) of data expected. This part of the section is important because it provides sufficient detail for researchers to replicate the study. When the current study's process is followed explicitly by others, the results should be similar to the ones found in the current study. Including reliability, the section covers validity of the study, particularly the process for determining such measures based on existing

survey instruments used in other studies. The section concludes with a transition to Section 3 of the study.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this quantitative correlational survey study was to extend leadership and retention research by examining the role of leadership style in the relationship between LMX and retention, thus identifying key variables to helping the study's SSOs retain employees. This topic explores in greater detail these relationships through primary survey research and the study was conducted in two SSOs focused on serving individuals with IDD and their respective locations in Southeastern Pennsylvania.

### **Role of the Researcher**

The role of the researcher is important as it provides broad points regarding how participants were contacted and how data were collected and analyzed. The researcher of the study was not directly related to the study's, nor any other, SSOs and was responsible for contacting the appropriate business contacts (e.g., HR) in the study's SSOs as well as having administered the survey and analyzed the data to form results. The researcher communicated with the SSO's business contacts and provided a survey link for distribution by the business contacts to eligible participants identified by them. The surveys used in the study were distributed to populations in different locations within the identified Southeastern Pennsylvania SSOs' locations. The researcher compiled the survey results and analyzed the data based on the research questions posed earlier.

The LMX-7 survey was readily available and permission (see Appendix B) had been granted by the authors (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995) for use in this study. As noted previously, the LMX-7 survey was ideal for measuring LMX due to the strong association with other LMX

surveys and because its brevity did not dilute the effectiveness of the construct itself. The MLQ used by Bass and Avolio (1997) was available via a remote online survey license on the website, Mind Garden, for a cost to the researcher. With the purchase of the remote online survey license, the researcher was able to administer the MLQ via a non-Mind Garden survey system such as Qualtrics. The GMSL survey, used to measure servant leadership in the study, was employed by Ehrhart (2004) and permission (see Appendix B) to use the survey had been granted to the researcher by the author. Finally, the 3-item turnover intention survey used by Landau and Hammer (1986) measured the construct of retention in the current study and the authors had granted permission (see Appendix B) for use in the current study.

### **Participants**

Eligibility of participants was determined by focusing on those who had been employees for at least two months in their current positions at the Southeastern Pennsylvania SSOs used in the study. This is sufficient time for members to assess LMX and leadership style, and for members to express any intention to leave the organization. Members received emails, via the business contacts at the SSOs, from the researcher including a link to the survey. The survey itself was one that included questions from all the surveys mentioned above. The survey was administered by the researcher and utilized Qualtrics. Qualtrics, well-known in the survey software field, functions as a tool used to develop, administer, and analyze results of surveys – all online (Qualtrics, 2020b). Launched in 2002 as a survey solution for academics, Qualtrics is now utilized by more than 11,000 brands globally across multiple industries. The Qualtrics platform completes complex tasks with its advanced survey functionality as well as its analytics that normally take academics months to complete and does so with an end-user experience that is

based on a drag-and-drop graphic user interface (Qualtrics, 2020b). Exporting of the survey data was done using SPSS.

Due to the sensitive nature of the study, it was critical to maintain privacy and anonymity among participants. Therefore, upon taking the survey, each participant had to consent to participating by having acknowledged (clicking *Agree* in the beginning) before entering the survey itself. It was important to keep participants anonymous due to the sensitive nature of the questions included in the survey. Results of surveys were kept by the researcher only and will be accessed via Qualtrics; any data stored in Qualtrics or SPSS (during analysis) was password-protected and encrypted by the researcher. Access to the Qualtrics website was available only to the researcher, the dissertation chair and/or committee, and Liberty University administration. Further, if requested, any analysis provided to the SSOs was summary-level data and did not identify any particular participants. Access to raw data was not permitted to anyone other than the eligible parties detailed above.

### **Research Method and Design**

The method and design of this study was based on the work of researchers who have studied the relationships of LMX, leadership style, and/or retention in the workplace. These fields have been studied and hypotheses have been tested to support varying theories contained within this study. This section reviews the study's research method and design relative to two Southeastern Pennsylvania SSOs.

### ***Discussion of Method***

The current study focused on the quantitative research method which measured the relationships between the study's variables of LMX, leadership style, and retention. This approach was consistent with research in this field (see Nature of Study). In order to have

effectively tested the hypotheses in this study, a quantitative approach measured the strength of the relationships between the variables involved. To reiterate from earlier, causation was not being examined here, simply the relationships between variables.

The aim of survey research is less about identifying a causal link between variables and more about generalizing the results from a sample population to a broader one (Vogt, 2011). Testing hypotheses in the current study enabled the researcher to effectively generalize to a larger population, namely SSOs in identified locations in Southeastern Pennsylvania. The correlational research method (i.e., how the data were gathered) in the current study was done via survey and this information, LMX, leadership style, and retention, was gathered and combined (i.e., multiple surveys covering different concepts) into one self-rated survey for each participating population (Weathington et al., 2012).

### *Discussion of Design*

The design was correlational which measured the valence (i.e., positive, negative, or none) and strength of the association between variables. Correlational designs like the one in the current study are bivariate in nature that is to say that the association being analyzed is between two variables at a time (Field, 2013). The process for conducting a bivariate correlation analysis involves checking for sources of bias such as linearity and normality. If the data has outliers, for example, the correct correlation coefficient (e.g., Spearman's  $r$  in this case) should be used. If there is no bias in the data, using Pearson's  $r$  is appropriate for analysis. Taking the correlation coefficient further, by squaring the correlation, one arrives at the coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) which is the amount of variability in one variable that is shared by the other variable in the bivariate analysis. Correlational analysis was employed in this study and the determination of



concepts such as linearity, normality, or what correlation coefficient should have been used were identified during analysis (Field, 2013).

### ***Summary of Research Method and Design***

This section provides further analysis of the intended research method and design of the associations between LMX, leadership style, and retention as they relate to the Southeastern Pennsylvania SSOs.

### **Population and Sampling**

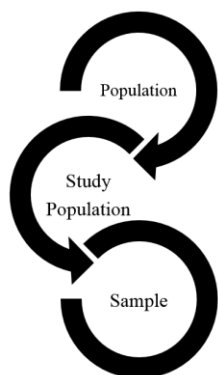
This section delves into the details surrounding the population in the study as well as the sampling employed.

### ***Discussion of Population***

In order to identify the participants of the current study, the researcher determined the respondents of the study and how those subjects were identified (Leavy, 2017). The study's Southeastern Pennsylvania SSOs were not only located within this particular region, but also had locations in other states as part of larger organizations. For the purposes of this study, only the locations in the study were employed for statistical analysis and the results were only generalized to the locations used.

### **Figure 2**

*Process of Moving from Population to Sample (Leavy, 2017)*



This study looked at the population solely within select Southeastern Pennsylvania locations. The study population was comprised of direct support staff in Southeastern Pennsylvania locations used in the study. Members in the study were those who provided direct support to clients. No members could be leaders, the other part of the LMX dyad, with direct reporting authority in the study. While such studies as those by Mardanov et al. (2008) or Tse (2008) do not exclude participants from their study based on tenure, this study excluded any participants with less than two months of tenure in their current jobs. Just as social relationships do not form valences right away, neither do members' relationships with their respective leaders. Requiring at least 60 days for relationships to form mitigated any potential bias in results.

### *Discussion of Sampling*

The sample population (see Figure 1) is identified as a sufficient subset of the study population that enables one to generalize results to larger populations than the sample itself (Leavy, 2017). There are myriad choices to sample a study population ranging from probability sampling (i.e., every person in the population has a non-zero chance of being selected) to convenience sampling wherein the participants are available to the researcher (Leavy, 2017). In examining clearly stated sampling strategies of others in this field, options varied between convenience (Arekar et al., 2016; Bhatti et al., 2015; Thomas et al., 2014) and simple random (Maaitah, 2018; Rose & Raja, 2016). Similar to the work of Henry (2019), the current study used all survey responses from the study population, thus having utilized a convenience sampling technique. Convenience sampling was acceptable and considered appropriate to the study because of the researcher's access to the study population.

To reiterate, those employees with less than two months of tenure in their current positions were not included in the study. With an expected population of 185 in the locations

identified, utilizing a confidence level of 95% with a margin of 5%, a sample size of 125 members satisfies the threshold for generalizing results to the population identified in the study (Qualtrics, 2020a).

### ***Summary of Population and Sampling***

This section focused on the study's population and sampling utilized in the examination of LMX, leadership style, and retention in two Southeastern Pennsylvania SSOs. The information contained in this section provided quantitative support for the current study and included details regarding how the sample population would be identified.

### **Data Collection**

The data collected for this study were comprised of multiple surveys designed to measure the LMX relationships members had with their leaders, the leadership style of leaders in the Southeastern Pennsylvania SSOs as scored by members, and the intention to leave the organizations by members. The surveys utilized in this study are time-tested surveys conducted by researchers and others in their respective fields. This section focuses on the survey instruments used as well as the techniques for data collection and organization.

### ***Instruments***

Surveys dispersed to members are ones having been combined into single surveys for the participatory group. Members completed a single survey comprised of the LMX-7, intention to leave, MLQ, and GMSL surveys as well as demographic questions for a total of 28 questions, including a control question, but not including the informed consent question to take the survey located in the beginning.

The LMX-7 survey is the work of Graen and Uhl-Bien (1995) and is composed of seven unique questions with a 5-point Likert scale. While each question varies regarding the values

used in the scales, there is clear distinction of a low (value of 1) and a high (value of 5). The survey is set up to work with member or leader respondents; in this study, only members responded to these questions about their respective leaders. The questions focused on members' perceptions of leaders' satisfaction with them; on leaders having understood their members' job issues and needs; and on the support leaders gave to their members (i.e., leaders) "bailed [members] out" at their own expenses. In essence, the survey measures the degree of working relational satisfaction one has with a leader. Though this may be a limitation, perceived LMX is important from the member's perspective and this perception, along with leadership style, drives members to consider leaving the company. Previous studies have shown that LMX-7, along with other versions of the LMX survey, has high internal consistency as evidenced by Cronbach's alpha being over the .80 threshold. The LMX-7 survey's level of measurement is continuous as measured by the total score of each question's response and assigning a point value to each possible response. The lowest possible LMX score from this survey was 7 (indicating a 1 on each question) and the highest possible LMX score was 35 (i.e., a 5 on each question). The higher the LMX total score, the higher the perceived LMX by the member (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995).

Intention to leave is constructed of three questions by Landau and Hammer (1986) and the concise, yet direct, nature of the questions makes it the ideal instrument to measure true turnover intention in this study. The authors focused on a larger survey that included topics such as perceived organizational policy of filling vacancies from within, perceived ease of movement in an organization, desire for mobility, and, of course, intention to quit which is relevant to the current study. The three questions utilize a 7-point Likert scale ranging from *strongly disagree* (equal to 1) to *strongly agree* (equal to 7). As noted earlier, this survey did not waiver in the

wording of the questions, rather, they were direct questions asking a respondent's intention to leave an organization. As noted by Yildiz (2018), the Cronbach's alpha of .912 for the turnover intention scale indicates high reliability of the scale itself. These questions were included in the larger survey with other instruments. In this study, the questions were spread out amongst the larger survey so as to not have drawn attention and made respondents uncomfortable in answering the questions about leaving the company. The lowest score a respondent could earn on these three questions was 3 (i.e., a 1 on each question) and the highest possible score was a 21 (i.e., a 7 on each question). The higher the intention to turnover score, the greater likelihood of the respondent intending to leave the organization, though one score does not guarantee such departure.

The first leadership style survey, MLQ, addresses passive, transactional, and transformational leadership styles. The survey was administered by Mind Garden and is available via [www.mindgarden.com](http://www.mindgarden.com). With 45 questions identifying and measuring key leadership and effectiveness behaviors, the MLQ (5X-Short) is best suited for researchers and has been used in countless dissertations per Avolio and Bass (2012). The 5X-Short survey instrument is more appropriate compared to the 5X-Long that uses 63 questions and is used more commonly employed for training, coaching, and feedback purposes. Less useful for research studies, the 5X-Long was not utilized in the current study. Further, to encourage a sufficient response rate from participants, a subset of the 5X-Short was utilized that identifies "key leadership and effectiveness behaviors shown in prior research to be strongly linked with both individual and organizational success" (p. 13). The questions use a 5-point Likert scale ranging from *not at all* (value of 0) to *frequently, if not always* (value of 4). For the sake of brevity and to encourage higher completion rates among participants, the use of eleven questions were used and

they employed the same 5-point Likert scale used in the 5X-Short survey. Three questions focused on passive leadership, three questions focused on transactional leadership, and five questions focused on transformational leadership. Overall scores are irrelevant when considering this part of the overall survey because this part covers multiple variables within leadership style. Said differently, a score of 33 out of a possible 44 (value of 3 on each question) on the MLQ does not suggest high scores on any one of the leadership styles covered in the MLQ. Only the subset scores for each leadership style are relevant to specific hypotheses related to each leadership style. The lowest possible scores for either passive or transactional leadership were 0 (score of 0 on each question) while the highest possible scores were 12 (score of 4 on each question). For transformational leadership, the lowest possible score was also 0 (score of 0 on each of five questions) and the highest possible score was 20 (score of 4 on each question). However, a higher subset score for any leadership style indicates higher trait values for that particular leadership style. The MLQ has shown to be reliable with Cronbach alphas over .80; only one leadership factor, active management-by-exception, indicates lower reliability at .64 (Avolio & Bass, 2012).

The second leadership style survey, GMSL, explicitly addresses servant leadership. Based on the work of Ehrhart (2004), the GMSL covers two main components of servant leadership, ethical behavior and the prioritization of subordinates' concerns. For the purposes of this study and originally made up of 14 questions, five questions were used to assess servant leadership. Using a 5-point Likert scale, members would respond ranging from *a very small extent* (value of 1) to *a great extent* (value of 5). The lowest score possible on this survey was a 5 (score of 1 on each question) and the highest possible score was a 25 (score of 5 on each question). Reliability is shown to be quite high with an alpha of .98 (Ehrhart, 2004).

### ***Data Collection Techniques***

Surveys used in this study were combined into one survey consisting of 28 questions including a demographic question and a control question. The survey was developed in the web-based survey tool Qualtrics, per the requirement of Liberty University for any survey research being conducted and utilized the Qualtrics website to distribute and collect surveys from participants. Participants received an email with a link to complete the Qualtrics survey online.

### ***Data Organization Techniques***

Because Qualtrics is university-approved, the organization and security of data will be maintained, and the researcher has access to the information for analytical purposes. Further, no other individual besides the researcher, dissertation chair and/or committee members, and university administration have access to the information, an important facet in the survey process, particularly with organizations. Qualtrics provides performance data such as surveys completed per day and the ability to communicate with participants in order to encourage completing the survey. To be respectful to the SSOs involved, any encouragement to respond came from the business contacts of the SSOs themselves, not the researcher.

### ***Summary of Data Collection***

This section provides detailed information regarding the instruments, collection, and organization of data. The information provides a proper grounding of how the survey process took place. How the data were analyzed is covered in the next section.

### **Data Analysis**

Through data analysis collected from the survey there were two IVs and two DVs in the study. First, the relationship between LMX (in this case, IV) and retention (DV) is discussed. Second, the relationship between each leadership style (IV) and LMX (DV) is examined. LMX

played the independent role in one scenario while playing a dependent role in another. This section of the current study provides details on the variables supported by current research and connects each variable to the research questions and hypotheses previously referenced. The section concludes with a summation.

### ***Variables Used in the Study***

The variables used in the study connect to both research questions and are discussed in greater detail below. LMX was correlated with turnover intention in order to analyze and interpret data regarding Research Question 1. Regarding Research Question 2, each leadership style's score, passive, transactional, transformational, and servant, was correlated with LMX. As noted earlier, passive, transactional, and transformational leadership subset scores from the MLQ translate to the scores for each leadership style except servant leadership. The score from the GMSL translates to the score for servant leadership. With correlative analysis, the higher the subset scores on these respective leadership styles, the stronger the behavioral styles. The goal here was to determine the relationship between leadership style scores and LMX. Demographic variables are included in the below mentioned review.

Each participant, upon completion of the survey, had subset scores for each leadership style, a score for LMX, and a score for retention (or turnover intention). Leadership style itself had a total of four subset scores, as noted above, the total leadership style score (a summation of each subset score) was not considered because it had no substantive meaning in the current study. The following table provides an overview of the variable types, save the control and demographic questions, used in the study:



**Table 1***Study Variables*

Variable	Survey	Source	Type of Data
Passive Leadership	MLQ 3 questions	Avolio and Bass (2002)	Continuous
Transactional Leadership	MLQ 3 questions	Avolio and Bass (2002)	Continuous
Transformational Leadership	MLQ 5 questions	Avolio and Bass (2002)	Continuous
Servant Leadership	GMSL 5 questions	Ehrhart (2004)	Continuous
LMX	LMX-7 7 questions	Graen and Uhl-Bien (1995)	Continuous
Intention to Leave	Turnover Intention 3 questions	Landau and Hammer (1986)	Continuous

LMX scores, comprised of the seven questions with assigned point values from 1 to 5 (as coded to one digit), were derived by totaling the possible scores for each participant. The use of LMX-7, in particular, is consistent with research (Kim & Hopkins, 2015; Qian et al., 2017; Wayne et al., 1997) in this field. A person who answered 4 on each question, for example, generated a total LMX score (coded to two digits) of 28. The higher the LMX total score for a participant/member, the higher the LMX with the participant's manager/leader. The lowest possible score for LMX was coded as 07 and the highest possible score was coded as 35.

