The leadership challenge in times of the COVID 19 pandemic - An empirical investigation on the impact of transformational leadership on motivation and team performance

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Abstract
In today’s world, where organisations are characterised by an “innovate or die” paradigm through digitalisation and disruption, team-based structures require not only a focus on the individual, but also on broader consideration of the team as a whole in terms of motivation and leadership. In this context, the way in which leaders lead and motivate their employees is a decisive factor.

The aim of this work is to examine the question of what influence motivation has on the performance of work groups that are led in a transformational way. To this end, 13 interviews were conducted with senior managers in German companies from various economic sectors in the context of a qualitative approach. The evaluation shows that motivation caused by elements of transformational leadership has a positive influence both on the work performance of the individual and the entire work group.

Keywords: Transformational leadership, Motivation, Team Performance, Expert interviews.

Introduction
Teamwork is an essential skill for the success and performance of organisations. In an “innovate or die” business world characterised by digitisation and disruption, the effective collaboration of employees within fluid job hierarchies and across geographic locations is necessary. Successful teamwork is a key driver of employee wellbeing and engagement, facilitating the retention of talent in a highly competitive global labour market.

According to Chen et al26, team-based structures within organisations require leaders to lead and motivate both the individual employee and also the team as a unit. Zaccaro et al84 identified the challenges as bringing together individual goals into a shared vision, managing resources, creating a climate of trust and support and coordinating information to ensure sharing and task completion. Researchers and managers have focused on the question of which behaviours can increase a leader's effectiveness over the past decades7,19

Abstract
The focus of leadership research has always been on what Burns22 and Bass9,13 defined as transactional leadership. Recent years have been marked by research on leadership behaviour which makes employees more aware of the benefits of task outcomes, activates their higher-level needs and prompts them to overcome self-interest for the good of the organisation.19,83

This transformational leadership behaviour is considered superior to transactional leadership because employees feel valued in their work and are committed to higher performance.6,13,28

According to Haas and Mortensen39, today's teams are different from the past in that they are “far more diverse, dispersed, digital and dynamic”. But while teams face new challenges, their success still depends on a set of basic principles for group collaboration.

The upheaval at the strategic, organisational and socio-cultural organisational levels associated with entry into the digital transformation also influences leadership behaviour. Today, classic leadership concepts often reach their limits due to the increasing amount of data and the networking of organisations and individuals.46 These changes place a great burden on companies and employees.45,79 Higgs and Rowland85 state that organisations are subject to constant development in order to improve their market position and competitiveness. For instance, a positive mindset is crucial for achieving organisational goals and successful change.33

Lamm and Gordon56 conclude that there is currently limited knowledge about the factors which motivate employees to support organisational change. According to Hinkelmann and Enzweiler46, the hierarchical structures that have prevailed up to now are being softened by the transparency and complexity of the digital transformation. Organisations must question their leadership culture and adapt it to be able to successfully manage the necessary change. Changes to the leadership culture are considered a challenging and time-consuming process, as the culture has developed over years. A renewal of leadership behaviour requires time, a scarce commodity in the context of digital transformation.46

According to Ayberk et al8, recipes for success, checklists or blueprints for corporate change do not exist. A universal solution that is easy to apply must first be developed.

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Tourish\textsuperscript{78} argues that leadership needs to be broken down into its component parts and analysed to allow for other views and critical questions. Kark and Dijk\textsuperscript{53} identify transformational leadership as a major leadership style that results in significant organisational and individual performance. The ability of leaders to motivate employees for goals, tasks or visions is crucial for their success.

According to the Deloitte Millennial Survey\textsuperscript{30}, millennials associate their job satisfaction with a high level of cross-team collaboration, a culture of mutual support and tolerance, open and free communication, a strong commitment to equality and the active promotion of ideas amongst all employees. It can be concluded that millennials have fewer thoughts of changing jobs because of a strong team ethos\textsuperscript{30}.

The Gallup Engagement Index shows in the 2020 study that the number of truly loyal employees has continued to fall. Marco Nink explains this with the COVID-19 pandemic that has caused a lack of confidence in the future and the economic strength of companies among employees. In addition, leadership deficits are blamed for the increased willingness to change. The study also shows that employees who have resigned more often also change their jobs, show a lack of initiative and willingness to perform and are absent more often, reducing overall productivity.\textsuperscript{75}

There is a considerable body of research indicating that transformational leadership is positively related to a variety of important organisational outcomes.\textsuperscript{1,7,47,59} Despite this, only a limited amount is known about the impact of transformational leadership on performance outcomes and the boundary conditions under which this relationship can develop. This is interesting because scholars have long lamented the lack of research on the boundary conditions that influence the underlying factors of the relationship between transformational leadership and performance outcomes.\textsuperscript{27,81}

This work examines the relationship between employee motivation and team performance as a result of transformational leadership. Furthermore, the factors influencing employee motivation on team performance are to be understood which emanate from the leadership style of the leader.

This leads to the following research question:

“What influence does transformational leadership have on staff motivation and team performance?”

**Theoretical Foundation**

Leadership is defined as influencing people to achieve common goals.\textsuperscript{22,83} Yuk\textsuperscript{13} focuses on the consensus needed to achieve common goals, while Burns\textsuperscript{22} refers to the achievement of common goals. This suggests that leadership is a multi-layered phenomenon which can be discussed from different cognitive perspectives.