Passive leadership had three questions from the MLQ that generated a composite subset score for each participant. The use of the MLQ for this variable is consistent with research in the field including that of Adeel et al. (2018) and Holtz and Hu (2017). Ranging from 0 to 4 (coded to one digit), a person who answered 4 on each question generated a total passive leadership

style subset score (coded to two digits) of 12. The lowest possible subset score was coded as 00 and the highest possible subset score was 12. The higher this subset score, the greater the likelihood that the participant's manager demonstrated passive leadership behaviors.

Transactional leadership had three questions from the MLQ that generated a composite subset score for each participant. The MLQ has been used by others (Jacobs & Mafini, 2019; Martínez-Córcoles & Stephanou, 2017; Saeed & Mughal, 2019) to measure transactional leadership in studies. Ranging from 0 to 4 (coded to one digit), a person who answered 4 on each question generated a total transactional leadership style score (coded to two digits) of 12. The lowest possible subset score was coded as 00 and the highest possible subset score was 12. The higher this subset score, the greater the likelihood that the participant's manager demonstrated transactional leadership behaviors.

Transformational leadership had five questions from the MLQ that generated a composite subset score for each participant. Ranging from 0 to 4 (coded to one digit), a person who answered 4 on each of these questions generated a total transformational leadership style subset score (coded to two digits) of 20. The lowest possible subset score was coded as 00 and the highest possible subset score was 20. The higher this subset score, the greater the likelihood that the participant's manager demonstrated transformational leadership behaviors. Recent research (Ohunakin et al., 2019; Rinfret et al., 2018; Tse, 2008; Tse et al., 2014) supports the use of the MLQ when measuring transformational leadership as in the current study.

Servant leadership had five questions from the GMSL that generate a composite score for each participant. Ranging from 1 to 5 (coded to one digit), a person who answered 4 on each of these questions generated a total servant leadership style subset score (coded to two digits) of 20. The lowest possible score was coded as 4 and the highest possible score was 25. The higher this

subset score, the greater the likelihood that the participant's manager demonstrated servant leadership behaviors. Research by Allen et al. (2018) supports the use of this survey instrument in the current study.

Retention, or turnover intention in this study, had three questions from the turnover intention survey that generated a composite score for each participant. Research done by Clarke and Mahadi (2017), Yildiz (2018), and Ohunakin et al. (2019), provide sufficient support for use of this instrument in the current study. Ranging from 1 to 7 (coded to one digit), a person who answered 4 on each of these questions generated a total turnover intention score (coded to two digits) of 12. The lowest possible score was coded as 03 and the highest possible score was 21. The higher this score, the greater the likelihood that the participant was considering leaving the SSO.

Length of service in one's current position, coded to one digit, employed the options of *0-2 Months*, *Greater than 2 Months but Less than 1 Year*, *Greater than 1 Year but Less than 5 Years*, *Greater than 5 Years but Less than 10 Years*, *Greater than 10 Years but Less than 20 Years*, *Greater than 20 Years*, and *Prefer Not to Answer*. Any employee that responded with *0-2 Months*, regardless of length of service with the SSO, was considered ineligible for the current study. Any respondent who chose *Prefer Not to Answer*, however, was considered eligible for the study.

Analysis was done using SPSS where the researcher provided descriptive statistics and the correlative analyses between variables listed above. SPSS is renowned for its ability to analyze small and large amounts of data and provide various reports, tables, and charts for analytical purposes.

***Hypotheses 01 and 11***

The first hypothesis in the current study examined the relationship, or correlation, between LMX and retention related directly with Research Question 1 in the study. Similar to Ahmed et al. (2013), the LMX-7 survey was employed for the IV and, for the DV, retention, the inverse was measured using the turnover intention survey. In this examination, the hypothesis ( $H_{11}$ ) in the current study was that as LMX increased as measured by the LMX-7 survey of Graen and Uhl-Bien (1995), the intention to leave the SSOs either increased or decreased as measured by the intention to leave survey by Landau and Hammer (1986). The result of this relationship, because it measured the inverse of retention, would be inverted to align with the variable of retention. Research on the relationship between these variables has varied; Ahmed et al. (2013) found the correlation between the two to have a small to medium effect size ( $r^2 = .24$ ) according to Cohen (1992). More recently, Yildiz (2018) found the correlation between LMX and turnover intention to have a small effect size ( $r^2 = .08$ ). The null hypothesis ( $H_{01}$ ), that there was no relationship between LMX and retention, was determined based on the correlative analysis of the variables noted by Field (2013). Using SPSS, correlations were computed between the study's variables and presented in a correlation matrix.

***Hypotheses 02 and 12***

The second hypothesis, addressing Research Question 2, studied the correlation between passive leadership and LMX. Here, the IV was passive leadership as measured by three questions on the MLQ and LMX was now the DV as measured, again, by the LMX-7. A small effect size ( $r^2 = .08$ ) was found by Wei et al. (2016) though it did not measure passive leadership, but only passive corrective leadership. Lee (2005) found a small effect size between passive-avoidant leadership and each of the four components of LMX: affect ( $r^2 = .08$ ), professional respect ( $r^2 =$

.23), contribution ( $r^2 = .09$ ), and loyalty ( $r^2 = .01$ ). The hypothesis, as written, indicated a relationship between the two variables while the null hypothesis indicated zero correlation between them. Said differently, the alternative hypothesis stated that for every level of increase in the score of passive leadership, as measured by the subset score in the MLQ, there was a valenced relationship in LMX. The null hypothesis stated that for every level of increase in passive leadership, there was no level of increase or decrease in LMX. Using SPSS, correlations were computed between the study's variables and presented in a correlation matrix.

### ***Hypotheses 03 and 13***

The third hypothesis sought to examine the relationship between transactional leadership (IV) and LMX (DV), having connected to Research Question 2. Lee (2005) studied the relationship between these two variables, again, with LMX being divided into affect, professional respect, contribution, and loyalty, and found small effect sizes ( $r^2_{\text{affect}} = .12$ ,  $r^2_{\text{respect}} = .16$ ,  $r^2_{\text{contribution}} = .06$ , and  $r^2_{\text{loyalty}} = .01$ ) between transactional leadership and each LMX component. Transactional leadership was measured with three questions by the subset score on the MLQ while LMX continued to be measured by LMX-7. This relationship hypothesized to be either positive or negative between the two variables, that is, as the subset score for transactional leadership increased, LMX was expected to increase or decrease. The null hypothesis here suggested that as the subset score for transactional leadership increased, no increase or decrease in LMX occurred. Using SPSS, correlations were computed between the study's variables and presented in a correlation matrix.

### ***Hypotheses 04 and 14***

Fourth among the hypotheses in the study was the examination of the relationship between transformational leadership (IV), having been measured by the 5-question subset score

on the MLQ, and LMX (DV), having been measured by LMX-7. This hypothesis, like the two before it, aligned with Research Question 2. In looking at the work of Lee (2005) again, transformational leadership had a medium effect size regarding LMX and affect ( $r^2 = .46$ ), respect ( $r^2 = .48$ ), contribution ( $r^2 = .26$ ), and loyalty ( $r^2 = .25$ ). Hypothetically, as the subset score of transformational leadership increased, the LMX score would either increase or decrease. With the null hypothesis, it indicated that as transformational leadership increased, LMX would neither increase nor decrease. Using SPSS, correlations were computed between the study's variables and presented in a correlation matrix.

### ***Hypotheses 05 and 15***

The last hypothesis, tied to Research Question 2, examined the relationship between servant leadership (IV) and LMX (DV) as measured by the GMSL and LMX-7, respectively. While other leadership styles generated correlations of small to medium effect sizes per Cohen (1992), a study by Mostafa and El-Motalib (2019) suggested that the relationship between servant leadership and LMX had a large effect size ( $r^2 = .64$ ). Servant leadership, measured by the five questions in the GMSL, and LMX, measured by LMX-7, provided an opportunity to examine this relationship through the hypothesis that for every level of increase in the servant leadership total score on the GMSL, there was a proportionate level of increase or decrease found in LMX. Alternatively, the null hypothesis sought to show that for every level of increase in servant leadership, there was no increase or decrease in LMX. Using SPSS, correlations were computed between the study's variables and presented in a correlation matrix.

### ***Summary of Data Analysis***

This section provides details on variables used in the current study; additionally, an analytical review of each set (alternative and null) of hypotheses is further reviewed and

clarified. The next section seeks to provide greater details on reliability and validity within the study itself.

### **Reliability and Validity**

This section reviews the instrument reliability and validity used in the current study. Reliability is discussed here and applied to each survey within the study's overall survey in the next section. Next, validity is reviewed here and applied to each survey within the study's overall survey in the next section. Reliability refers to the consistency of results measured in a survey instrument and often uses Cronbach's alpha to determine scale reliability of the survey instrument (Leavy, 2017). Fallon (2016) noted that inter-item reliability was used when multiple questions measured one variable (in Leavy, 2017). For example, the seven questions in LMX-7 of Graen and Uhl-Bien (1995) should consistently measure the construct (i.e., leader-member exchange) that it is measuring (Field, 2013). If a participant responded to the LMX-7 survey one month apart, results should be similar each time. Cronbach's alpha is represented by the following:

$$\alpha = \frac{N^2 \overline{\text{cov}}}{\sum s_{\text{item}}^2 + \sum \text{cov}_{\text{item}}}$$

The important part of the above equation is the number of items in a scale. Larger surveys can yield higher alphas simply because of the number of items being high (Field, 2013). However, in the current study's survey, with the largest subset survey measurement (servant leadership) being only five items, the alphas identified in this study demonstrated a level of confidence in the instruments' constructs utilized.

Validity is often referred to as whether an instrument measures what it was designed to measure (Field, 2013). There are multiple types of validity (e.g., face, content, ecological, etc.)

used in statistics. Content validity, often used in self-report measures or surveys, was appropriate for the current study because it equated to “a judgment call made by experts that the measure is tapping what we think it is” (Leavy, 2017, p. 112). In the current study, the reliance on researchers who conducted surveys using the same ones in the current study were used to determine the extent of content validity.

### ***Reliability***

The measures of reliability for each survey instrument used in the current study are provided in the following review. Evidence from researchers were provided for each survey instrument. LMX-7 has long been tested by researchers regarding reliability, and other LMX instruments have shown similar results. For example, Byun et al. (2017) used the LMX-7 of Graen and Uhl-Bien (1995) and found that internal consistency was high at .93; Covella et al. (2017) found similar ( $\alpha = .93$ ) results in their study of Amazon MTurk participants. Mostafa and El-Motalib (2019) used LMX-7 as well and found nearly similar ( $\alpha = .868$ ) results with reliability. Kim and Hopkins (2015) utilized a similar LMX survey of Scandura and Graen (1984) and found that internal consistency measured .94 for LMX; Qian et al. (2017) found strong reliability ( $\alpha = .81$ ) using the same LMX-7 instrument as did Wayne et al. (1997) with an alpha of .90. Clarke and Mahadi (2017) employed LMX-12, suggesting that more items (i.e., 12 questions versus 7 in LMX-7) would result in higher consistency, but the result ( $\alpha = .76$ ) did not correlate. For Ahmed et al. (2013), they did not specify which LMX survey they used in their study of public sector participants but the resultant alpha of .894 did suggest strong internal consistency regardless of the LMX survey instrument used. From these findings, it is clear that use of the LMX survey, particularly LMX-7, yields reliable internal consistency.



The MLQ employed by Avolio and Bass (2002) measures leadership style, except servant leadership, and has equally been used by other researchers. Using the same MLQ, Avolio and Bass (2012) demonstrated nearly each component of the MLQ resulted in strong internal consistency – only management-by-exception-action resulted in medium-strength alphas of .63 and .64 in two samples. Bian et al. (2019) used the MLQ and found a healthy alpha of .77 in their study of employees in the construction industry. It is unclear where the MLQ ranks in the work of Jacobs and Mafini (2019) because it was not explicitly stated; however, the lowest alpha that was associated with the MLQ was .604, a medium strength, yet under .80, alpha. On the other hand, Ohunakin et al. (2019) found much stronger internal consistency in their study of Nigerian university guesthouses ranging from a low of .88 to a high of .92. Saad et al. (2018) found strong internal consistency ( $\alpha = .90$ ) in their study, and Saeed and Mughal (2019) found an alpha of .847 in their project, suggesting that the MLQ demonstrated near-consistent results when used by others and this internal consistency supports the use of the MLQ in the current study.

The GMSL of Ehrhart (2004) is found to have an extremely high ( $\alpha = .98$ ) measure of reliability regarding servant leadership. Jang and Kandampully (2018) measured servant leadership with affective OC and turnover intention and found internal reliability for servant leadership to be strong ( $\alpha = .828$ ). Though limited research had been used, results suggested that there was strong internal consistency with regards to the GMSL and these results support the use of this survey instrument in the current study.

Finally, turnover intention as measured by Landau and Hammer (1986), has evidence of use in research by others. Yildiz (2018) found strong ( $\alpha = .912$ ) reliability in his study of participants who worked in providing sports and physical activities in public organizations. Another study by Güllü et al. (2020) also demonstrated strong reliability with an alpha of .843.

Kim et al. (2017) found an alpha of .89 when having used select questions from Landau and Hammer (1986), but their survey of turnover intention also included select questions from Cammann et al. (1979). Similarly, Yew (2011) combined the work of Landau and Hammer (1986), Wayne et al. (1997), and Tuma and Grimes (1981), and found a composite alpha of .89. Finally, the work of Radebe and Dhurup (2018) showed equally strong reliability of .817 in studying perceived injustice, work-related depression, anxiety, and irritation among employees in a company that manufactured computer parts. The consistent results found in research supports having used this survey in the current study.

### ***Validity***

As noted in Leavy (2017), validity is difficult to measure but there are different measures that help gauge a study's validity. For example, content validity relies upon experts in the study's field to legitimize a study's validity while construct validity indicates the instruments are measuring the constructs detailed in the study. There are other ways to determine a study's validity (e.g., statistical, ecological), but content and construct validity were used for the current study (Leavy, 2017).

In the current study, content validity first relied upon research done by others using similar measurements providing validity of the survey measurements used here. Equally important is the researcher's dissertation committee made up of experts from both a practitioner's and academic's standpoint. Together, these sources of expertise provided legitimacy to the current study's use of LMX-7, MLQ, GMSL, and turnover intention surveys.

From a construct validity perspective, LMX-7 was used by researchers (Byun et al., 2017; Covella et al., 2017; Mostafa & El-Motalib, 2019; Tse, 2008) and this survey by Graen and Uhl-Bien (1995) continues to be utilized today lending credence to its legitimacy as a valid

construct over time. MLQ was employed by a sufficient number of researchers (Bian et al., 2019; Jacobs & Mafini, 2019; Ohunakin et al., 2019; Saad et al., 2018; Saeed & Mughal, 2019) and suggests its use in the current study legitimized its validity as far as leadership style is concerned. The GMSL was used less frequently by others, with the current study noting most recently by Jang and Kandampully (2018), but a review of Google Scholar noted that the survey's developer, Ehrhart (2004), had been cited 1,476 times by others, thus indicating a strong reliance on the legitimacy of the survey measurement. Therefore, the current study's use of the GMSL gains legitimacy in its use of the survey. The turnover intention survey used by Landau and Hammer (1986) had been utilized by researchers in part (Kim et al., 2017) or in whole (Güllü et al., 2020; Radebe & Dhurup, 2018; Yew, 2011; Yildiz, 2018) for over four decades and this provides legitimacy for its use in the current study.

### ***Summary of Reliability and Validity***

This section provides a thorough accounting of research that contributes to the current study's confidence and legitimacy with the survey measurements used. Whether it is research showing high reliability as evidenced by Cronbach's alpha, or it is the high utilization of similar instruments in demonstrating validity, the current study is well-served by the research of others and the dissertation committee in providing overall legitimacy for the current study.

### **Transition and Summary of Section 2**

To this point, the current study has delved into such important concepts as the problem statement, nature of the study, research questions and hypotheses, and a thorough review of the literature (see Section 1); and, details surrounding the study's research method and design, data collection and analysis, and reliability as well as validity. Information in Section 2 provides details for replication by others and gives insight on how the study was conducted.

Section 3 involves the presentation of findings including quantitative data analysis, applications to professional practice, recommendations for action and further study, reflections, and a summary of the study itself and the study's conclusions.

### **Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change**

This final section of the study consists of, primarily, the presentation of findings from the survey conducted in the Southeastern Pennsylvania SSOs. First, an overview of the study is provided of why and how the study was done, reviewing the research questions being addressed, and a brief summary of the findings. Second, the presentation of the findings is done that includes conclusions, addresses both research questions and all hypotheses; reviews all data bounded by the evidence collected via surveys; relates the findings to existing literature on LMX, leadership style, and retention; and discusses outliers and/or discrepancies found in the survey data. Third, quantitative data analysis is organized by each hypothesis; provided details of the tests performed; linked by each hypothetical result back to the research questions, theoretical framework, and literature; and provided a summary of the analysis. Fourth, applications to professional practice are listed as are recommendations for action and for further study. Lastly, this section concludes with reflections, a summary, and the study's conclusions.

#### **Overview of the Study**

The current study sought to test relationships between LMX and retention, or turnover intention, as well as the relationship between LMX and each leadership style in two Southeastern Pennsylvania SSOs. The study attempted to survey 185 employees whose responses address the study's two research question: (1) what is the relationship between LMX and employee retention, or turnover intention, in two Southeastern Pennsylvania social services organizations; and (2) what is the relationship between leadership style and leader-member exchange (LMX) in two Southeastern Pennsylvania social services organizations, and provide valuable insight regarding effective business practice in the fields of social or human services.