According to Landis et al\textsuperscript{57}, leadership style plays a decisive role in employee commitment and willingness to perform. Leadership is a continuous process requiring planning, organisation, management and control mechanisms. The optimal use of resources to achieve the set goals is another element. Thus, the achievement of maximum results depends on successful leadership and the actions of the leader have a significant influence on the efficiency of the employees.

Lewin et al\textsuperscript{48} established the basis of modern research on leadership styles in 1939 with his work on experimental leadership research. The authoritarian, cooperative and laissez-faire leadership styles are derived from this research. More differentiated approaches by dividing leadership into task and employee orientation took place in the 1950s and 1960s. Towards the end of the 1950s, Tannenbaum and Schmidt\textsuperscript{76} developed a one-dimensional leadership model that is divided into a seven-level typology based on the participation of employees in decision-making situations. The managerial grid, a two-dimensional scientific model that shows possible combinations of employee and task orientation, was developed in the 1960s by Blake and Mouton\textsuperscript{20}. With their situational leadership theory from the 1970s, Hersey and Blanchard\textsuperscript{42} distinguish between a person-oriented and a task-oriented leadership style. The leadership style distinguishes between the four characteristics "telling", "spelling", "participating" and "delegating".

The origins of transformational leadership go back to the findings of James MacGregor Burns\textsuperscript{22}. In the 1970s, he analysed the relationship between leaders and led in political leadership. According to Burns, transformational leadership is a process in which "leaders and followers help each other to rise to higher levels of morale and motivation". He developed two concepts: "transformational leadership" and "transactional leadership". According to Burns, the transformational approach brings about a significant change in the behaviour of people and organisations. It reshapes ideas and values and changes the expectations and aspirations of employees. In contrast to the transactional approach, it is not based on a "give and take" relationship, but on the personality, character and ability of the leader.

Through the leader's role model function, the communication of a moving vision and challenging goals, a change is to be brought about. According to Burns' theory\textsuperscript{22}, transformational and transactional leadership are mutually exclusive styles. Transactional leaders usually do not seek to change the culture in the organisation but operate within the existing organisational culture. Transformational leaders seek to change the organisational culture.

Bernard M. Bass\textsuperscript{12} expanded the work of Burns\textsuperscript{22} by analysing psychological connections between transformational and transactional leadership and using the term "transformational" instead of "transforming". The
original concepts of Burns' were supplemented by Bass' to explain how transformational leadership becomes measurable and how it affects employee motivation and performance. The degree to which a leader is transformational is measured by the impact they have on employees. Employees feel admiration, trust, respect and loyalty for the leader and as a result, are willing to perform beyond what was originally expected. This effect occurs because the transformational leader creates incentive value for the employees with an inspiring vision and goal.

The leader transforms and motivates employees through idealised influence, intellectual stimulation and individual consideration. Furthermore, such a leader encourages employees to find new and extraordinary solutions to challenge the status quo and to change the framework in order to increase the company's success. In contrast to Burns', Bass argued that a leader can be both transformational and transactional at the same time.

Meanwhile, according to Bass and Bass, research and variety of meta-analyses have shown that transformational and transactional leadership positively predicts a wide range of performance outcomes including individual, group and organisational variables. Transformational leadership, according to Bass, increases awareness of organisational goals and values which are perceived by transformationally led employees as their own goals and placed above self-interest.

Antonakis and House argue that the Full Range of Leadership theory is a more promising leadership theory than previous leadership approaches. For Bass and Riggio, the reasons for the high interest in transformational leadership lie in the focus on intrinsic motivation and the positive development opportunities for transformationally managed employees. The resulting better adaptability to the complex environment of current work groups and companies is also a decisive factor.

According to Heinitz and Rowold, work performance is causally related to transformational leadership. Thus, in a meta-analysis, the relationship for subjective and objective performance criteria could be proven.

To describe the behaviour of a leader, Bass and his colleagues identified four components (known as the four I's) of transformational leadership:

**Idealised Influence (II):** According to Bass and Avolio, transformational leaders are perceived by their employees from an idealised perspective. The transformational leader sets high goals and standards for the employees and tries to fulfil them themselves.

The level of idealised influence is directly related to the effectiveness with which employees work towards the organisation's goals. Idealised influence, according to Bass and Riggio, maps two perspectives: first, the leader's characteristics as perceived by employees and second, the leader's recognisable behaviour.

**Inspirational Motivation (IM):** The transformational leader inspires and motivates employees through their behaviour. They set challenging tasks, develop attractive and forward-looking visions and convey the meaningfulness of the work. By communicating the meaning and significance of the company's goals, the leader encourages employees to achieve them through their efforts. Guiding principles, corporate goals and visions should be jointly developed and recorded by the manager and the employees. These principles serve as orientation aids and support employees in identifying with their company.

**Intellectual Stimulation (IS):** In order to establish innovative and new ways of looking at things, old ways of thinking have to be abandoned. The transformational leader, according to Bass and Riggio, seeks to stimulate the innovative and creative abilities of their employees through their behaviour. Employees are involved in problem-solving processes by participating in the definition of problems and the search for solutions. An open culture of error, where the transformational leader encourages or works with employees on how to learn from mistakes, should also be strived for.

**Individual Consideration (IC):** The transformational leader sees their employees as individuals who are not limited to their function or role within the organisation. In addition, the leader is available to each employee as an advisor, coach or trainer to address needs and develop personal potential. Thus, the transformational leader emphasises two-way communication, pays attention and listens effectively in order to build a personal relationship with their employees. To this end, the leader creates a climate of openness and support.

Bass states that employees develop their personal potential as the transformational leader delegates meaningful tasks and expands the scope of responsibility without overburdening employees. In doing so, respecting individual needs is a major challenge for the leader.

Another approach to transformational leadership has been identified by Podsakoff et al in their six dimensions which are similar to Bass' four I's. Conger and Kanungo also developed an approach based on charismatic leadership.

**Transactional Leadership:** The transactional leadership style, according to Bass, describes a relationship between the leader and their employees. As a form of rewarding leadership style, transactional leadership works through a reward and punishment model. The reward offered to the employee, usually monetary, is in exchange for fulfilled performance, but also includes punishment such as reductions for unfulfilled or poor performance.
According to Podsakoff et al\textsuperscript{68}, in a conditional reward, the exact conditions and goals to be achieved are fixed, negotiated between the leader and the employee and eventually lead to the reward. Zopiti\textsuperscript{s} et al\textsuperscript{85} argue that a precise agreement on tasks to be performed leads to a "quid pro quo" relationship between leader and employees.

Bass\textsuperscript{14} divides the transactional leadership style into three areas: (1) "Contingent Reward", (2) "Management-by-Exception Active" and (3) "Management-by-Exception Passive".

**Contingent Reward**: Bass\textsuperscript{16} argues that contingent reward, as part of transactional leadership, is a proactive leadership style offering rewards to employees when goals set by the leader are met. According to Bass and Avolio\textsuperscript{10}, the cooperation between leader and employee is based on the fact that valuable rewards are offered. Employees are motivated by receiving a reward depending on their performance and thus avoiding possible "penalties" for not achieving them. Arnold et al\textsuperscript{1} find that contingent reward is associated with several positive effects for employees such as increased job satisfaction. Although contingent reward is consistently predicted to have positive effects, these effects are significantly reduced compared to transformational leadership.\textsuperscript{5,19,52,54}

**Management by Exception - active and passive**: Management by exception, as part of transactional leadership, represents a style of leadership in which the leader responds to deviations from standards and mistakes made by their employees. Both Bass\textsuperscript{12} and Bass and Riggio\textsuperscript{19} state that "management by exception active" means active monitoring of employees by the leader and taking corrective action before errors or deviations occur. In contrast, "management by exception passive" means that despite monitoring by the leader, employees have freedom and the leader only takes action when errors or deviations from standards have occurred.

**Laissez-Faire Leadership**: Bass\textsuperscript{16} describes the laissez-faire leadership style as a form of passive leadership in which the leader avoids taking action. James and Collins\textsuperscript{41} argue that laissez-faire leadership is a passive leadership style in which the leader is reluctant to influence employees' freedoms. According to Zopiti\textsuperscript{s} et al\textsuperscript{85}, the leader shows no interest in cooperation and supports during a process and acts exclusively in a result-validating position.

Furtner and Baldegger\textsuperscript{16} describe the high level of dissatisfaction on the part of employees caused by a lack of interaction, low responsibility of the leader in relation to work and leadership tasks. As a result, according to Arnold et al\textsuperscript{1}, laissez-faire leadership is negatively associated with the perception of the leader's effectiveness.

To measure transactional, transformational and laissez-faire leadership, Bass\textsuperscript{12} developed the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ), a quantitative measuring instrument. In research, the short version is currently the most frequently used.\textsuperscript{3,4} The Transformational Leadership Inventory (TLI) developed by Podsakoff et al\textsuperscript{67,68} is another instrument for measuring transformational and transactional leadership. The measurement comprises a total of seven scales, six of which relate to the dimensions of transformational leadership and one to transactional leadership.

All definitions of leadership have in common that there must be both leaders and those being led within the system classified into different hierarchical levels. The leaders influence the led in a process of social influence in order to achieve common goals and tasks and to fulfil them.\textsuperscript{60}

In research on leadership, the Full-Range Leadership Model has established itself as a model of comprehensive leadership behaviour. It is considered the most influential model of leadership in economics.\textsuperscript{57,73}

**Motivation**: The motivation of employees is a significant factor for companies which can influence the overall performance so that it should not be underestimated. Employee motivation can be divided into different categories. First, intrinsic or autonomous motivation, in which the employee goes to work because the work is fun, interesting or exciting and because they like to be involved in their work. Autonomous motivation, according to Deci and Ryan\textsuperscript{29}, includes both intrinsic motivation and the forms of extrinsic motivation, where the employee identifies with the meaning of the activity and ideally has integrated it into their self-concept. This gives employees a sense of volition i.e. self-affirmation of their actions.

According to Gagné et al\textsuperscript{17}, the second category is extrinsic motivation in which the employee performs an activity for purely expedient reasons e.g. to receive recognition and rewards, to avoid punishment or criticism, to increase self-esteem or to achieve a personal goal. Grant\textsuperscript{48} concludes that intrinsic motivation generates higher levels of persistence, performance and productivity in employees. Furthermore, Gagné et al\textsuperscript{17} describe the absence of motivation towards an activity as another category.

Herzberg et al\textsuperscript{14} developed a classical content theory of work motivation based on the assumption that satisfaction and dissatisfaction are not endpoints on a bipolar scale. Rather, Herzberg et al\textsuperscript{14} argue that satisfaction and dissatisfaction are two independent dimensions Herzberg\textsuperscript{43} argues that the opposite of satisfaction is not dissatisfaction but "non-satisfaction", the absence of satisfaction. Similarly, the opposite of dissatisfaction is not satisfaction, but the absence of dissatisfaction, "non-dissatisfaction".