A brief summary of the findings shows that passive leadership is detrimental to effective relationships between leaders and members in Southeastern Pennsylvania SSOs. The other forms of leadership show strong relationships with LMX, thus demonstrating that these types of leadership style are conducive to strong, and even reciprocal and trusting, relationships with managers in these organizations. Further, it was found that LMX had a negative relationship with turnover intention; stated otherwise, as LMX increased in these SSOs, retention increased. These results provide a path for similar organizations not only to reduce turnover, but also focus on what types of leaders they need to have in order to reduce such turnover.

Research question one, what is the relationship between LMX and retention, or turnover intention, in the two Southeastern Pennsylvania SSOs, shows a moderate negative, and statistically significant, relationship between the two variables being tested. This translates to an increase in LMX resulting in a moderate decrease in intent to leave the SSO. In other words, an increase in LMX yields a moderate and proportionate increase in employee retention.

Research question two, what is the relationship between LMX and leadership style in the two Southeastern Pennsylvania SSOs, varies by leadership style from passive leadership showing a weak to moderate negative, but statistically significant relationship; to strong positive, and statistically significant, relationships between LMX and each of transactional, transformational, and servant leadership styles.

### **Presentation of the Findings**

The current study sought to test relationships between leader-member exchange (LMX) and retention, or turnover intention, as well as the relationship between LMX and each leadership style in two Southeastern Pennsylvania social services organizations (SSOs). The study attempted to survey 185 employees whose responses addressed the study's two research

questions: (1) what is the relationship between LMX and employee retention, or turnover intention, in two Southeastern Pennsylvania social services organizations; and (2) what is the relationship between leadership style and leader-member exchange (LMX) in two Southeastern Pennsylvania social services organizations, and provide valuable insight regarding effective business practices in the field of social or human services.

First, descriptive statistics will be provided along with analysis of the data. Next, hypothesis testing will occur including why the data are appropriate for the test conducted and the details surrounding the test itself; a full discussion on the test(s) conducted including post-hoc tests, graphs, tables, figures, and interpretation of the output; and, calculating and discussing Type I and Type II errors. The task proceeds to a discussion of the relationships of the findings to the study's research questions, theoretical framework, literature, and the problem. Finally, the task concludes with a summary of the findings.

The survey was conducted at two SSOs in Southeastern Pennsylvania and had a total population of 185 employees with 159 (85.9%) responding thanks to strong communications by the SSOs' points of contact. Of this number, however, only 132 (71.4% of all employees) fully answered the survey, two respondents did not consent to take the survey, and 25 partially answered and dropped out before completing it, therefore, reducing the number of participants. When employing the demographic question, four respondents indicated having been in their positions at the company less than two months, so they were removed from consideration since they were deemed not having been able to adequately assess LMX in their managers. The final participant list was 128 eligible respondents, satisfying the necessary sample size of 125 for generalizing to the larger population of 185. The survey was a compilation of questions from other surveys used in the literature and amounted to 27 Likert-scale questions excluding a control

question and one demographic question related to tenure in one's position. While some respondents did not answer the control question correctly, responses before and after the control question showed variability and demonstrated they simply misunderstood the control question. If responses before or after the control question were the same (e.g., answering the first choice or the last choice in the list of possible responses) as their responses with the control question, they were removed. Fortunately, no respondents showed similar patterns of choices before or after the control question, therefore, they were not removed from the final list of 128. Once the eligible respondents were identified, the data were analyzed for missing elements. Since each question was required for respondents to move throughout the survey, it was simply a formality to review the data and confirm no data needed removal.

The survey was collected between February 22, 2022, and March 19, 2022, lasting approximately one month. The median response duration to complete the survey was almost six minutes (354.5 seconds) with many (75th percentile) completing it in less than nine minutes (499.25 seconds). The mean was not used to compute duration because some respondents took excessive times to respond, most likely starting it one day, leaving it open, and completing it the following day.

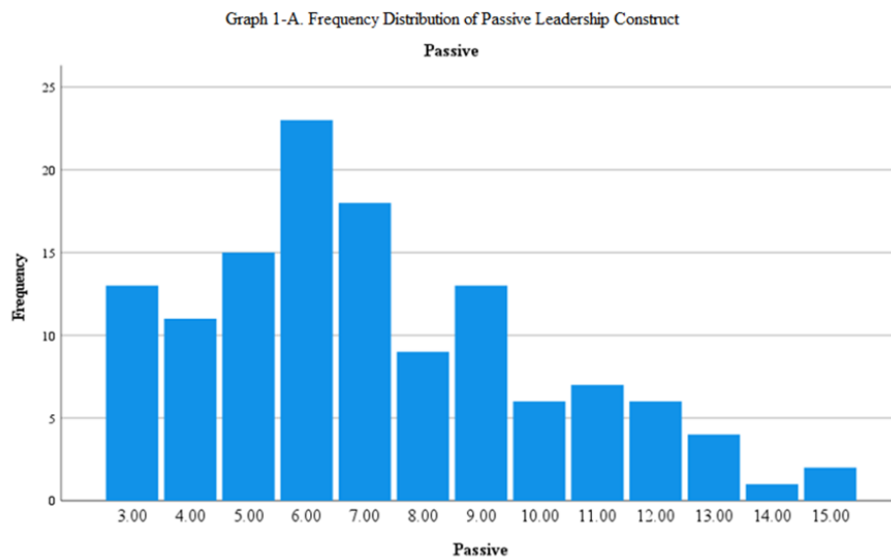
Construct variable scores were created using the Transform → Compute Variable function in SPSS. Each construct score was developed based on the questions from the survey that either measured LMX, each leadership style, or turnover intention. Questions 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, and 10 measured LMX; questions 12, 14, and 17 measured passive leadership; questions 16, 23, and 25 measured transactional leadership; questions 2, 7, 11, 13, and 15 measured transformational leadership, questions 20, 21, 22, 24, and 27 measured servant leadership; and questions 9, 18, and 26 measured turnover intention. Question 19 was a control question and 28



was a demographic question. Each of the construct variables above involved summing the respective questions' numerical responses to form the overall construct score. These ordinal constructs were then used to conduct correlations involving the Analyze → Correlate → Bivariate function in SPSS and employing Spearman's rho for the study's correlation coefficient (rationale for Spearman's rho is provided below). Only the lower triangle of the correlation matrix (see Table 3) contained values since the upper triangle is simply a mirror image of the lower triangle.

Frequency distributions, per Morgan et al. (2019), are tallies/counts displaying the number of times each score on the variable constructs happens. Frequency distributions were created in SPSS by going to Analyze → Descriptive Statistics → Frequencies, then adding each of the construct variables into the Variable(s) box. Next, Statistics was selected with Percentile Values showing Quartiles; Central Tendency showing Mean and Median; and Dispersion showing Standard Deviation. In the original dialog box, Charts was selected, and the Chart Type had Bar Charts selected with Frequencies being chosen under Chart Values. Continue was then selected and the graph was run by clicking OK.

In doing frequency distributions, one visually inspects the distributions and determines if they are normally distributed (i.e., follow a bell curve). Distributions do not always follow a normal pattern; they can skew negatively or positively. Graph 1-A shows frequency distributions for the passive leadership made up of select questions as noted above. Here, the most frequent score was 6.00 indicating an average response of two on each of three questions related to this construct – 23 respondents selected responses equaling this score. The lowest score was 3.00 with 13 respondents selecting an average response of one on the three questions, and the highest score was 15 with two respondents averaging a five on each of the three questions.

**Figure 3***Frequency Distribution of Passive Leadership Construct*

Here, the data appears to skew positively with the tail of the curve appearing to the right side of the graph. Since these constructs are comprised of ordinal data, the constructs are considered ordinal as well. Overall, as noted in the figure, most respondents indicated their managers displayed lower levels of passive leadership. The variable shows a slight bell curve despite the positive skewness.

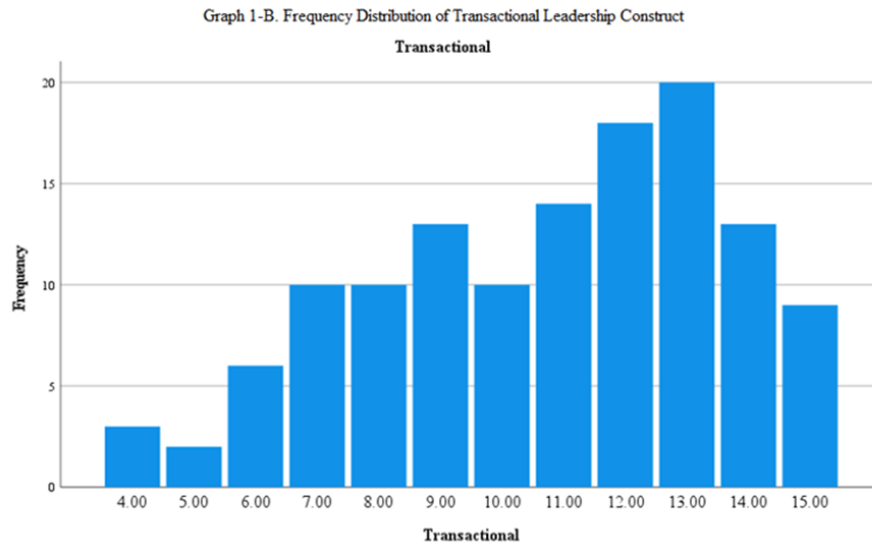
**Figure 4***Frequency Distribution of Transactional Leadership Construct*

Figure 4 shows the frequency distribution for the transactional leadership construct and displays a negative skewness (i.e., the extreme scores are located to the left of the distribution). Like the passive leadership construct, this construct is also considered ordinal because the underlying data are ordinal. There is less of a bell curve, or symmetry, with this construct along with the negative skewness. The most frequent score was 13.00 (average response of between four and five on each of three questions) with 20 respondents comprising this score. The lowest score was 4.00 (average response of between one and two for each question) with three respondents. The highest score was 15.00 with nine people averaging five for each of the questions.

Next, Figure 5 provides the frequency distribution for the transformational leadership construct and provides slight negative skewness with extreme scores appearing to the left of the distribution. The construct is ordinal in nature and shows an overall approximation of normality. The most frequent score was 18.00 with 14 respondents averaging between three and four on each of five questions. The lowest score is 6.00 with one person averaging between a one and

two on each of five questions associated with this construct. The highest score was 25.00 with six respondents averaging a five on each of the questions for this construct.

**Figure 5**

*Frequency Distribution of Transformational Leadership Construct*

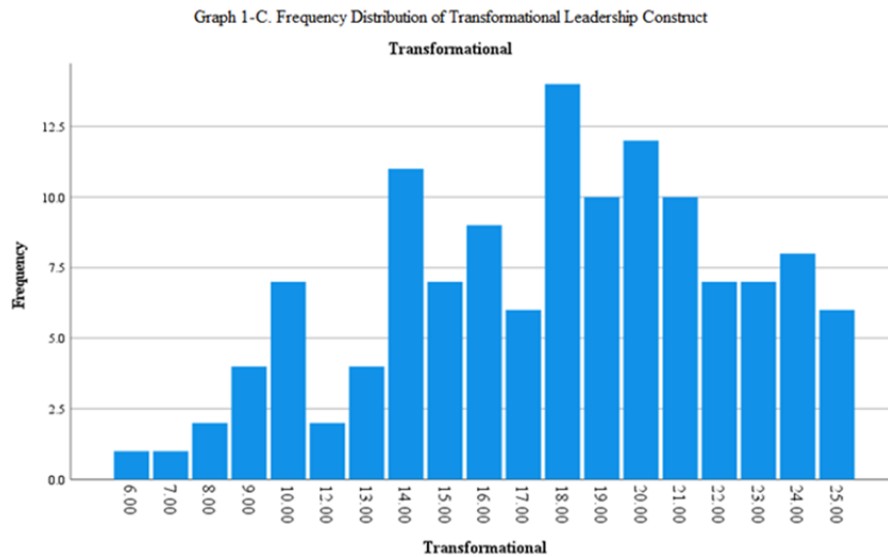


Figure 6 provides a frequency distribution of the servant leadership construct and, like transformational leadership before it, displays slight negative skewness with the extreme scores appearing to the left of the distribution. The construct is considered ordinal like the other variables before it. The most frequent score was 20.00 with 13 respondents averaging between a four on each of five questions for this construct. The lowest score was 5.00 with three respondents averaging a one on each of the five questions. The highest score was 25.00 with five respondents averaging a five on each question with the overall distribution appearing roughly normal.

**Figure 6**

*Frequency Distribution of Servant Leadership Construct*

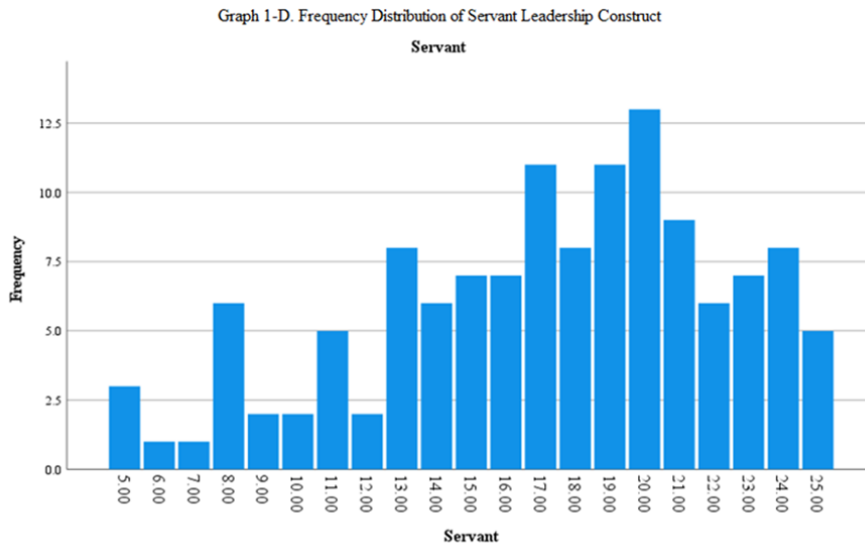
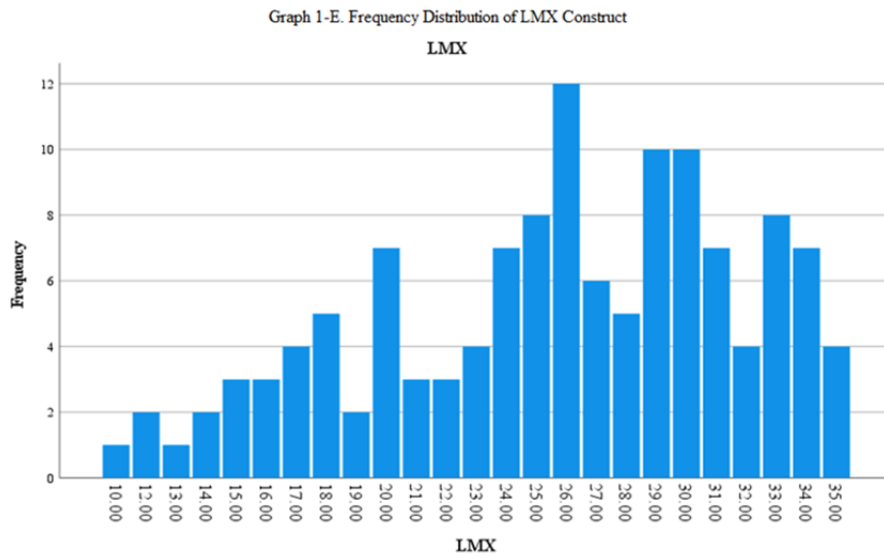


Figure 7 shows a frequency distribution for the LMX construct, again, an ordinal level variable like the ones before it. The data appears to be approximately normal, more so than previous constructs, though distribution is not entirely symmetrical. In fact, there is slight negative skewness to the graph with extreme scores appearing to the left. The most frequent score was 26.00 with 12 respondents averaging between three and four for each of seven questions. The lowest score in the distribution is 10.00 with only one respondent averaging between one and two for each question measuring LMX.

**Figure 7**

*Frequency Distribution of LMX Construct*



The highest score observed is 35.00 which had four respondents averaging five on each question.

Further tests of normality will assess this and other variables later.

**Figure 8**

*Frequency Distribution of Intent to Leave Construct*

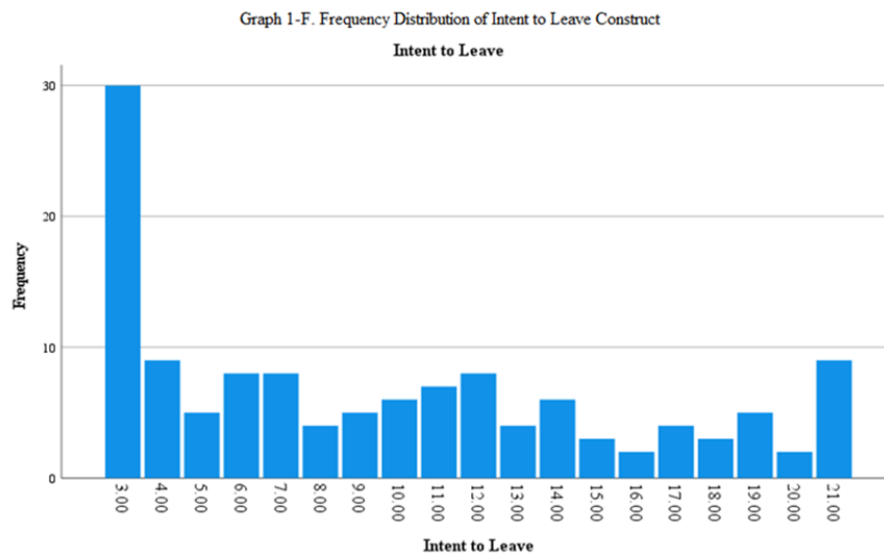


Figure 8 provides a frequency distribution for the intent to leave construct, an ordinal variable comprised of questions that are, themselves, ordinal. Unlike the other variables before it, this distribution does not appear to be even an approximate normal distribution. The distribution is positively skewed though this indicates that a high number of respondents (30) are not looking elsewhere or are looking to leave the SSOs. They averaged one for each of the three questions measuring intent to leave, the lowest score possible for this construct. The highest score was 21.00 with nine respondents averaging a seven on each of the three questions. This variable was not expected to be normally distributed and, if the lowest scores were removed from consideration, there would be a closer approximation to a normal distribution. This is because many people are satisfied in their jobs and do not intend to leave.