In their study, Herzberg et al conducted a survey among a total of 1,685 people in various industries and positions to find out which factors influence satisfaction and dissatisfaction. The study showed that satisfaction and
dissatisfaction were influenced to varying degrees by different events. Events related to work content or activities (intrinsic factors) often led to satisfaction, but rarely to dissatisfaction. Events related to the work context (extrinsic factors) led more often to dissatisfaction and only rarely to satisfaction.

Herzberg\textsuperscript{43} states that motivators relate to work content and influence motivation. The motivators include appreciation by superiors, responsibility, promotion or advancement, personal growth, recognition by colleagues, increasing one's own performance and work content. In reference to medical hygiene, Herzberg\textsuperscript{43} named the factors that lead to dissatisfaction as hygiene factors. Although these are necessary to achieve satisfaction, they are not mandatory. Ideally, strongly developed hygiene factors can result in an individual not being dissatisfied. Herzberg\textsuperscript{43} referred to the factors that lead to satisfaction as motivators. In contrast to the hygiene factors, the motivators can be an incentive to higher performance.

Over the years, there have been various methodological and substantive criticisms of Herzberg\textsuperscript{43}' two-factor theory. House and Wigdor\textsuperscript{45} criticised the division into motivators and hygiene factors as ambiguous. The critical incident technique chosen by Herzberg et al\textsuperscript{42} for the survey is another point of criticism. According to Vroom, satisfaction tends to be attributed to one's own achievements and successes, whereas negative events tend to be blamed on the environment such as poor working conditions or management. Therefore, according to Dunnette et al\textsuperscript{32}, the whole theory is strongly dependent on the method chosen to collect and analyse the initial data. Hulin and Smith\textsuperscript{50} found in their study that motivators and hygienic factors influence both satisfaction and dissatisfaction.

Work Performance: Work performance is scientifically researched within the framework of work and organisational psychology and also belongs to the area of human resource management. Work performance assesses whether an employee successfully completes their tasks and is a decisive criterion for company results and success. Sonnentag and Frese\textsuperscript{71} argue that companies are dependent on high-performing employees and leaders in order to achieve both the set corporate goals and to deliver the products and services in which they specialise in order to ultimately achieve competitive advantages. Managing tasks and performance at a high level can be an important basis for satisfaction; low performance and failure to achieve goals can be perceived as dissatisfaction or even personal failure.

Performance is often rewarded by financial and other benefits and is an important pre-requisite for career development and success in the labour market. Campbell\textsuperscript{23,24} defines job performance as an individual-level variable that an individual performs. Rather, the performance itself enables the organisation to achieve its goals.\textsuperscript{25} This distinguishes job performance from broader concepts such as organisational performance or government performance which are higher-level variables.

Performance represents a multidimensional construct. Borman and Motowidlo\textsuperscript{21} differentiate between task performance and contextual performance at the most basic level. Task performance describes the ability of an employee to perform activities that contribute to the "technical core" of the organisation. This performance can be either direct (e.g. production workers) or indirect (e.g. managers or staff). Contextual performance refers to activities that support the organisational environment. This includes, for example, the behaviour of employees towards each other, or suggestions for improving work processes.

Sonnentag et al\textsuperscript{72} state that performance includes the fulfilment of the requirements contained in the employment contract between employer and employee. Furthermore, performance itself can be seen as a multi-dimensional construct. Campbell\textsuperscript{23} presented eight performance factors in a hierarchical model. Five of these eight factors relate to task performance:

1. task-specific task competence
2. non-task-specific task competence
3. written and oral communication skills
4. supervision in the case of a management position
5. management / administration.

Contextual performance, according to Sonnentag et al\textsuperscript{72}, differs from task performance in that it includes activities that are not formally part of the job description. Borman and Motowidlo\textsuperscript{21} distinguish between five categories of contextual performance:

1. voluntary commitment to activities that go beyond an employee's formal job requirements
2. persistent enthusiasm and commitment to fulfilling important task requirements; and
3. helping others
4. following rules and prescribed procedures, even when inconvenient
5. openly advocating the goals of the organisation.

Sonnentag et al\textsuperscript{72} argue that teamwork and other forms of group work are increasingly being introduced in organisations. Due to the composition of teams of individuals, team processes and team performance cannot be fully understood and optimised without considering individual performance.

General Assumptions: Transformational leadership, according to Bass and Riggio\textsuperscript{19}, leads employees to exceed performance expectations. In doing so, the level of performance achieved exceeds what could be achieved, for example, through purely transactional leadership behaviour. Scott\textsuperscript{70} states that the level of motivation in the workplace has a direct impact on employee productivity. Thus,
productivity increases because motivated workers who are enthusiastic about their work, perform tasks to the best of their ability. Dionne et al.\(^1\) state that indirect outcomes of transformational leadership, such as a shared vision, team commitment, or an empowered team environment, have a positive impact on the team.

The purpose of this work is to investigate the following assumptions:

1. leadership behaviour has an impact on employee motivation and thus on team performance.
2. a shared vision has a positive impact on teamwork and performance (II/IM).
3. the leader's commitment has a positive impact on the team's performance (II/IM).
4. team cohesion will have a positive impact on team performance.
5. empowerment of team members by the leader will have a positive impact on team performance (IC).
6. Intrinsic motivation increases team performance more than extrinsic motivation.

**Research Framework**

The research framework shows the relationship between independent and dependent variables. The transformative and transactional leadership styles of the Full Range Leadership Model form the basis. These are used as independent variables. The dependent variable is employee motivation, which is used to draw conclusions about team performance.

Derived from Bass' research framework and theory, employee motivation increases from no motivation to high motivation depending on the leadership style used by the leader.

![Figure 1: Research Framework – Illustration by the authors](image)

![Figure 2: Level of Motivation – Illustration by the authors](image)
Methodology
In order to empirically test the assumptions, there are various possibilities with regard to the type of data material to be collected and the structure of the study. Primary data collection can be carried out using both the quantitative and the qualitative method.

Qualitative Research: Pohontsch states that qualitative research knows many methods for gaining insights from data. Qualitative content analysis is an established form of data evaluation. For the evaluation of interviews, questionnaires or group discussions, qualitative content analysis has proven to be an appropriate and practicable method for evaluating a wide range of questions and areas of application in research.

As Kohlbacher points out, the strength of qualitative content analysis lies in the fact that it is conducted in a methodologically stringent manner and the material is analysed step by step. The central element is a system of categories which are developed directly from the material with the help of a theoretical approach. According to Mayring, the aspects to be filtered out from the material are worked out on the basis of this category system.

Titscher et al. consider the category system to be the core and central tool of any content analysis. During coding, each statement must be assigned to one or more categories, whereby categories are understood to be the more or less operational definitions of variables.

Mayring and his research group developed the techniques of qualitative content analysis towards the end of the 1970s as part of a research project. For this purpose, Mayring describes the basic research steps, which are applicable for qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods research with a step model. Based on the traditional research processes of quantitative approaches, these are reformulated and expanded for qualitative approaches. Mayring distinguishes between seven phases:

Step 1: Concrete research question
Step 2: Linking the research question with theory
Step 3: Definition of the research design
Step 4: Defining the sample
Step 5: Methodological procedure in data collection and analysis
Step 6: Evaluation and interpretation of the results with regard to the research question
Step 7: Discussion in relation to quality criteria

For the data analysis and coding in this work, the structuring by means of deductive category assignment according to Mayring was used. This method represents a content-analytical method whose aim is to extract a certain structure from the material to be analysed. This structure is transferred to the existing data material through a system of categories. All textual components addressed by the categories are then specifically extracted from the material. The assignment of a particular feature to a category must be determined precisely. The fundamentals of the process are divided into three stages: 1. definition of categories, 2. anchor examples, 3. coding rules. Afterwards, a test run is carried out in which text passages are marked in which the searched category is addressed. This test run can result in a revision of the category system and its definitions.

Choice of Survey Instrument: In order to answer the research questions, the expert interview was chosen as the instrument for collecting the primary data. The selection of the interviewees was aimed at being representative in terms of content, so that particularly rich information can be generated on the research questions posed and the exploration of motivation, team performance and leadership style is made possible. For the structuring of the survey, an interview guideline was developed which was divided into the three thematic areas mentioned on the basis of the research interests. The partially standardised questionnaire formed a questionnaire framework in which closed initial questions and open follow-up questions were used.

The questions of the three thematic areas were divided into the areas of leadership style, motivation and team performance, each with a closed introductory question and a concluding open follow-up question. The questions on leadership style were based on Bass’ Full Range Leadership Model, while the questions on motivation were based on the theory of Herzberg et al. The research of Campbell as well as Borman and Motowidlo formed the basis for the area of team performance whereby the questions are derived from the respective categories. Partial structuring allowed the interviewer to actively shape the interview situation. This made it possible to inquire about certain topics in order to be able to understand facts more intensively or in greater depth.

The interview guide was presented as follows:

Thematic area – Leadership style
1. Do you think you are fair to your employees when it comes to decision-making? How does this become clear?
2. Do you think it is important to involve staff in the implementation of new concepts/ideas? How does this become clear?
3. Do you think it is important for a leader to be assertive? How does this become clear?
4. Do you feel that a concrete work plan to support each staff member to achieve specific goals is important? How does this become apparent?
5. Do you feel that the company's goals and communicating a clear vision for the future are important? How does this become apparent?
6. Do you believe that other views and perspectives are helpful in solving problems? In your experience, how does this become clear?
Thematic area – Motivation
7. Do you believe that the motivation of your employees has an influence on the achievement of company goals? How does this become apparent?
8. Do you feel that the development needs of your employees have an influence on motivation? How does this become apparent?
9. Do you think that interesting and exciting tasks motivate your employees more? How does your experience show this?
10. Do you have the feeling that target agreements increase the motivation of your employees? How does this become clear?
11. Do you think that the intervention of the leader has an influence on the motivation of the employees in case of mistakes or deviations from the standard? How is this noticeable?

Thematic area – Team performance
12. Do you have the feeling that your employees are sufficiently qualified for their tasks? How does this become apparent?
13. Do you have the impression that your employees treat each other professionally and considerately? How is this evident? 14.
14. Do you think that communication within your team works well? How does this become apparent?
15. Do you have the feeling that your employees share the responsibility for tasks? How does this show?
16. Do you think that the responsibilities are balanced among the members of your team? How is this evident?
17. Do you think your team can adapt quickly to changing priorities? How does your experience show this?

Method of data analysis: The formation of categories necessary for data analysis and coding was carried out deductively on the basis of the relevant theories. The categorisation of the leadership style was carried out on the basis of transformational and transactional leadership. For this purpose, the individual variations of the two leadership styles were used and the criteria were formed.

The categorisation of motivation was conducted according to Herzberg and a distinction was made between high, neutral and no motivation. The factors of motivation thus resulted from the motivators and the hygiene factors and the respective level of satisfaction. The categories of performance differed based on the task and contextual performance of the employees.