Table 1 (see Appendix A) shows descriptive details of the question data compiled via analysis in SPSS. Using Analyze → Descriptive Statistics → Descriptives, each question was selected. Options such as mean, standard deviation, variance, minimum, and maximum were selected; kurtosis and skewness were selected under Distribution; and the variable list was selected under Display Order. Each question shows the number of respondents (N), mean response score, standard deviation, and variance. Turnover intention questions had seven response choices on the Likert scale while all other questions (save demographics) had five response choices. Among 5-Likert questions, the lowest mean was Q14 at 2.05 while the highest mean was Q4 at 3.91. Among the turnover intention questions, Q26 had the lowest mean (2.83) and Q9 had the highest mean (3.70). This reflects the very nature of Likert scales of five or seven choices – the greater the number of choices, the inherent nature of higher mean scores.

Regarding standard deviations, calculated as the square root of variance and indicating the distance of each value from the mean score, among questions, not surprisingly, all three

turnover intention questions had the largest standard deviations – Q9 = 2.193, Q18 = 2.133, and Q26 = 2.152. This, again, is attributed to the Likert scale having seven choices instead of five.

Among questions not related to turnover intention, control, or demographics, the smallest standard deviation was Q8 (0.937) and the largest standard deviation was Q24 (1.409). Turnover intention questions had standard deviations ranging from a low of 2.133 (Q18) to a high of 2.193 (Q9). Although standard deviation works best for continuous data, per Morgan et al. (2019), the standard deviation for ordinal data can be helpful.

Regarding variance, measured as the squared standard deviation, Table 1 shows similar results to those regarding standard deviation. The lowest variance among five-choice questions was .878 (Q8) and the highest was 1.986 (Q24). Among turnover intention questions and their seven choices, the lowest variance was Q18 (4.550) and the highest was Q9 (4.809).

Table 2 provides descriptive statistics for constructs created by select questions in the survey as detailed above. As noted previously, for example, if a respondent answered four on the three passive leadership style question, the passive leadership score would be 12.

**Table 2**

*Descriptive Statistics*

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Dev	Variance
Passive	128	3.00	15.00	7.16	2.923	8.542
Transactional	128	4.00	15.00	10.72	2.848	8.109
Transformational	128	6.00	25.00	17.70	4.607	21.221
Servant	128	5.00	25.00	17.16	5.047	25.477
LMX	128	10.00	35.00	25.66	6.084	37.015
Intent to Leave	128	3.00	21.00	9.56	5.963	35.555



The range for each construct varies based on the number of questions making up each construct and the possible values associated with each question. For example, while intent to leave has three questions, the highest possible score per question is seven, so the highest possible construct score is 21. Conversely, LMX has more than twice as many questions as turnover intention, but with only five possible answer choices, the highest possible construct score is only 35.

The lowest mean subset score was passive leadership (7.16) while the highest was, not surprisingly, LMX at 25.66. However, considering the number of questions per construct score, turnover intention (45.5%) was the lowest mean score as a percentage of the total points possible for that construct followed closely by passive leadership (47.7%). The highest mean score as a percentage of the total points possible for that construct was LMX (73.3%) followed closely by transactional leadership (71.5%) and transformational leadership (70.8%).

Regarding standard deviation, the lowest score was transactional leadership (2.848) while the highest standard deviation was LMX (6.084). When comparing the three construct scores with three questions only, transactional leadership (2.848) remained the lowest standard deviation and turnover intention had the highest score (5.963) indicating some volatility with the construct's questions. Concerning the two construct scores that had five answer choices on the Likert scale, transformational leadership (4.607) was outpaced by servant leadership (5.047).

Variance shows similar results to standard deviation with transactional leadership (8.109) having scored the lowest while LMX (37.015) scored the highest among all variables. As noted above, variance is calculated by squaring the standard deviation.

Based on the data and tests performed thus far, it is clear that correlational analysis is appropriate for the current study. Pearson's correlation is more appropriate for normally

distributed and continuous data while the current study's use of Spearman's rho is more appropriate because the underlying data are ordinal and non-parametric (i.e., not normally distributed or symmetrical). Thorough analysis above supports these facts and the use of Spearman's rho. The remainder of this section focuses on the testing of the study's hypotheses.

First, per Morgan et al. (2019), scatterplots (see Appendix B) were generated to visually inspect the relationships between construct variables in the study. In SPSS, scatterplots are done by going to Graphs → Legacy Dialogs → Scatter Dot, then clicking on Simple Scatter. In the dialog box, after clicking Define, each dependent variable, or DV (e.g., LMX or turnover intention), is moved separately to the Y Axis and each independent variable, or IV (e.g., LMX, passive leadership, transactional leadership, transformational leadership, and servant leadership), is moved separately to the X Axis in SPSS. This process is repeated for each DV and IV in the study. The simple scatterplot is then executed without a regression line, but a fit line is simply added to show how close to the data points are to the fit line itself. Figures 2A-2E show the outputs for scatterplots of all relationships in the study that equate to the hypotheses listed in this section.

The scatterplots show the relationships for each hypothesis being studied. In Figure 2-A, between LMX and turnover intention, the scatterplot indicates a negative relationship with the fit line starting in the top left corner and ending in the bottom right corner. In Figures 2-B through 2-E, between passive leadership and LMX, the scatterplot indicates a positive relationship with the fit line originating in the bottom left corner and ending in the top right corner. None of the scatterplots suggest the IVs and DVs are not related in a valenced manner, indicating that the null hypotheses should be rejected so far. However, analysis below is conducted to further support or refute this claim.

Correlational analysis is used when testing the relationships of variables such as the subset scores in the current study. Here, Table 3 provides a bivariate correlation matrix (see procedure above) illustrating valence and strength (between 1 and -1) for each pair of the study's variables. As noted in the literature review, correlation matrices are used extensively in studies of leadership style, LMX, and/or retention or turnover. While most research uses multiple regression and structural equation modeling (SEM), particularly when there are moderating and/or mediating variables involved, correlation analysis is at the heart of nearly all quantitative research when testing hypotheses. Researchers use descriptive statistics and correlation matrices as introductory tables when presenting findings. Whether the subject matter focuses on LMX (Kim & Hopkins, 2015; Sias & Duncan, 2019), turnover intention and retention (Afsar et al., 2018), or leadership style (Barling & Frone, 2017; Che et al., 2017), the correlation matrix serves not only as a "jumping-off" point when analyzing data, it can operate as a primary statistical tool when testing hypotheses like the current study.

**Table 3***Correlations*

			Passive	Transacti onal	Transform ational	Servant	LMX	Intent to Leave
Spearman's rho	Passive	Correlation	--					
		Coefficient						
		Sig. (2-tailed)						
		N	128					
	Transactional	Correlation	<b>-.347**</b>	--				
		Coefficient						
		Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000					
		N	128	128				
	Transformational	Correlation	<b>-.527**</b>	<b>.789**</b>	--			
		Coefficient						
		Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000				
		N	128	128	128			
	Servant	Correlation	<b>-.493**</b>	<b>.730**</b>	<b>.783**</b>	--		
		Coefficient						
		Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000			
		N	128	128	128	128		
	LMX	Correlation	<b>-.442**</b>	<b>.777**</b>	<b>.776**</b>	<b>.795**</b>	--	
		Coefficient						
		Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000		
		N	128	128	128	128	128	
	Intent to Leave	Correlation	<b>.398**</b>	<b>-.448**</b>	<b>-.568**</b>	<b>-.552**</b>	<b>-.536**</b>	--
Coefficient								
Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000		
	N	128	128	128	128	128	128	

The correlation matrix in Table 3 shows the strongest positive correlation (e.g., for every unit of increase in one variable, there is a proportionate increase in another variable) being between LMX and servant leadership at .795 and statistically significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). Interpreted another way, for every unit of increase in servant leadership, there is nearly an 80% corresponding increase in LMX between a manager and member of his/her team. Causation is not being implied here, simply that there is a relationship between the two variables.

The strongest negative correlation (e.g., for every unit of increase in one variable, there is a proportionate decrease in another variable) is between transformational leadership and turnover intention though that relationship is not within the scope of this study. It is worth noting that, because turnover intention is the inverse of retention, a negative correlation like this and others illustrate an increase in employee retention. In other words, for example, for every unit of increase in LMX between a leader and member, there is nearly a 60% decrease in intent to leave an organization by the member. Each of the correlations above are detailed in the following review of hypotheses.

Field (2013) provided a background on Type I and Type II errors stating that there are two possibilities when testing hypotheses, “there is, in reality, an effect in the population, or there is, in reality, no effect in the population” (p. 68). When rejecting the null hypothesis when it is actually true is known as making a Type I error; making a Type II error is accepting the null hypothesis when it should have been rejected (Morgan et al., 2019). When conducting power analysis, the Type I error and statistical power are linked. Power is represented as a percentage indicating the chance of detecting an effect if one truly existed; in other words, an 80% chance of detecting an effect if one genuinely exists is .80. However, the power of a statistical test is relative to how big the effect is as bigger effects will be easier to spot via effect size; how strict one is in deciding that an effect is significant; and how large a sample size is because larger samples have less sampling error and are, therefore, closer approximations of the population (Field, 2013).

### ***Hypotheses $H_{01}$ and $H_{11}$***

Hypotheses  $H_{01}$  and  $H_{11}$  address the relationships between LMX and retention, or turnover intention, in the two Southeastern Pennsylvania SSOs with  $H_{01}$  being the null

hypothesis and  $H_1$  being the alternative hypothesis. Relating them to the study's research questions, these hypotheses directly relate to the first research question of the quality of relationship, if any, between LMX and employee retention, or turnover intention, in two Southeastern Pennsylvania SSOs. Spearman's rho was computed to assess the relationship between LMX and turnover intention in SPSS. Results show there is a negative and statistically significant correlation between the two variables,  $r(126) = -.536, p = 0.01$  from Table 3, indicating a medium effect size according to Cohen (1992) between the two variables. This suggests LMX is positively associated with retention and increases in LMX result in proportionate increases in retention. The findings for this relationship are in line with results found in Ahmed et al. (2013) and were stronger than correlations seen in Clarke and Mahadi (2017) and Covella et al. (2017), though the latter of the two studies also used other variables as mediators between LMX and turnover intention. Nevertheless, results here align favorably with these studies. Relating to the theoretical framework, the sole relationship between these two variables demonstrates a clear and valenced one that favorably impacts retention in select Southeastern Pennsylvania SSOs.

Power analysis was used when testing the relationship between LMX and turnover intention. To reiterate, per Faul et al. (2007, p. 175), "the power of a statistical test is the probability that its null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) will be rejected given that it is in fact false." This was done choosing Analyze → Power Analysis → Correlations → Spearman Rank-Order. In the dialog that followed, Estimate Power was chosen with a sample size (in pairs) of 128. The Spearman correlation parameter was entered as  $-.563$  per the correlation matrix between LMX and turnover intention. The null value was set to the default of zero. The Test Direction was non-directional or two-tailed and Significance Level was set to 0.01. The result showed a statistical

power of 1.000 with a significance level of .01. This statistical power indicates the probability of accepting the alternative hypothesis if true. As a result, the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis (i.e., there is a valenced relationship between LMX and retention, or turnover intention) is supported in full.

### ***Hypotheses $H_{02}$ and $H_{12}$***

Hypotheses  $H_{02}$  and  $H_{12}$  address the study's second research question and the relationship between leadership style, in this case, passive leadership, and LMX in the two Southeastern Pennsylvania SSOs. Specifically, the null hypothesis ( $H_{02}$ ) suggests no relationship between these two variables and the alternative ( $H_{12}$ ) suggests a valenced relationship between them. Spearman's rho was computed to assess the correlation between passive leadership and LMX in SPSS. There was a negative and statistically significant correlation between the two variables,  $r(126) = -.442, p = 0.01$ . The data finds that there is, indeed, a moderate effect size according to Cohen (1988) between these two variables and these findings align with research examining passive leadership and negative work outcomes such as lack of trust and turnover intention (Holtz & Hu, 2017) and lack of trust and justice (Aasland et al., 2010). Relating to the theoretical framework, passive leadership plays a contributing role in the overall relationship between the larger leadership style variable and LMX, and does so in a valenced manner (i.e., negatively).

Power analysis was used when testing the relationship between passive leadership and LMX. Following the procedure from the first set of hypotheses, Estimate Power was, again, chosen with a sample size (in pairs) of 128. The Spearman correlation parameter was entered as  $-.442$  per the correlation matrix between passive leadership and LMX. The null value was, again, set to the default of zero. The Test Direction was non-directional or two-tailed and Significance

Level was set to 0.01. The result showed a statistical power of .994 with a significance level of .01. This statistical power indicates the probability of accepting the alternative hypothesis if true. As a result, the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis (i.e., there is a relationship between passive leadership and LMX) is supported in full.

### ***Hypotheses H<sub>03</sub> and H<sub>13</sub>***

Hypotheses  $H_{03}$  and  $H_{13}$  examine the relationship between transactional leadership and LMX, namely the null hypothesis ( $H_{03}$ ) suggests no relationship between the two variables while the alternative hypothesis ( $H_{13}$ ) suggests there is a valenced relationship between them. This leadership style relates to the second research question regarding the quality of relationship between leadership style (i.e., transactional leadership) and LMX in the two Southeastern Pennsylvania SSOs. Spearman's rho was computed to assess the relationship between transactional leadership and LMX using SPSS for analysis. There is a positive and statistically significant correlation between the two variables,  $r(126) = .777, p = 0.01$ . These findings indicate that there is a very large effect size according to Cohen (1992) between the two variables. This result is in line with research that looked at transactional leadership and positive work outcomes like safety (Martínez-Córcoles & Stephanou, 2017) and job performance (Deng et al., 2019) though results found in these research studies did not demonstrate similar strengths of this variable and the DVs. However, with SSOs where staff benefit from transactional leadership as well as other forms of leadership, the strength of this relationship is not unexpected given the nature of social and human services. Relating to the theoretical framework, transactional leadership plays a contributing role in the relationship between the larger leadership style variable and LMX, and does so in a valenced manner, specifically in a positive way.



Power analysis was used when testing the relationship between transactional leadership and LMX. Following the procedure from the first two sets of hypotheses, Estimate Power was, again, chosen with a sample size (in pairs) of 128. The Spearman correlation parameter was entered as .777 per the correlation matrix between transactional leadership and LMX. The null value was, again, set to the default of zero. The test direction was non-directional or two-tailed and Significance Level was set to 0.01. The result showed a statistical power of 1.000 with a significance level of .01. This statistical power indicates the probability of accepting the alternative hypothesis if true. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis (i.e., there is a valenced relationship between transactional leadership and LMX) is supported in full.

#### ***Hypotheses H<sub>04</sub> and H<sub>14</sub>***

Hypotheses *H<sub>04</sub>* and *H<sub>14</sub>* measured the association between transformational leadership and LMX. These hypotheses relate to the second research question of the study and the quality of relationship, if any, between leadership style (i.e., transformational leadership) and LMX in two Southeastern Pennsylvania SSOs. The null hypothesis (*H<sub>04</sub>*) posits there is no relationship between these two variables while the alternative hypothesis (*H<sub>14</sub>*) states there is a valenced relationship between them. Spearman's rho was computed to assess the relationship between transformational leadership and LMX using SPSS for analysis. There is a positive correlation between the two variables,  $r(126) = .776, p = 0.01$ . The result shows there is a strong positive relationship between transformational leadership and LMX. The findings are in line with research such as Ohunakin et al. (2019) though their results showed weaker correlations between transformational leadership and antecedents of turnover intention such as job satisfaction, a proxy for LMX. Research such as Rinfret et al. (2018) showed moderate to strong positive

relationships between transformational leadership and retention antecedents such as justice, commitment, self-determination, and job satisfaction – all proxies for LMX.

Power analysis was used when testing the relationship between transformational leadership and LMX. Following the procedure from the previous three power analyses of hypotheses, Estimate Power was, again, chosen with a sample size (in pairs) of 128. The Spearman correlation parameter was entered as .776 per the correlation matrix between servant leadership and LMX. The null value was, again, set to the default of zero. The test direction was non-directional or two-tailed and Significance Level was set to 0.01. The result showed a statistical power of .994 with a significance level of .01. This statistical power indicates the probability of accepting the alternative hypothesis if true. As a result of the above findings and analysis, the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis (i.e., there is a relationship between servant leadership and LMX) is supported in full.

Relating to the theoretical framework, transformational leadership plays a contributing role in the relationship between the larger leadership style variable and LMX, doing so in a valenced manner like transactional leadership (i.e., positively). Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis (i.e., there is a relationship between transformational leadership and LMX) is supported in full.

### ***Hypotheses H<sub>05</sub> and H<sub>15</sub>***

The last hypotheses, *H<sub>05</sub>* and *H<sub>15</sub>*, measured the relationship between servant leadership and LMX. These hypotheses relate to the second research question of the quality of relationship, if any, between leadership style (i.e., servant leadership) and LMX in two Southeastern Pennsylvania SSOs. The null hypothesis, *H<sub>05</sub>*, suggests there is no relationship between these two variables while the alternative hypothesis, *H<sub>15</sub>*, suggests there is a valenced relationship

between the two. Spearman's rho was computed to assess the relationship between transformational leadership and LMX using SPSS for analysis. There is a positive and statistically significant correlation between the two variables,  $r(126) = .795, p = 0.01$ . These findings suggest that the relationship has a very large effect size according to Cohen (1992) between servant leadership and LMX. This relationship is the strongest of all relationships examined in the study. While research by Allen et al. (2018) showed positive moderate associations between servant leadership and positive work outcomes like OC, their work also showed positive strong relationships to structural empowerment, possible antecedents to LMX. Work by Jang and Kandampully (2017) showed positive relationships between servant leadership and affective OC, another LMX antecedent, as well as positive weak associations with turnover intention which is related to LMX as exemplified in the current study. Relating to the theoretical framework, servant leadership plays a contributing role in the relationship between the larger leadership style variable and LMX and does so in a valenced manner (i.e., in a positive way).

Power analysis was used when testing the relationship between servant leadership and LMX. Following the procedure from the previous four power analyses of hypotheses, Estimate Power was, again, chosen with a sample size (in pairs) of 128. The Spearman correlation parameter was entered as .795 per the correlation matrix between servant leadership and LMX. The null value was, again, set to the default of zero. The test direction was non-directional or two-tailed and the significance level was set to 0.01. The result showed a statistical power of .994 with a significance level of .01. This statistical power indicates the probability of accepting the alternative hypothesis if true. As a result of the above findings and analysis, the null

hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis (i.e., there is a relationship between servant leadership and LMX) is supported in full.

In this section, analysis was provided for all five sets of hypotheses that tested the statistical power of the study; and, using correlational analysis, the valence and strength of the alternative hypotheses when null hypotheses were rejected. Clear evidence was seen regarding the relationships of LMX and turnover intention, and all four leadership styles and LMX. In the next section, a discussion on the relationship of the findings is presented.

### ***Relationship of Hypotheses to Research Questions***

This section relates the findings of the study's hypothesis testing to the study's research questions. Each hypothesis is analyzed and, using the theoretical framework noted in the previous section, addresses each research question in the study. Again, the first research question asks what the relationship is between LMX and employee retention, or turnover intention, in two Southeastern Pennsylvania SSOs. The second research question asks what the relationship is between leadership style, passive, transactional, transformational, and servant, and LMX in the same two Southeastern Pennsylvania SSOs.

The first set of hypotheses were found to reject the null hypothesis and support the alternative hypothesis in full. LMX and employee retention, or turnover intention, are related in a negative way when using turnover intention. As LMX increases in select areas of Southeastern Pennsylvania SSOs, turnover intention proportionately decreases in a moderate manner.

The second set of hypotheses were also found to reject the null hypothesis and support the alternative hypothesis in full. Passive leadership, as part of the overall leadership style variable in the study, and LMX are related in a negative way. As passive leadership becomes

more pronounced in leaders at the two Southeastern Pennsylvania SSOs, LMX decreases in a weak to moderate manner.

The third set of hypotheses were found to reject the null hypothesis and support the alternative hypothesis in full. Transactional leadership, as part of the overall leadership style variable in the study, and LMX are related in a positive way. As transactional leadership increases at the two Southeastern Pennsylvania SSOs, LMX increases in a strong manner.

The fourth set of hypotheses were also found to reject the null hypothesis and support the alternative hypothesis in full. Transformational leadership, as part of the overall leadership style variable in the study, and LMX are related in a positive way. As transformational leadership becomes more pronounced in leaders at the two Southeastern Pennsylvania SSOs, LMX increases in a strong manner.

The final set of hypotheses were also found to reject the null hypothesis and support the alternative hypothesis in full. Servant leadership, as part of the overall leadership style variable in the study, and LMX are related in a positive manner. As servant leadership increases in leaders at the two Southeastern Pennsylvania SSOs, LMX increases in a strong manner.

**The Theoretical Framework.** Each element of the theoretical framework was briefly discussed above regarding each set of hypotheses. This section will provide further details and discussion related to the theoretical framework. First, considering the relationship between LMX (IV) and turnover intention (DV), there is a clear negative relationship between the two variables suggesting that the higher the quality of relationship with one's manager, the less likely that employee is to leave the organization; said otherwise, the higher the quality of LMX with a manager, the more likely that employee is to remain with the SSO. The logic from the findings, as it relates to the theoretical framework, suggests that higher levels of LMX result in greater

reciprocity and trust between high-LMX manager/employee dyads and this relationship asserts that the employee is less likely to leave the organization because of this dynamic with the manager. The theoretical framework is based upon social exchange theory and LMX theory as well as leadership theories for each style in the study. In the relationship of LMX and turnover intention, both theories are prevalent because the findings provide evidence of higher LMX impacting employee turnover intention in a negative way. While the alternative hypothesis did not suggest a direction (positive or negative), there is greater support for why the relationship would be a negative one based on social exchange and LMX theories. As suggested by Bhatti et al. (2015), LMX enhances the perception of employees' organizational support and job satisfaction; they further state that greater job satisfaction leads to lower turnover intention, acting as a mediating variable between LMX and turnover intention. To suggest that there is no relationship (null hypothesis) between these two variables indicates that the quality of relationship with one's manager has no impact on whether to remain or leave an organization, it does not follow the logic of both social exchange and LMX theories.

The theoretical framework next looks at the relationship between LMX (DV) and each of the leadership styles (IVs) are covered for the remainder of this section. The second relationship of the study is between passive leadership and LMX. Considering the findings, it is logical that passive leadership does not work well with LMX, though this was not a certainty given the unique nature of SSOs, hence the commitment of positive or negative relationship in the hypotheses. High LMX is not thought to be tied to passive leadership because this leadership style is the foundation for the manager who exhibits it – reactive and often not taking responsibility in the workplace. Wei et al. (2016) supported this claim and found a negative relationship between passive corrective leadership and LMX. When projects arise or tight

deadlines are needed, the passive leader will first seek to avoid dealing with them alone or through part of his/her team. Seeking a person to complete a special task, or stay late, or work extra hours on the weekend is not an easy job for the passive leader because very few members reciprocate with a passive leader. The rationale being that the employee will not be proactive in helping since the manager is not proactive in solving problems/crises. It is more understandable that a manager quick to delegate is not, per se, passive in leadership; on the contrary, delegating is not a skill passive managers have.

The study's third relationship between transactional leadership and LMX suggests that transactional leadership works well in SSOs as noted earlier. This appears to be the case with such a strong relationship between transactional leadership and LMX. Here, LMX is highly correlated because SSO employees are often rewarded for the work they put into their jobs; in other words, overtime is paid to employees for extra work that they provide. Social exchange theory is prominent here for the very reason that transactional leadership relies on similar tangible exchanges between leaders and members. Members of transactional leaders focus on the completion of work in exchange for compensation or even public recognition. In the SSOs, staff who agree to cover an additional shift or to come in early are automatically rewarded with overtime pay by the SSO, but employees will recognize the transactional leader and give credit for paying overtime. Of note, the transactional leadership impact on LMX between managers and employees is such that compensation is the primary driver for employees and is the one reward that is most cherished by employees.

The study's fourth relationship tested was between transformational leadership and LMX in Southeastern Pennsylvania SSOs. This leadership style, along with servant leadership, is highly effective in SSOs, but this could be related to the desired leadership style of the SSOs

rather than of the employees. In this relationship, transformational leadership and the care that this leader gives to his/her members is evidenced by higher LMX, but the exchanges between these two parties begin to transition to the intangible that is less likely to be seen in transactional leadership. Where transactional leaders and members tend to orbit those more-tangible benefits (e.g., compensation, paid time off, even public recognition with a plaque or certificate), transformational leaders and members tend to gravitate towards the more-intangible benefits evident in LMX. A transactional leader may need a project done requiring weekend work by the employee, but s/he will reward the employee with overtime pay in the next paycheck. A transformational leader may need the same project done requiring weekend work by the employee, but the employee may do so for no additional compensation because s/he has earned respect from the manager via special projects, helpful tips to improve to management for the employee, and even committee participation in exciting projects coming up for the SSOs. In other words, exchanges in transformational leadership are not always quid pro quo like what would be found with transactional leadership.

The fifth, and last, relationship of the study centers on servant leadership and LMX. Distinguishing itself from transformational leadership (Liden et al., 2008), the servant leader seeks to put others before himself/herself and, in doing so, has more of a personal connection with his/her staff because of this self-sacrifice. Thus, this sacrifice by the leader is reciprocated by similar sacrifices by members of the team. This logic is confirmed with the servant-LMX relationship being the strongest among all types of leadership style in the study. Servant leaders look to help others through professional development for employees; important work responsibilities for employees and, thus, empowering them; and giving back to the community. Because many servant leadership skills are not inherent in employees, they learn to become



servant leaders through their managers' servant leader behavior; this results in servant leadership acting as a "do as I do" compared to other types of leadership based on "do as I say, not as I do." Demonstrating servant behaviors means helping others and, by doing so, channeling leadership power into achieving common goals of the group. This is different compared to the passive leader, who avoids helping others and self, transactional leader, who does assert power in management, and transformational leader, who seeks to motivate and inspire a team to accomplish common goals (Liden et al., 2008). When LMX is considered, employees seek to "give back" what has been received already from their servant leaders.

**The Literature.** Research conducted for the purposes of this study were identified and utilized to provide support for the current study's method, design, and hypothesis testing techniques. When conducting a literature review, it is important to note when articles support or counter the current study's hypotheses. In this section, each relationship studied will provide the similarities and differences found in other literature related to the findings.

The first set of hypotheses, the relationship between LMX and turnover intention, addresses the first research question of the study. Here, six studies focused on this relationship and the research question itself. Ahmed et al. (2013) specifically researched, among other hypotheses in their study, the relationship between LMX and turnover intention. The findings between these LMX and turnover intention in that study showed similar data and effect size. Ahmed et al. (2013) found a similar correlation of  $-.490$  ( $p < 0.01$ ) compared to the current study's correlation of  $-.536$  ( $p < 0.01$ ), both having medium effect size (Cohen, 1992). The major difference between the two studies is that this study researched the relationship between these two variables while Ahmed et al. (2013) used structural equation modeling (SEM) to consider mediating effects like that of perception of organizational support (POS) and found that POS had

a significant influence on the LMX-turnover relationship. Another difference is the authors compared results to other industries like education, hotel, and information technology. The current study contributes to their research by adding the social and human services industry for comparison. Finally, the research by Ahmed et al. (2013) found enough support for the hypothesis that was also the supported alternative hypothesis in the current study.

Clarke and Mahadi (2017) studied similar associations and found little impact of LMX on turnover intention in the insurance industry. Few similarities exist between the authors and the current study with one being the use of follower LMX – assessing LMX based on follower responses only. A major difference was when they looked at leader LMX and dyad LMX; correlations among all forms of LMX and turnover intention were very low ranging from a low -.01 (n.s.) found in dyad LMX to a high of 0.03 (n.s.) found in leader LMX. Compared to the current study, follower LMX's correlation with turnover intention was -0.03 (n.s.). While these results do not match what was found in the current study, the authors suggest that dyad LMX is a better predictor of job outcomes including turnover intention when using regression analysis. Not enough support was found in the study to suggest the results are comparable to those found in the current study.

Yildiz (2018) hypothesized a negative relationship between LMX and turnover intention in studying the effect of mobbing on organizational efficiency and productivity. Similar ( $N = 111$ ) to the sample size of the current study ( $N = 128$ ), the fallout of responses from gross to net (18.9%) due to incomplete responses was comparable to the current study (18.4%), too. Yildiz (2018) cited a correlation between LMX and turnover intention of  $-.289$  ( $p < .01$ ), a medium effect size (Cohen, 1992) like the current study. Other similarities with the current study are the uses of LMX-7 and the turnover intention scale used by Graen and Uhl-Bien (1995) and Landau

and Hammer (1986), respectively. While not exactly the same strength as the current study, the two studies suggest similar valenced relationships overall. A difference between the studies centers on Yildiz (2018) providing mobbing as a mediating variable that can influence the LMX-turnover relationship. When testing normality, the current study differs because no significant P values were found while the current study concludes that the variable construct data are not normally distributed. Similar to the current study, results found with Yildiz (2018) support the hypothesis between LMX and turnover intention just like that found in the current study.

Covella et al. (2017) examined LMX and turnover intention in their study of 402 full-time employees via Amazon's MTurk across several industries, differing from the current study's look at the social and human services industry only. Further, the use of MTurk suggests that the crowdsourcing approach to surveying differs from the controlled survey approach in the current study. Both studies used the LMX-7 survey tool but they differ on the turnover intention tool with Covella et al. (2017) relying on the work of Sjöberg and Sverke (2000) instead of the current study's use of Landau and Hammer (1986). When reviewing correlations between LMX and turnover intention, the effect size found by Covella et al. (2017) is weak to medium (Cohen, 1992) while the current study's medium effect size is stronger. This finding is both a similarity – negative direction and significant, and a difference, weaker strength ( $-.18, p < .001$ ), compared to the current study. This similarity shows support for the findings in the current study.

Book et al. (2019) examined the hospitality industry while looking at the relationship of leader satisfaction, using six of the seven questions in the LMX-7 survey, and turnover intention was not measured, but retention was. These slight differences with the current study still allow for enough comparison with the current study's findings. Another difference is the use of more elaborate modeling to not only test the LMX-turnover relationship, but to test other variables like

physical engagement, emotional engagement, cognitive engagement, employee loyalty, and employee engagement. The correlation between leadership satisfaction and intent to stay was .37 though no explicit level of significance was provided by the authors; however, the squared correlation shows  $p < .05$ . This correlation's medium effect size (Cohen, 1992) is like the effect size in the current study. The results are similar to those found in the current study's support for the alternative hypothesis.

The last study used to compare and contrast findings found in the current study and related to the first research question is that done by Mardanov et al. (2008) who surveyed a similar number of participants ( $N = 122$ ) but in the banking industry. As noted in the literature review, the authors did not use the LMX-7 survey; instead, they used the LMX-12 survey, though the LMX-7 was included in this larger survey that also included a custom 13<sup>th</sup> question. Further, the study looked at each LMX question to assess LMX rather than using a construct variable like the current study. No correlations were used in the study, a difference compared to the current study; rather, the authors used regression analysis to predict turnover. A similarity with the current study is the overall role that LMX plays with turnover, that a higher level of quality in LMX leads to lower turnover by employees (Mardanov et al., 2008).

The second research question, dealing with different leadership styles and LMX, is found in the remaining sets of hypotheses. Studies in this section compare different leadership styles with antecedents of LMX, whereas the current study looks at each leadership style and its relationship directly with LMX. Adeel et al. (2018) studied the effect of passive leadership on affect-based trust, which can be argued is an antecedent of LMX, and organizational justice. Similarities between the two studies is noted in the correlations, where Adeel et al. (2018) found a weak to moderate effect size (Cohen, 1992) between passive leadership and affect-based trust

( $r = -.256, p < .01$ ); in the sample size ( $N = 120$ ); the response rate (80% net response rate vs. 69% in the current study); the use of MLQ surveying to measure passive leadership; and the results showing passive leadership as being detrimental to affect-based trust. Differences centered around methodology where LMX was not directly measured, but affect-based trust was using a survey from McAllister (1995). Directionally, the results found support similar results found in the current study's alternative hypothesis regarding passive leadership and LMX.

Studying the effect of passive leadership on trust and organizational justice, Holtz and Hu (2017) suggested that passive leadership had a significant negative relationship with cognition-based trust, another antecedent to LMX. Passive leadership, measured using the MLQ survey, was shown to be correlated ( $r = -.55, p < .01$ ) with cognition-based trust, therefore aligning with the findings in the current study. In fact, the correlations themselves were nearly exact in strength and both show medium effect size per Cohen (1992). A difference between the study and the current study is the sample population. The authors used 192 university students who experienced passive leadership from managers. Like the previous study, LMX was not measured, but cognition-based trust was using the same survey from McAllister (1995). Overall, the results are like those found in the current study with respect to valence and strength.

Harold and Holtz (2015) looked at employee dyads to measure passive leadership's impact on workplace incivility. Similar to the current study, the MLQ was used to assess passive leadership. Results, using the premise that behavioral incivility being positively correlated with passive leadership is similar to passive leadership and LMX being negative, were on par with those found in the current study. Here, passive leadership had a positive correlation ( $r = .36, p < 0.01$  in Study 1,  $r = .66, p < 0.01$  in Study 2) with a medium effect size (Cohen, 1992); the current study shows stronger correlations but similar effect size. A difference was, like the study

before this, the use of students as participants rather than employees in an organization. Another difference is how the authors conducted their study, they did two studies, one ( $N = 122$  dyads) measured workplace incivility in general among supervisors and employees, and one ( $N = 105$  dyads) measured peers' reporting on employees' behavioral incivility and managers' leadership behavior. Overall, the findings are in line with those found in the current study's support of the alternative hypothesis between passive leadership and LMX.