Quality Criteria of Robust Research: Steinke argues that in the discussion about quality criteria for qualitative research, a distinction can be made between three basic approaches: 1. Quantitative criteria for qualitative research, 2. Independent criteria of qualitative research, 3. Rejection of postmodern criteria. Mey et al. also describe the necessity of establishing quality criteria for qualitative research. They justify this with the statement that in contrast to quantitative research, no universally valid quality criteria have yet been established in qualitative research. However, there are various differentiated approaches in assessing the quality of qualitative methodological procedures. As central quality criteria of qualitative research, Mey et al. formulate transparency, intersubjectivity and scope. In contrast, Steinke describes the central criteria for qualitative research as: intersubjective comprehensibility, representation of the research process and empirical foundation.

Results
As described, the expert interview was used to collect primary data. The participants are exclusively employees who work for German companies across different economic sectors (e.g. logistics, health care, food, telecommunications or IT services). They work in different departments (e.g. controlling, quality management, consulting, finance) and at different hierarchical levels (lower, middle and higher management).

In March 2021, a total of 13 interviews were conducted of which 12 interviews were evaluated. Due to legal measures during the COVID-19 pandemic, face-to-face interviews were not possible, so the interviews were conducted using a video conferencing system. The interviews lasted an average of 30 minutes with the shortest interview lasting 17 minutes and the longest 44 minutes. In order to transcribe the data obtained afterwards, the interviews were digitally recorded.

The interviews were all conducted in German. The interview guide was provided to the participants in advance. At the beginning of the interviews, the ethical guidelines and the purpose of the interview were explained to the participants. Consent to participate and record the interview was obtained. All interviews were conducted anonymously to ensure data protection. The standardised questions were asked to all interviewees following the same order.

The interviews were transcribed using the function provided by "Microsoft Word 365 online". This produced verbatim transcripts in the first step. These were converted into a flattened verbatim transcript according to the transcription rules of Mayring. The evaluation of the collected data from the expert interviews was carried out using the previously formed categories. For this purpose, the interviews were analysed line by line following the seven steps of Mayring. Text passages that fulfilled the category definition and represented an ideal-typical text passage were inserted into the coding guide as anchor examples.

In the sub-category, idealised influence with the sub-code "fair interaction", it became apparent that all interviewees cultivate fair interaction with their employees and try to include them in as many decisions as possible. This was based on the expectation that employees are experts due to their proximity to the respective tasks and their higher knowledge as expressed by interviewee #1.
Figure 3: Categorisation of Leadership

Figure 4: Categorisation of motivation

Figure 5: Categorisation of performance

Figure 6: Profile of the respondents
Interviewee #8 stated that by giving responsibility to employees, they are able to allocate their tasks as autonomously as possible and thus set their development and performance priorities. The subcodes "getting employees involved" and "different views and perspectives on problems" partly reflected answers with the same character.

Leaders take into account the views and ideas of their employees as this gives rise to new ideas or perspectives that the leader may not have considered, as interviewee #1 expressed. Interviewee #6 highlighted the influence that staff can have on developments and decisions. Interviewee #8 emphasised the need for buy-in to concepts that staff helped to develop. Interviewee #7 argued that multiple perspectives provide multiple solutions to problems. The employees are the specialists in finding solutions, as they have deeper knowledge of the subject matter.

Within the subcategory, inspirational motivation with the subcode "inspiration and motivation", interviewee #7 stated that employee motivation is the driving force that differentiates a good company from a very good company. Interviewee #8 said that motivated employees are more efficient. Interviewee #13 stated that only motivated employees achieve good results. The challenge for the leader and also for the company, is to keep the employees motivated. In general, all participants considered that motivated employees were important in achieving the company's goals.

The subcode "challenging tasks" revealed that performing interesting and challenging tasks motivate employees, promote development and increase their willingness to work harder.

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### Figure 7: Coding table Transformational Leadership - Idealized Influence (II)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main category</th>
<th>Subcategory/ code</th>
<th>Subcode</th>
<th>Interview</th>
<th>Anchor examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Transformational Leadership | Idealised Influence - Idealized Influence | 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13 | 13: "[...] I involve staff very strongly [...] when it comes to technical decisions [...] because in the end the experts [...] are much closer to the topic and usually know more about it [...]"
13: "[...] I actually always include them in my decisions [...] we want to improve and how do we do that, we actually always decide that together and then think about our roadmap together [...]"
14: "[...] to always involve employees in important decisions and to take them along and explain to them what we actually have in mind and ideally to come to a decision together"
18: "[...] I show them their room for manoeuvre and usually try to explain to them the advantages and disadvantages [...] to give them the responsibility that they can divide up their own work as independently as possible and set their own development and performance priorities"

within the subcategory, inspirational motivation with the subcode "inspiration and motivation", interviewee #7 stated that employee motivation is the driving force that differentiates a good company from a very good company. Interviewee #8 said that motivated employees are more efficient. Interviewee #13 stated that only motivated employees achieve good results. The challenge for the leader and also for the company, is to keep the employees motivated. In general, all participants considered that motivated employees were important in achieving the company's goals.

The subcode "challenging tasks" revealed that performing interesting and challenging tasks motivate employees, promote development and increase their willingness to work harder.
Here, all interviewees saw the challenge of offering employees a portfolio of tasks which is challenging while covering standard tasks. Thus, interviewee #3 stated that employees are demotivated if only the same tasks have to be done repetitiously.