Having examined the relationship between passive leadership and employee well-being, Barling and Frone (2017) hypothesized that passive leadership led to a decrease in overall work attitudes (using role stressors and psychological work fatigue as mediating variables), similar in part to the current study. Positive overall work attitudes are logically associated with higher LMX whereas lower LMX is more in line with those suffering in overall work attitude. A difference between the study and current study was the use of variables, LMX was not used explicitly, but rather with overall work attitude as an antecedent to LMX. Participants, numbering 2,467, was much larger compared to the current study's 128 participants, another difference between the two studies. A third minor difference is how passive leadership was measured; the current study used three questions from the MLQ while the survey used by Barling and Frone (2017) used four total questions from Den Hartog, van Muijen, and Koopman (1997) and Pearce and Sims (2002). The correlation between passive leadership and overall work attitude ( $r = -.42, p < 0.001$ ) was nearly identical to that of the current study ( $r = -.442$ ) with both showing medium effect size. Therefore, the results in this study provide support for the current study's acceptance of the alternative hypothesis.

Transactional leadership style, and the relationship it has with LMX, was shown to be positive with a strong effect size (Cohen, 1992) and fully supported through analysis in the

current study. Martínez-Córcoles and Stephanou (2017) provided similar results in their review of 161 parachutists from the Hellenic armed forces, ground, naval, and air, in Greece.

Hypothesizing that transactional leadership would have effects on safety compliance and risky behaviors, the authors suggested that this type of leadership was important considering safety issues, that compliance was critical to high-risk behavior such as parachuting. Transactional leadership was measured using the MLQ-5X by Bass and Avolio (1997), similar to the one used in the current study though different because of its much broader scope in questions. Another similarity is seen with correlations between transactional leadership and multiple variables aligning with LMX-like traits. Their findings showed moderate relationships with safety climate ( $r = .64, p < 0.01$ ), safety compliance ( $r = .49, p < 0.01$ ), and safety participation ( $r = .54, p < 0.01$ ) compared to the strong relationship ( $r = .777, p < 0.01$ ) found in the current study. Risky behaviors showed a weak negative relationship ( $r = -.30, p < 0.01$ ) with this leadership style, suggesting that parachutists would engage in less risky behavior as transactional leadership was more prominent. Variables like the ones used in the study connoted a need for trust not only among other parachutists, but with commanding officers, the very essence of LMX. Despite the strength of relationship between the study's leadership style and LMX-like traits not being as strong as the current study, this slight difference still provides support for the findings in the current study's acceptance of the alternative hypothesis, that there is a valenced relationship between transactional leadership and LMX.

Saeed and Mughal (2019) examined the relationship between transactional leadership and employee performance, a key factor in this type of leadership. One similarity between this study and the current study was the use of MLQ based on the work of Avolio and Bass (2002), though they differed by using 36 questions from this survey instrument compared to the 11 used in the

current study. When correlating variables, the authors showed a weak ( $r = .167, p < 0.05$ ) effect size (Cohen, 1992) which differs from the stronger relationship in the current study. However, it is worth noting that this relationship did not directly measure LMX and, therefore, could be construed as being loosely related to LMX. Nevertheless, the relationship was found to be valenced and significant, similar to the results from the current study. The study took place in the banking industry, highly bureaucratic, compared to the current study's use of social services. Thus, the findings from Saeed and Mughal (2019) provided little support, but support nonetheless, for the current study's acceptance of the alternative relationship between transactional leadership and LMX.

Moving to transformational leadership and its relationship with LMX, Ohunakin et al. (2019) studied facets of transformational leadership and their impacts on job satisfaction, turnover intention, and life satisfaction as key antecedents to high LMX. In studying the Nigerian hospitality industry, the authors hypothesized that the components of transformational leadership, idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration, positively affected job satisfaction and negatively affected turnover intention with both of these variables having acted as mediators of life satisfaction. Similar to the current study, Ohunakin et al. (2019) used the MLQ to measure transformational leadership. Another similarity was the response rate of 79% compared to the current study's net response rate of 69%. A difference was the study having had a larger sample population ( $N = 324$ ) compared to the current study's 128. While the current study used construct variables to measure relationships, the study by Ohunakin et al. (2019) instead measured each facet of each variable; for example, job satisfaction included five facets and transformational leadership was made up of the four components noted above. Findings showed that hypotheses for select transformational



leadership traits, notably, idealized influence and intellectual stimulation, were accepted while the other two traits, inspirational motivation and individualized consideration, could not be rejected. Overall, sufficient evidence provides support for the current study's hypothesis acceptance of transformational leadership's relationship with LMX being valenced (Ohunakin et al., 2019).

The last piece of literature to compare and contrast with the current study's findings is done by Allen et al. (2018) having focused on servant leadership and its relationship with LMX. They studied 128 non-profit employees, similar to the current study's focus on 128 non-profit employees, and specifically hypothesized that servant leadership impacted structural empowerment or an individual's perception of empowerment in workplace conditions. Another similarity is the relationship that servant leadership had with structural empowerment ( $r = .55, p < 0.01$ ), very similar to the servant leadership-LMX relation in the current study. It is reasonable to suggest that LMX played a key role in such empowerment as well, to wit "[b]oth unit level leader-member exchange quality ... had significant direct effects on individual level psychological empowerment" (Laschinger et al., 2009, p. 228). As a result, in the study, structural empowerment acted as a proxy for LMX. Another difference from the current study was the authors' use of a different measure of servant leadership, namely, the 10-item Essential Servant Leadership Behaviors (ESLB) by Winston and Fields (2015). The findings by Allen et al. (2018) directionally show support for the current study's acceptance of the alternative hypothesis stating there is a valenced relationship between servant leadership and LMX.

**The Problem.** This section discusses how the findings in the current study relate to the problem being studied. The problem, in general, was the impact that leadership and leadership styles had in organizations, more specifically, Southeastern Pennsylvania SSOs, struggling to

retain employees, having resulted in higher allocations of financial resources in talent acquisition and operations. The findings in the study demonstrated that leadership (LMX) and leadership styles have impacts in organizations to the extent that turnover intention is mitigated when LMX is increased and desired leadership styles are employed by management. Passive leadership is the one style that should be avoided by the two SSOs in Southeastern Pennsylvania. In doing so, they enjoy a greater likelihood of stronger employee retention for those serving clients with IDD. Further, they realize a cost savings related to hiring and training, two drains on budgets in non-profits dependent on outside funding. Considering the impact that LMX training and leadership training have on organizations and one realizes that the expense for such training is far outweighed by the benefits. While these two factors alone cannot predict lower retention, they act as low-cost, low-risk opportunities in terms of clear improvements that positively impact operations in these organizations.

Improving LMX in the study's two SSOs results in lower turnover intention, but other benefits emerge such as greater levels of trust between employees and managers; reciprocity such as employees staying longer on their shifts to allow late employees proper time to get to work; and, employees volunteering for overtime when this task was more difficult before any LMX improvements. In other words, not only do employees benefit with greater job satisfaction and a stronger relationship with their managers, other departments, human resources, scheduling, training, and accounting, benefit downstream from this improvement in leader-member exchange.

Without question, leadership style is critical to all organizations, but in particular to the two SSOs in the current study passive leadership should be avoided while transactional, transformational, and servant leadership should be desired. Identifying the desired leadership

styles in new manager applicants, as well as current managers, should be a top priority for human resources and the SSOs as a whole. The findings show support for all leadership styles except passive leadership and this ties well to the SSOs in the current study because their organizations preferred transformational and servant leadership but knew that even transactional leadership could improve the relationship one has with his/her manager. The two SSOs can take comfort knowing that expunging passive leadership, via coaching, training, or attrition, will improve the quality of relationship among managers and employees, thus improving operational costs and reducing the time to hire and train new employees.

### ***Summary of the Findings***

Each alternative hypothesis in the current study was supported not only by the analytical tests conducted but also by the literature. The findings lend support to the fields of LMX and leadership theories and extend the research to include two non-profits in Southeastern Pennsylvania SSOs. Fully discussed in this section was the hypotheses and associated testing; the relationship of the findings as it related to the research questions, theoretical framework, literature, and the study's general and specific problems; and, a summary of the findings.

### **Applications to Professional Practice**

When considering the implications of results for professional practice, it is worth noting the ability to generalize results to the proper population. The results found in this study enable one to generalize to the two Southeastern Pennsylvania SSOs. In this section, each research question and the related variables are discussed in relation to the impacts on professional practice, namely, the two SSOs in Southeastern Pennsylvania.

LMX is a quality that is inherent in every organization, but it is not consciously noticed by leaders or members. Rather, it is implied through such interactions of reciprocity and trust. In

the two Southeastern Pennsylvania SSOs, evaluating LMX among employees helps these organizations identify training or coaching/mentoring opportunities for managers. Such professional development has lasting favorable impacts not only with employee retention, like the current study found, but has similar impacts on such related factors as job satisfaction, OC, and affective OC. When an organization develops managers to embrace LMX qualities, the result is higher LMX among the managers and employees. As noted in the study's findings, when LMX increases as evaluated by employees, these employees are less likely to leave the two SSOs in search of other employment opportunities. The benefits of higher employee retention have downstream effects on budgets (e.g., reducing the need to hire replacement employees and the training costs associated with doing so) and, during a time of rising inflation, resources overall resulting in a cost savings for these SSOs. These two SSOs in Southeastern Pennsylvania benefit by investing in professional development at a fraction of the cost compared to rehiring and retraining replacement employees. Professional development courses, online and in-person, exist on the internet for organizations like SSOs to capitalize on and train their existing and incoming managers to become more effective managers. For example, EdApp provides a series called Leadership Theory: Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) that is three lessons in total. Here, the site promotes LMX by stating what LMX is,

How it occurs in the workplace, what in-groups and out-groups are, ... what leaders can do to avoid in-group biases [and] ... provide steps leaders can take to have a better relationship with all their members, not just those similar to them, and create a large in-group in their organization. (EdApp, 2022)

Deploying similar training to managers in Southeastern Pennsylvania can have lasting positive impacts on managers and employees alike. With a small investment in training, the two SSOs

realize savings and fewer headaches involved with replacing employees. Further, increased retention has indirect benefits like industry recognition when compared to competitors.

Leadership style, when approached by the two SSOs carefully, identifies managers who demonstrate the right leadership style (e.g., transformational, servant, and even transactional) and those who demonstrate the wrong leadership style (e.g., passive leadership). Passive leadership is difficult to break because of the inherent complacency associated with it, but evaluating managers at the individual level, rather than the organizational level like the current study conducted, targets managers who can be trained to become better managers and leaders. First, it is important to evaluate each manager so that their specific leadership styles are properly identified. Second, managers, including passive leaders, benefit from leadership style training by breaking them of bad habits and encouraging them to be more concerned, or aware, about their employees as people rather than resources (a common shortcoming among transactional leaders as well). Of course, third, after professional development to change or strengthen leadership styles of these identified leaders, if they continue to demonstrate passive leadership, the two SSOs must consider replacing them. While there is a greater cost in doing so, the approach is more deliberate or targeted, thus reducing the expense of replacement. Further, hiring the right leaders with the right leadership style, again, transformational and servant leadership, and to a slightly lesser extent, transactional leadership, can be identified in the interview process with select questions or with a leadership style survey like the ones used in the current study. While there is still the chance that some applicants skirt the questions in a way that mis-characterizes them as positive leadership styles, the SSOs can increase their chances of hiring the right leadership styles.

Transactional leadership is a curious leadership style relative to this study and the applications for business practice in select Southeastern Pennsylvania SSOs. In organizations today, many prefer transformational or servant leadership over transactional leadership, but transactional leadership has its place and purpose in certain organizations. SSOs may benefit from transactional leadership because the business model focuses on regimented activities such as daily care for individuals who expect, or require, routine from their staff. Further, due to the nature of their positions, direct care employees enjoy being rewarded with overtime compensation in exchange for working above and beyond regular hours where hourly rates are low, a basic tenant of transactional leadership.

Training sessions for existing managers involve a series of courses focused on building trust and empowerment in managers that are applied in everyday operations with employees. Focusing on traits associated with transformational and servant leadership through introductory, intermediate, and even expert workshops can have positive benefits not only for the SSOs, but also for newly trained managers and their direct reports. Colleges and universities like Southern Methodist University (SMU) provide 10-session courses on transformational leadership that, per the school's website, can "maximize your company's most valuable, volatile asset – human capital in a rapidly changing environment – and strengthen your skills in strategic thinking" (SMU Cox School of Business, 2022). Organizations such as the Servant Leadership Institute offer hands-on training approaches and coaching regarding the concept of servant leadership; relationship-based programs focused on the personal dynamics in organizations; and, events and publications inspiring organizations and its leaders to begin or continue the practice of servant leadership, namely, by serving others first (Servant Leadership Institute, 2022). Such training

and coaching programs steer an SSO in the right direction to improving employee retention and reducing costs associated with hiring replacements and operational training for these new hires.

Results of the study have biblical implications, particularly as it relates to transformational and servant leadership. These two types of leadership are well-rooted in the Bible as detailed earlier. By encouraging leaders in SSOs to be more transformational and/or servant-like towards employees, the organizations' leaders emulate traits seen in such biblical figures as Abraham and Jesus. While some SSOs are more secular in their approaches, many can actively use biblical teachings to develop their staff as well as work with their clients. The shortcoming of this approach is that many organizations presume their managers/leaders are already demonstrating transformational and/or servant leadership styles in everyday operational activities. The use of such instruments like the study's survey sheds light on how engrained SSOs' management teams are utilizing transformational and/or servant leadership skills when engaging their respective team members. Through the Bible, SSOs can find numerous passages to encourage their leaders to reflect upon and apply in daily interactions with their employees. For example, from 1 Peter 5:1 (ESV): "So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed" provides an overview of how to care for those reporting to leaders in the SSOs. Continuing, "Shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly" (1 Peter 5:2, ESV) suggests that leaders in SSOs should not take a "Do as I say" approach, but, rather, should approach caring for others shamelessly and with passion. Concluding, "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble" (1 Peter 5:5, ESV), indicating that one using servant leadership

traits does so not for the glory of self, but for the glory of God; in doing so, one will be exalted by God.

Relating to the field of strategic management, implications from the study are profound in this field of study because of the leadership style and LMX concepts being entwined with the strategic planning process – defining a vision for an SSO’s future with transformational and/or servant leadership in mind and with LMX as a foundation for management. In doing so, an SSO identifies such pillars as strengths and incorporate them into goal setting, strategic planning, and verbiage in corporate mission and vision statements. Incorporating transformational and/or servant leadership training, and LMX training, into individual goals and objectives can filter upward through the SSO and become part of the organizational DNA.

### **Recommendations for Action**

Recommendations entail detailed paths to improve LMX and achieve desired leadership styles beginning with the study’s SSOs or other SSOs wishing to participate in this new process. In this section, information is provided to reach these goals including the surveying of the target population for professional development, the recommendations for various training, and the need for reassessments once training has been completed. The eight-step process for doing so is detailed below.

First, it is important to distinguish work done with any organizations as one between the author as a consultant versus as a doctoral student. This involved completing due diligence in setting up an LLC to have formalized the provision of consultant work to organizations. The author has set up the LLC with LegalZoom and has completed the necessary steps (e.g., having obtained a business license, designated LegalZoom as a registered agent, filed the necessary



paperwork with Pennsylvania where the LLC is located, and obtained an Employer Identification Number [EIN] for use in the township where the LLC is located).

Second, findings from the current study should be presented to the current study's SSOs along with recommendations for next steps. In this study's overall recommendations for action, this step is recognized on a timeline as Day 0. This involves presenting, either via presentation or whitepaper, and discussing the summary results such as descriptive statistics, charts, and relationships found between variables. The recommendations by the author include doing further analysis, this time at the individual level. It is expected that the desired leadership style for these SSOs is either transformational or servant leadership. In order to gain further insight into training, a detailed process should take place over one year and another year will be needed to realize the full impact of such training on employee retention.

Third, within 30 days from presenting findings to the SSOs, presuming the organizations agree with the recommendations, mandatory participation in a broader survey should take place. All managers will be expected to complete this larger survey that measures individual LMX and leadership style. All managers will have one month, between Day 30 and Day 60, to complete the larger survey. Each manager will be completing the survey in order to receive specific results related to the quality of LMX between him/her and members of his/her team. Managers will also identify what leadership style they most align with in their jobs. Data collection will be done by the author, now in a consultant position, with analysis being done after Day 60. This survey will serve as the baseline score to be compared to future iterations of the survey.

Fourth, between Day 60 and Day 75, analysis will be conducted by the author to identify quality of LMX for each manager and the strongest leadership style. Summary results will also be presented to the SSOs in order to establish a pre-intervention (i.e., pre-training) development

baseline, not to be confused with the survey baseline for each manager. Recommendations will be made for future training and how it will be conducted so the SSOs can plan accordingly. The first recommendation, regardless of results, involves LMX training for all managers to be done over two weeks in phases. This is important since daily operations cannot be disrupted if, for example, all managers received training simultaneously. Beginning Day 105 and ending Day 120, approximately one month after recommendations, waves of managers will receive training on LMX. LMX training can be accomplished in a variety of ways: (1) training managers by the study's author, (2) training trainers of the SSOs to train managers, or (3) providing 3rd-party sites like EdApp for managers to complete. Of the three approaches, it is recommended that personal training, either by the study's author or by the SSOs' trainers, be conducted with EdApp as a valuable solution should neither of the personal training approaches be available. Training will be done over two weeks with each manager receiving 16 hours (four hours per day) of training during this time. Topics will include a background on LMX and why it is important and the skills/practice to develop and strengthen high-LMX qualities in each manager. Lessons from the class can be applied immediately by manager with their respective teams.

Leadership style training is more in-depth and will require three levels of instruction, all conducted in waves, so managers attend without compromising daily operations on their teams. Transitioning from undesired leadership styles to desired ones take time and resources, but the results benefit SSOs with increased retention and cost savings. While the training topic (e.g., transformational or servant leadership) will vary depending on which desired leadership style SSOs, or other organizations, prefer, the process is consistent. Fifth, between Day 120 and Day 150, managers will receive introductory leadership style training on the variety of leadership styles present in organizations; which leadership style is desired at the respective SSOs;

introductions to the desired leadership style; and role-playing exercises to help managers not only understand but apply the lessons learned from the introductory training.

Sixth, approximately 60 days after completing the introductory training on leadership style, between Day 210 and Day 240, managers will return to the classroom and be trained on the intermediate level of the desired leadership style. This class is done after managers have had at least 60 days to adequately apply their introductory class learnings in their everyday jobs. Here, best practices will be thoroughly reviewed with constructive feedback from the trainers. This class is critical because some detractors will still exist seeking to discredit the need for such training. This is the time where trainers identify and re-train attendees on the desired leadership style to reinforce what had been taught thus far. Further role-playing exercises will incorporate more subtle scenarios that challenge managers to apply more skills gained from the class. Attendees will take the skills learned from this 2-day class (16 hours, eight hours each day) back to their teams and apply them over the next 90 days.

Seventh, by now, managers who had displayed other leadership styles will have had nearly six months to apply the new leadership styles to their jobs. Between Day 330 and Day 360, nearly one full year since having presented findings from the current study to the SSOs, managers will attend the final training class considered to be an expert-level session for attendees. This 3-day (16 hours, eight hours each day) session will review what had been learned from the previous two sessions and will slowly build up to include more abstract skills of the desired leadership style; and will cover benefits of the desired leadership style for the attendees and the organization. It is important for managers to understand their roles in the organizations and to “see the big picture.”

Finally, once training has been completed in full, managers will take a post-training survey between Day 360 and Day 390 that is the same as the pre-training survey done between Day 60 and Day 75. Results will be analyzed by the author and presented to the SSOs between Day 390 and Day 405. Over the next year, retention numbers will be monitored by the SSOs and shared with the author/consultant. After a lengthy process of training, applying lessons in the workplace, analyzing, and monitoring, the author will complete a final write up between Day 770 and Day 777 for the SSOs sharing the impact of leadership style as well as the benefit of consultation from the author.

Clearly, the above recommendations for action are ideal for SSOs but they are also applicable to many other organizations and industries. This business model is intentional and is not designed to be implemented quickly, though it must be noted that the actual intervention of training is one year in length, only the organizations must wait a full 2 years to realize the true impacts to retention and expense reductions.

### **Recommendations for Further Study**

Though the current study provides insightful contributions to theory and practice, there are several recommendations for further study that take the lessons learned here to another level. In this section, recommendations are provided to guide the study's author or others to research this topic further.

Due to the geographical focus of Southeastern Pennsylvania for the current study, the next logical step for further study is to expand the study's approach to SSOs in other parts of Pennsylvania, perhaps including a study that covers all of Pennsylvania. In doing so, a state-level view of LMX, leadership style, and retention can be studied and expand this study's findings.

Although this will take time to complete, the findings are significant for further expansion of study.

A second recommendation for further study is to expand to more states in the United States and to develop a regional or national perspective of this topic regarding SSOs. This step is lengthy, but it will show variance between states which can lead to further branches of study. For example, funding for clients in SSOs can vary between states and this difference can impact the ability to care for these clients. Another example is if population density impacts the effectiveness of SSOs where retention becomes more important than areas like Southeastern Pennsylvania that are more densely populated and job applicants are more readily available and willing to work.

A third recommendation for further study is to conduct research in other organizations and industries. The findings from this study may conflict findings in such organizations as banks, colleges and universities, hospitals, and manufacturing due to leadership styles varying in these organizations. As noted earlier, banks benefit from transactional leadership due to the bureaucratic nature of the business. This recommendation has opportunities that are endless for research.

A fourth recommendation is to research international settings to compare to those found in the United States. Here, cultures differ from country to country and the organizations within these countries can provide numerous settings where the current study's findings are not similar. This recommendation is appropriate for research focusing on culture as it can be impactful on the type of leadership style as well as quality of LMX.

## **Reflections**

### ***Introduction***

Taking time for reflections enables researchers to consider the effort and research undertaken to accomplish studies like the current one. In this section, personal and professional growth will be discussed focusing on how conducting the research project has provided these skills and traits. Next, a biblical perspective is provided of how the business functions explored in the current study relate to, and integrate with, a Christian worldview. Finally, this section concludes with a summary.

### ***Personal and Professional Growth***

Immense value was gained by the researcher in this study as it relates to the research process of this study's topics. It allowed the researcher to understand how the doctoral process works in general and how it functions at Liberty University. Not only does one have to complete the dissertation and defense, s/he must endure years of training in the online classroom setting for, without this training, the dissertation process itself would become difficult to comprehend let alone conduct. Everything learned in the online classroom translated to proper researching, communicating, and writing the dissertation – a culmination of the doctoral program at Liberty.

The dissertation process itself was challenging and intense with numerous roadblocks having presented themselves during the COVID-19 pandemic. Dissertation research was started in fall of 2019 and, shortly thereafter, COVID-19 imposed lockdowns and mandates on all individuals. Organizations were not immune to this. They were impacted by moving resources virtually and those who were not able to do so (e.g., essential workers) were restricted in their movements because of the contagion of COVID-19. At that time, the researcher approached numerous organizations and individuals for help in completing the survey, but the common

response was that the surveying of employees was a burden on staff who were already stretched thin because of minimal staffing imposed by COVID-19. This delayed the research by two full years as the pandemic ebbed and flowed with its infectiousness, mutating into subsequent variants, relying on vaccines and boosters, and imposing mask mandates in cities like those in Southeastern Pennsylvania. A belief and trust in God – “Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding” (Proverbs 3:5, NIV) – helped the researcher retreat, reassess, and persevere through such difficult times over these past two years. When it seemed that all roads led to failure, one only be reminded of Psalm 86:7 (NIV), “When I am in distress, I call to you, because you answer me.” Through prayer and, with guidance from fellow Christians in friends and family, the author developed confidence and courage – “Be strong, and let your heart take courage, all you who wait for the Lord!” (Psalm 31:24, ESV) – to continue reaching out to SSOs and gain the valuable research necessary to complete the field study and dissertation. In recent months, the virus subsided sufficiently enough allowing the researcher to approach organizations to help – this time, two organizations sought value in the surveying of their employees and conversations continued for six months. The research persisted and this allowed him to complete the study with enlightening results not only for the fields of management and leadership, but for the participating organizations themselves.

Throughout the doctoral and dissertation process, with Proverbs 4:26 (ESV) in mind, “Ponder the path of your feet; stay on the safe path,” the researcher remained focused on finding those SSOs that (1) wanted to learn more about LMX and leadership style as it related to employee retention, and (2) wanted to help contribute to research in strategic management and leadership. The researcher’s experience in such industries as banking, higher education, and retail created some personal biases based on preconceived values and attitudes (e.g.,

experiencing all forms of leadership and applying them) in the workplace as well. Such biases were mitigated through use of the study's surveys that had been time-tested in the fields of strategic management and leadership. Doing so removed these biases from influencing the field study and significantly reduced the researcher's beliefs from influencing the overall study.

### ***Biblical Perspective***

Each leadership style within this study evokes a biblical perspective in today's workplace. This section will call examples for each of the study's construct variables regarding leadership style, demonstrating the biblical reach throughout the study itself. Passive leadership is seen in such biblical quotes as Proverbs 18:9 (ESV), "Whoever is slack in his work is a brother to him who destroys;" here, the perspective is that a person who is not fully engaged in his/her position as manager or leader, with employees or members working together and depending on strong leadership, is one who causes harm to the performance and overall success of an organization. A more serious biblical quote, "So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is a sin" (James 4:17, ESV), pertains to the passive leader who shirks his/her duty to lead and manage other employees and processes. Taken one step further, the passive leader only gets involved when it can no longer be avoided, but decision-making clouded in initial avoidance can have detrimental impacts to an organization. Therefore, when confronted with passive leaders, similar to those who stir up division, "After warning him once and then twice, have nothing more to do with him" (Titus 3:10, ESV). Here, organizations have the chance to warn, or coach/train, passive leaders, but the old adage applies, "coach them up or coach them out", indicating that a passive leader who cannot be trained to be transactional, transformational, or servant-like should not be managing in the organization.



Transactional leadership is noted in the Bible as well, hence it being included and relevant in the current study. Not all forms of transactional leadership are undesirable, there are figures in the Bible who were effective based on transactional leadership style. For example, Lewis (2019) noted that Moses displayed some transactional leadership, as well as servant leadership, skills (e.g., he was seen as a leader whose authority enabled him to influence others [i.e., transactional]) and was at the mercy of God. In fact, per Lewis (2019), he stated that God referred to Moses, near death, as a servant four times. It should not be lost that the best example of transactional leadership by Moses is when he conveyed the Ten Commandments from God to Israelites. In essence, Moses provided the rules of conduct in order to serve God. In exchange for this, the Israelites would be able to live moral lives.

Transformational leadership is more pronounced in the Bible than the previous two styles of leadership. Traits of transformational leaders are found in Jesus, who demonstrated values such as (1) investing in people, (2) seeing long and far, (3) sending people away from him on mission, and (4) feeling the needs of people (Stetzer & Rainer, 2015). Through these actions, Jesus trusted his disciples would carry out what is referred to as the Great Commission (i.e., making “disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit;” Matthew 28:19, NIV). Transformational leaders in organizations today also value the trust and respect they have with employees and encourage them to do what is best for their respective organizations, religious and secular alike.

Servant leadership has many examples throughout the Bible, particularly the New Testament, and these can be related to organizations today. Matthew 23:11 (NIV) sums it up best: “The greatest among you will be your servant.” In this verse, considering organizations today, greatness refers to leadership and those in power must serve others in order to achieve

such leadership. As witnessed in this study's surveys, servant leadership has strong outcomes like LMX and turnover intention. Another Bible verse exemplifying servant leadership is Luke 22:26 (NIV): "But you are not to be like that. Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves." This statement, appearing to challenge others in their values and beliefs, states that those who are in organizational leadership positions should be servants to others and, only in doing so, will they achieve respect from others in their organizations. Mark 9:35 (NIV) affirms this reference to servant leadership with the following: "Sitting down, Jesus called the Twelve and said, 'Anyone who wants to be first must be the very last, and the servant of all.'" In organizations, servant leaders put the needs of others first and before their own needs.

### **Summary and Study Conclusions**

This study focused on the relationships between key variables like LMX, retention, or turnover intention, and leadership style, passive, transactional, transformational, and servant, as they appeared in two Southeastern Pennsylvania SSOs. Focusing on these two organizations, two research questions were considered: (1) what is the relationship between LMX and retention, or turnover intention, in these Southeastern Pennsylvania SSOs; and (2) what is the relationship between leadership style and LMX in these Southeastern Pennsylvania SSOs. In this study, the evidence suggests that, first, LMX is moderately and negatively related to turnover intention (i.e., as the quality of LMX increases in these SSOs, employees are moderately less likely to leave the organizations).

Regarding leadership style and LMX, it was found that higher LMX resulted in increased proportions in all types of leadership styles researched except passive leadership that was weakly to moderately and negatively impacted LMX. The other leadership styles strongly and positively

affected LMX in these SSOs. The findings suggest that these organizations thrive on three types of leadership style, transactional, transformational, and servant. In doing so, these organizations and others like them can benefit greatly by hiring and developing managers into these types of leaders.

The research in this study closes the gap in the literature by focusing on SSOs and front-line staff dedicated to serving clients in need. By arming managers with proper training to be quality leaders, employees are set up for success in their roles and develop stronger relationships with their managers. The SSOs demonstrate higher employee retention rates and positions them to be leaders in their industry. Managers in these SSOs demonstrate greater job satisfaction when their employees are satisfied, and employees demonstrate greater job satisfaction, and this translates to serving clients with greater care and passion. Finally, clients with IDD benefit from lower turnover and can develop and maintain greater stability in their lives. In conclusion, LMX and leadership style play vital roles in these Southeastern Pennsylvania SSOs, offering opportunities to grow retention rates; reduce costs associated with replacing those employees who left the SSOs; and, train new hires replacing the departing employees.

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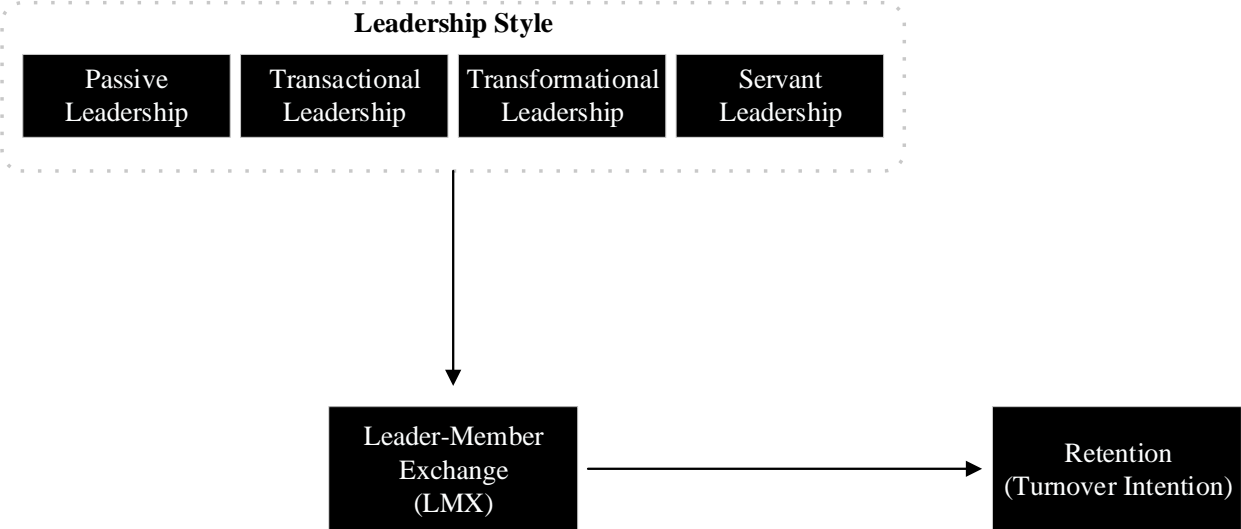
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**Appendix A: Theoretical Framework**



**Appendix B: Surveys and Permissions****Leader Member Exchange (LMX)-7 and (Answers)**

1. Do you know where you stand with your leader . . . do you usually know how satisfied your leader is with what you do? (*Rarely, Occasionally, Sometimes, Fairly Often, Very Often*)
2. How well does your leader understand your job problems and needs? (*Not a Bit, A Little, A Fair Amount, Quite a Bit, A Great Deal*)
3. How well does your leader recognize your potential? (*Not at All, A Little, Moderately, Mostly, Fully*)
4. Regardless of how much formal authority he/she has built into his/her position, what are the chances that your leader would use his/her power to help you solve problems in your work? (*None, Small, Moderate, High, Very High*)
5. Again, regardless of the amount of formal authority your leader has, what are the chances that he/she would “bail you out,” at his/her expense? (*None, Small, Moderate, High, Very High*)
6. I have enough confidence in my leader that I would defend and justify his/her decision if he/she were not present to do so? (*Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree, Strongly Agree*)
7. How would you characterize your working relationship with your leader? (*Extremely Ineffective, Worse than Average, Average, Better than Average, Extremely Effective*)



**LMX-7 Permission**

6/7/2020

Gmail - Permission to Use LMX-7 Form

**David Schlosser**  
[Redacted]

---

**Permission to Use LMX-7 Form**

2 messages

**David Schlosser**  
[Redacted]Sat, Jun 6, 2020 at 9:15  
PM

Good evening, Dr. Uhl-Bien. I am a doctoral student at Liberty University and am nearing completion of my program and dissertation. My dissertation is entitled, *LMX, Leadership Style, and Retention in a Southeastern Pennsylvania Social Services Organization*. I am writing to you to request permission to use the LMX-7 survey that was used in your 1995 article with Dr. Graen. Respectfully, will you please respond to this email indicating your approval for use in my dissertation? I look forward to hearing from you! Thank you.

David W. Schlosser

---

**Mary Uhl-Bien**  
[Redacted]Sat, Jun 6, 2020 at 9:36  
PM

To: David Schlosser [Redacted]

Yes you have permission to use it.