The subcodes "attractive, forward-looking visions" and "communicating the importance of the company's goals" showed that self-developed visions for the department evoke higher motivation among employees highlighted in the statements of interviewee #1 and #4. The statements on clear communication of the company's goals showed that these were decisive factors both in the motivation of employees and of leaders, exemplified in the statements of interviewees #2, #7 and #9.

For the subcategory intellectual stimulation, the subcodes "new knowledge and competences" and "continuous learning" were surveyed. Here, interviewee #2 expressed the expectation that employees will continue to develop their skills on their own in order to keep up with new challenges. Interviewee #1 stated that technical development is a major factor in employees' need for continuous training and the acquisition of new knowledge. This was particularly evident among leaders working in technical areas, but also among the rest of the interviewees. The general fast pace of the economy and short-term adjustments in corporate strategy are playing a major role here.

This was also reflected in the answers to the subcategory individual consideration with the subcode "Developing strengths and skills". Here, interviewees #4 and #11 emphasised that the involvement of employees in their personal development had a decisive influence on motivation. The subcode "Delegating tasks" showed that interviewees #2 and #6 assign tasks directly to employees while for the rest of the participants, employees have a portfolio of tasks for which they are each responsible.
The allocation and processing of tasks is at the discretion of the employees. The leader only controls the result. This also became apparent in the subcode "Increase responsibility." Interviewee #2 presented the responsibility for the result and thus the contribution of each employee to the company’s success. Interviewee #11 emphasised the clear responsibility for tasks and the communication of these responsibilities to the employees.

The subcode "Employee incentives" pointed out that the majority of the interviewees consider target agreements with a monetary link to salary to be outdated. In annual interviews, goals are defined with the employees that are linked to the company goals. Only four interviewees linked target agreements to monetary targets.

The subcode "increased satisfaction" was addressed directly by five interviewees, for example, interviewee #4 named the employees’ agreement with the jointly developed goals of the department.

Within the subcode "response to errors or deviations", it became apparent that the leaders preferred to seek solutions in partnership. A clarifying discussion would only be held in the case of intentional or repetitive errors. All interviewees emphasised that the way the leader approaches the employee has a decisive influence. A negative attitude or authoritarian behaviour on the part of the leader could contribute to demotivating the employee. Likewise, the majority said that a possible need for development could also be derived from the error analysis with the employees.

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**Figure 10: Coding table Transformational Leadership - Individual Consideration (IC)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main category</th>
<th>Subcategory/ code</th>
<th>Subcode</th>
<th>Interview</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Transformatio nal Leadership</td>
<td>Individual Consideration (IC)</td>
<td>Developing</td>
<td>1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delegating tasks</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2, 3, 4, 7, 8, 9, 13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase responsibility</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Anchor examples**

1. "[...] I would like to become broader and know more or I would like to become a leader or simply a specialist [...]"
2. "[...] if I didn’t conduct the appraisal interview [...] it could formulate [...]. what they actually want [...] only then can I use the corresponding training, push them in that direction and only then do people enjoy it and only then do I achieve my company goals."
3. "[...] I divide up the tasks and therefore there is little need for me to say now coordinate among yourselves [...]"
4. "[...] to distribute the tasks according to skills and knowledge, but all in all I still try to treat every employee equally [...]"
5. "[...] everyone is responsible for their results and their contribution to the success of the company and I always try to explain this to the other person."
6. "[...] it is the responsibility that is very important, that it is basically clear who does what? And then everyone is aware that he is not there, then it is my thing or his thing or someone else’s thing. But the responsibility is clear and it feels like there is a clear path [...]"

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**Figure 11: Coding table Transactional Leadership - Contingent Reward and Management by Exception**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main category</th>
<th>Subcategory/ code</th>
<th>Subcode</th>
<th>Interview</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Transactional Leadership</td>
<td>Contingent Reward (CR)</td>
<td>Increased satisfaction</td>
<td>3, 4, 5, 6, 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee incentives</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 9, 10, 11, 13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management by Exception (MBE)</td>
<td>Response to errors or deviations</td>
<td></td>
<td>1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Anchor examples**

1. "[...] I have a very strong branch manager, but people feel very well looked after [...]"
2. "[...] they have created them themselves, they just stand behind it differently and say yes, I have written this on the notice board and I have decided that it is important [...]"
3. "[...] in principle, I think it makes sense to agree on objectives in order to set the focus and indicate a direction [...]"
4. "[...] especially in sales, it is important that people know their goals and also know what happens when they achieve or exceed their goals. [...] That’s why I think it’s essential and if these individual goals reflect the company’s goal, then it’s a win-win situation."
5. "[...] have agreed annual bonuses, i.e. bonus payments that happen at the end of the year. The target agreement is actually coordinated per project, which means the project target is set and the employees are put in this role of the project."
6. "[...] has an influence in any case, whether it is good or bad depends on what exactly the leader does, i.e. if I have a worse result than planned and I express myself accordingly in a negative way, I can of course risk that the motivation sinks. [...] What is important is what kind of error policy you yourself or the company have, if you talk openly about it, if you say, We had actually imagined it differently, but there were such and such reasons, then that can also influence motivation in a positive sense, [...] also lean from it again."
7. "[...] as a leader, I would never reproach my employees if a mistake is made, unless it is deliberate and repeated [...] I am a friend of getting creative and maybe thinking outside the box and choosing a completely different approach to a solution and I also believe that this motivates one or the other employee [...]"
The sub-categories "work performance and success" and "work content" were addressed by all interviewees. Interviewee #6 stated that his employees were very qualified and that his area of responsibility had one of the lowest staff turnover rates in the company and at the same time one of the highest efficiency improvement rates in recent years. Interviewee #9 stated that employees defined job content, for example, through a great working environment or a particularly exciting topic.