All best,  
Mary

[Quoted text hidden]

### Turnover Intention Survey and (Answers)

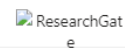
1. As soon as I can find a better job, I'll leave \_\_\_\_\_. (*Strongly Disagree* → *Strongly Agree*)
2. I am seriously thinking about quitting my job. (*Strongly Disagree* → *Strongly Agree*)
3. I am actively looking for a job outside \_\_\_\_\_. (*Strongly Disagree* → *Strongly Agree*)

### Turnover Intention Survey Permission



Tove Helland Hammer via ResearchGate [REDACTED]  
Sun 6/7/2020 11:12 AM  
To: Schlosser, David

[ EXTERNAL EMAIL: Do not click any links or open attachments unless you know the sender and trust the content. ]



Tove sent you a message



**Tove Helland Hammer**  
Cornell University

Dear David,  
You have my permission to use the turnover scale in you dissertation research.  
Best regards,  
Tove Hammer

[Reply on ResearchGate](#)

This message was sent to [REDACTED] by ResearchGate. To make sure you receive our updates, add ResearchGate to your address book or safe list. [See instructions](#)

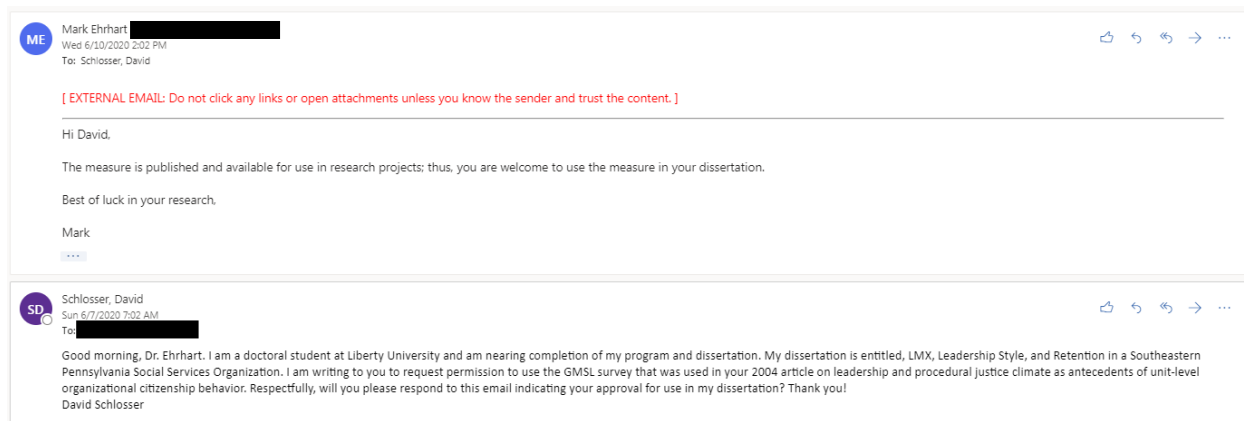
**Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) and (Answers)**

1. Provides me with assistance in exchange for my efforts (*Not at All, Once in a While, Sometimes, Fairly Often, Frequently if Not Always*)
2. Fails to interfere until problems become serious (*Not at All, Once in a While, Sometimes, Fairly Often, Frequently if Not Always*)
3. Avoids getting involved when important issues arise (*Not at All, Once in a While, Sometimes, Fairly Often, Frequently if Not Always*)
4. Seeks differing perspectives when solving problems (*Not at All, Once in a While, Sometimes, Fairly Often, Frequently if Not Always*)
5. Discusses in specific terms who is responsible for achieving performance targets (*Not at All, Once in a While, Sometimes, Fairly Often, Frequently if Not Always*)
6. Talks enthusiastically about what needs to be accomplished (*Not at All, Once in a While, Sometimes, Fairly Often, Frequently if Not Always*)
7. Shows that he/she is a firm believer in "if it ain't broke, don't fix it" (*Not at All, Once in a While, Sometimes, Fairly Often, Frequently if Not Always*)
8. Treats me as an individual rather than just as a member of a group (*Not at All, Once in a While, Sometimes, Fairly Often, Frequently if Not Always*)
9. Gets me to look at problems from many different angles (*Not at All, Once in a While, Sometimes, Fairly Often, Frequently if Not Always*)
10. Helps me to develop my strengths (*Not at All, Once in a While, Sometimes, Fairly Often, Frequently if Not Always*)
11. Expresses satisfaction when I meet expectations (*Not at All, Once in a While, Sometimes, Fairly Often, Frequently if Not Always*)

### General Measure of Servant Leadership (GMSL) and (Answers)

1. My department manager's decisions are influenced by department employees' input (*To a Very Small Extent* → *To a Great Extent*)
2. My department manager is sensitive to department employees' responsibilities outside the workplace (*To a Very Small Extent* → *To a Great Extent*)
3. My department manager does what she or he promises to do (*To a Very Small Extent* → *To a Great Extent*)
4. My department manager makes me feel like I work with him/her, not for him/her (*To a Very Small Extent* → *To a Great Extent*)
5. My department manager emphasizes the importance of giving back to the community (*To a Very Small Extent* → *To a Great Extent*)

### GMSL Permission



**Appendix C: Tables**

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics

Question	N	Mean	Std. Dev	Variance
Do you know where you stand with your manager . . . do you usually know how satisfied your manager is with what you do?	128	3.77	1.103	1.216
My manager seeks differing perspectives when solving problems	128	3.42	1.175	1.380
How well does your manager recognize your potential?	128	3.72	1.115	1.243
Regardless of how much formal authority he/she has built into his/her position, what are the chances that your manager would use his/her power to help you solve problems in your work?	128	3.91	1.046	1.094
Again, regardless of the amount of formal authority your manager has, what are the chances that he/she would "bail you out" at his/her expense?	128	3.15	1.293	1.671
I have enough confidence in my manager that I would defend and justify his/her decision if he/she were not present to do so?	128	3.84	0.984	0.968
My manager gets others to look at problems from many different angles	128	3.37	1.156	1.337
How would you characterize your working relationship with your manager?	128	3.84	0.937	0.878
As soon as I can find a better job, I'll leave _____.	128	3.70	2.193	4.809
How well does your manager understand your job problems and needs?	128	3.43	1.134	1.286
My manager helps others to develop their strengths.	128	3.34	1.104	1.219
My manager fails to interfere until problems become serious	128	2.34	1.187	1.408
My manager talks enthusiastically about what needs to be accomplished.	128	3.69	1.155	1.335
My manager avoids getting involved when important issues arise	128	2.05	1.288	1.658
My manager treats me as an individual rather than just as a member of a group	128	3.88	1.197	1.433
My manager provides me with assistance in exchange for my efforts	128	3.51	1.249	1.559
My manager shows that he/she is a firm believer in "if it ain't broke, don't fix it"	128	2.76	1.260	1.587
I am actively looking for a job outside _____.	128	3.03	2.133	4.550
This question is a control question, please select option 2.	128	2.09	0.502	0.252
My manager's decisions are influenced by department employees' input	128	3.10	1.266	1.604
My manager is sensitive to department employees' responsibilities outside the workplace	128	3.37	1.380	1.903
My manager does what she or he promises to do	128	3.70	1.168	1.363
My manager discusses in specific terms who is responsible for achieving performance targets	128	3.33	1.151	1.325
My manager makes me feel like I work with him/her, not for him/her	128	3.67	1.409	1.986
My manager expresses satisfaction when others meet expectations	128	3.88	1.069	1.144
I am seriously thinking about quitting my job.	128	2.83	2.152	4.632
My manager emphasizes the importance of giving back to the community	128	3.33	1.358	1.844
What is your length of service in your current position with this company?	128	3.42	1.120	1.254

Appendix D: Figures

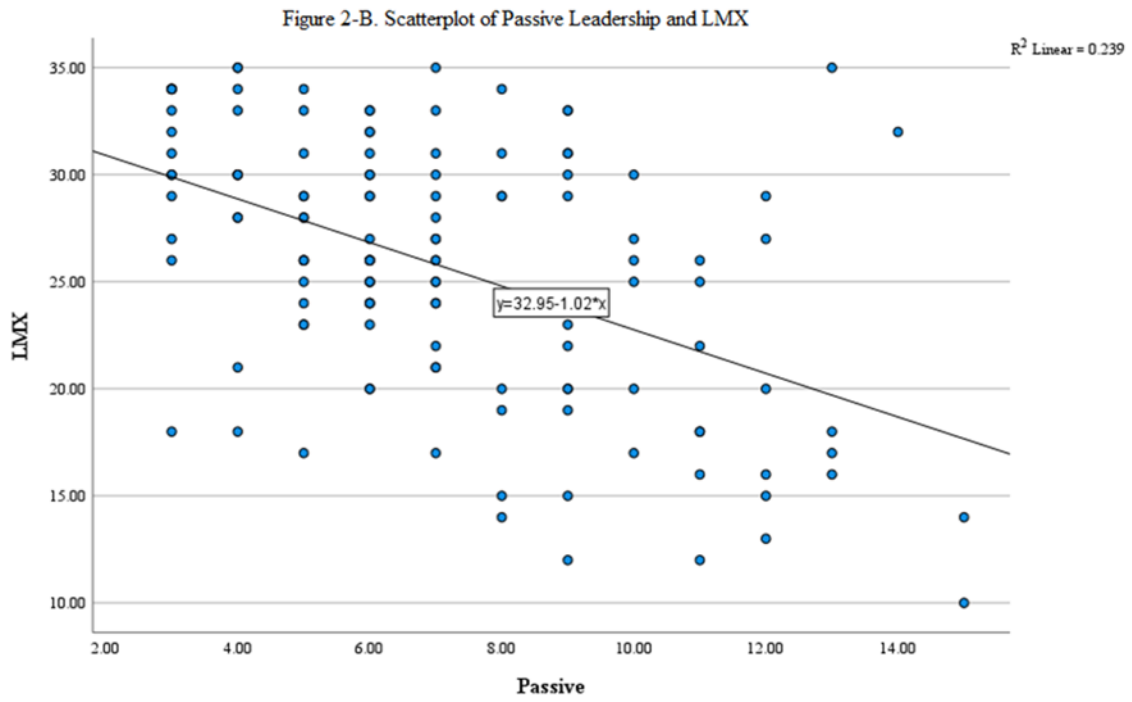
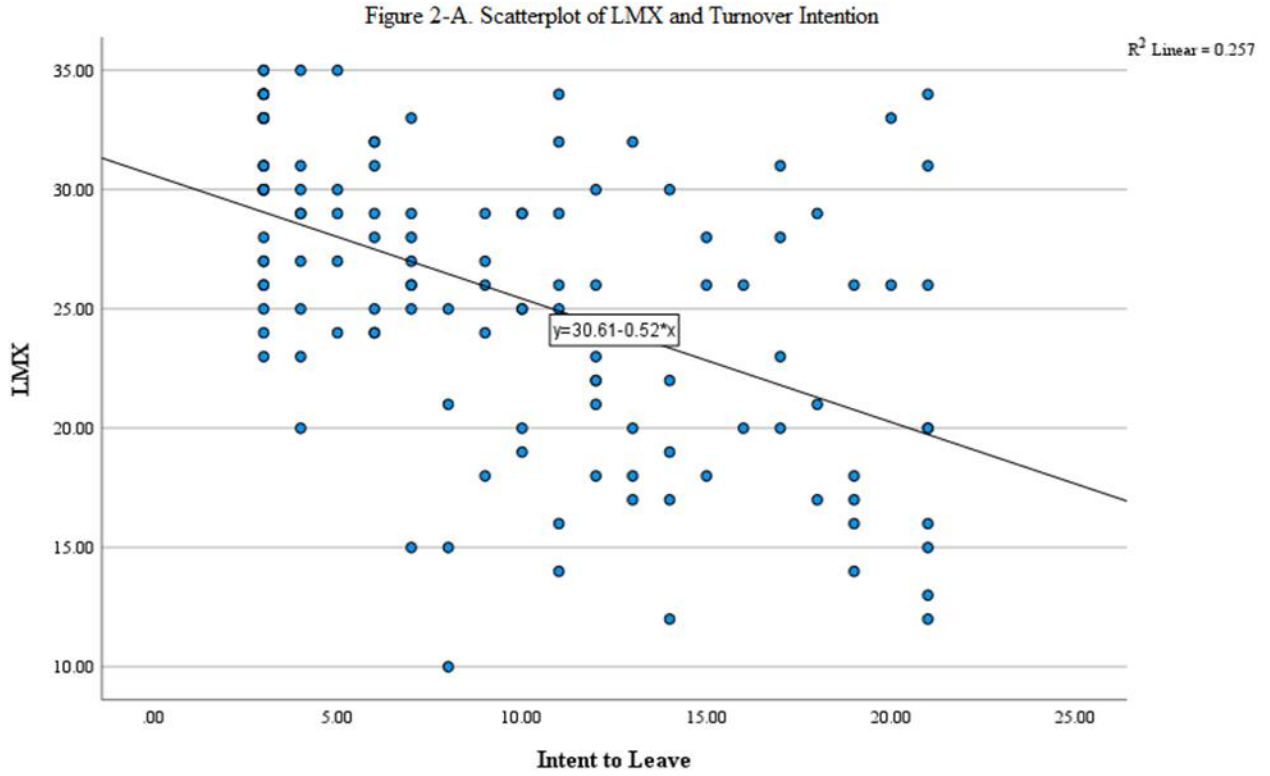


Figure 2-C. Scatterplot of Transactional Leadership and LMX

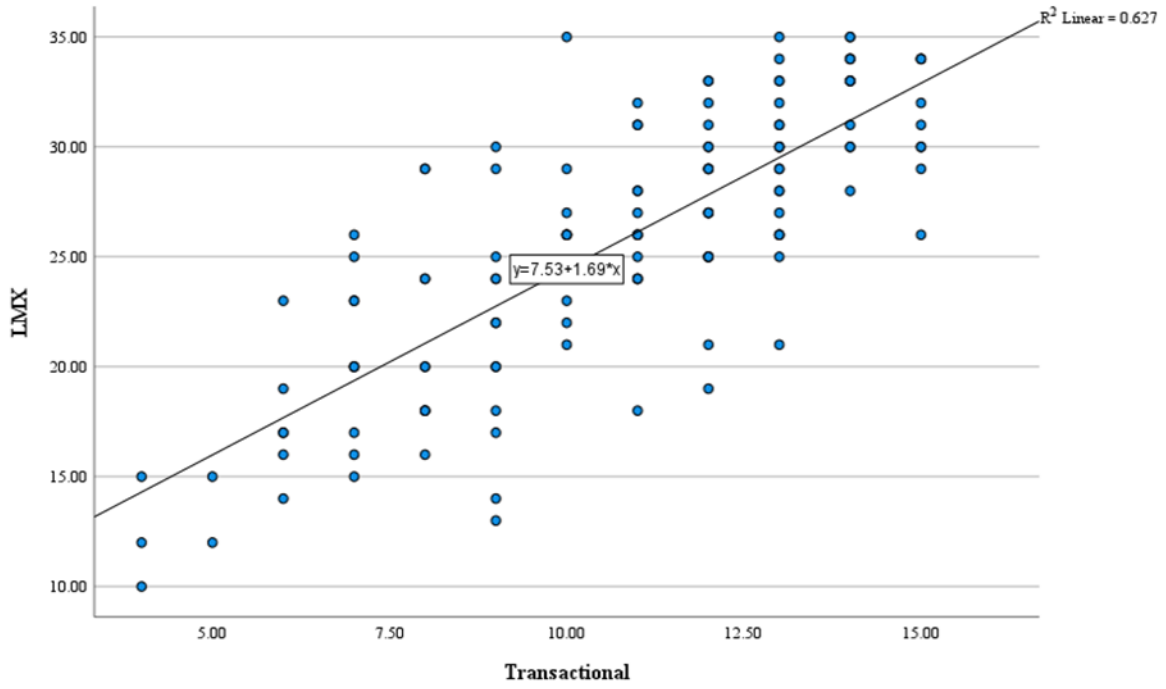


Figure 2-D. Scatterplot of Transformational Leadership and LMX

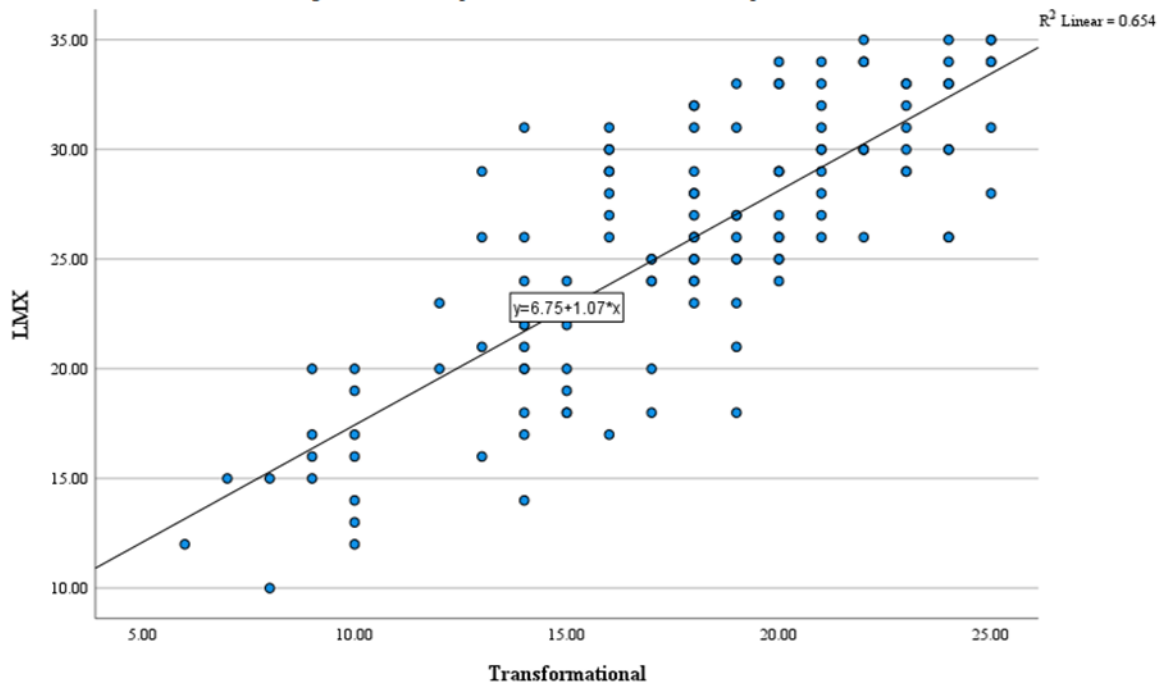


Figure 2-E. Scatterplot of Servant Leadership and LMX