The sub-categories "Recognition" and "Responsibility" showed that recognition through promotion, as interviewee #3 stated, had a positive impact on employee motivation. The responsibility of the employees also had a decisive influence on their motivation. For example, the employees of interviewee #1 had the opportunity to act and make decisions almost completely independently within their area of responsibility.

Within the subcategories "Growth" and "Promotion", interviewee #4 stated that the development needs and support of employees had a great influence on motivation. Interviewee #11 stated that she had hired a new employee to establish a new therapy area in the company and they were motivated to work on the implementation.

For the sub-code "salary", target agreements were also used as a benchmark, as in the evaluation of leadership style. Interviewee #2 stated that target agreements were helpful as a component of salary. Interviewee #13 stated that monetary aspects in target agreements were motivating for his area.

In the area of "management style", all interviewees stated that the leader should act as a moderator, taking into account the feedback of the employees and stands by the decisions made. Interviewee #11 stated that employees should not only come to the leader with problems, but also directly with suggestions for solutions. The majority of the interviewees considered assertiveness to be necessary and helpful towards achieving the next higher level of management.

The areas of "working conditions" and "interpersonal relations" were also addressed by all participants. Interviewee #11 stated that he would involve his staff in the planning of a new therapy centre to a great extent, as they were the professionals and later their area of activity would
Interviewee #6 described the cohesion within the family business with the mutual support of the employees among each other, for example in case of problems or illness.

The sub-code "task competence" was addressed by all participants. Interviewee #1 stated that the staff had a great technical background. Interviewee #4 additionally emphasised the achievement of set standards. Interviewee #6 said that the expert feedback of his staff was an essential point when making decisions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main category</th>
<th>Subcategory/code</th>
<th>Interview</th>
<th>Anchor examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Hygiene factors | Salary | 2, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 13 | "[...] Target agreements in the sense of salary components are certainly also helpful.[...]
|               |                | 12 | "[...] with us it is actually the case that you get money for it.[...], which is the first time in the company that you actually work with target agreements.[...]
|               |                | 13 | "[...] in my controller job, they are all bonus recipients, so of course this has a direct money effect. So for them it is, on the one hand, of course a motivation and, on the other hand, simply a guideline to organise their year and to advance and prioritise their topics.
| Management style | 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13 | 14 | "[...] there are points where you have to decide, where you have to assert yourself, but in general, I think it is more important as a leader to have a good moderation to tickle the right out of people and then to convince them that the decision is the right one.[...]
|               |                | 15 | "[...] I discuss a lot with my staff [...]. I take feedback into account and listen to my staff when there are suggestions.[...]
|               |                | 16 | "[...] My favourite employee is the one who not only brings the problem to me, but also brings a solution.
| Working conditions | 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13 | 17 | "[...] to plan a therapy centre and it would be fatal not to involve the people who work there afterwards, I need the professionals to tell me how best to implement it.
|               |                | 18 | "[...] you can't motivate everyone, for many the jobs just not the right one and then it's extremely difficult, so I think it's absolutely necessary to talk to people where you have the feeling that the job is just not the right one.
| Interpersonal relations | 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13 | 19 | "[...] a handful of people around him who have to support him and work for him so that the whole thing works.[...]
|               |                | 20 | "[...] we are a family business we take care of each other when there are problems in the team when employees are unwell when employees are ill and their colleagues step in and also take care of open questions and issues.

Figure 13: Coding table Hygiene factors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main category</th>
<th>Subcategory/code</th>
<th>Interview</th>
<th>Anchor examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Task performance | task competence | 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13 | 11 | "[...] We have people who have a very large professional background, who are very good at what they do technically, who have also been doing it for a long time.
|               |                | 12 | "[...] Tasks that are part of the standard, that they are qualified for it, then it becomes clear that the standard is simply achieved.
|               |                | 13 | "[...] it is important for me to get feedback from experts when making decisions that point the way and to be able to rely on the opinions and feedback of the experts, i.e. my staff.
| Communication skills | 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13 | 14 | "[...] we have international teams, we have colleagues who are not at one location anyway [...]. have the same information content and the same communication content with colleagues abroad or in other parts of Germany [...]. learnt this like a kind of crash course through the home office and are then top prepared.[...]
|               |                | 15 | "[...] have introduced certain rules of communication in order to exchange information and keep up to date [...]. Before Corona, for example, we had a 5-minute meeting in the operational area at the beginning of each shift and within the group [...]. Shopfloor Management approach where you just exchange information about the things that are there [...].
|               |                | 16 | "[...] Communication is actually quite good and that surprised me the most, how well it worked through Corona and Home Office. They really communicate very well with each other.[...]
| Supervision | 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 | 17 | "[...] what kind of fault do you have yourself or the company, if you talk openly about it, if you say, we had actually imagined it differently, but there were such and such reasons, then that can also influence the motivation in a positive sense.
|               |                | 18 | "[...] I have a branch manager who is very, very assertive but still very much in partnership with his team.

Figure 14: Coding table Task performance
All participants saw the "communication skills" of the employees as an important point, partly, work is increasingly done in the home office and the communication of the employees, through the use of virtual teams, (especially in times of the COVID-19 pandemic), but also with the leader playing a decisive role. Here it became apparent to almost all participants that a rethink was necessary due to the current challenges and that new methods and tools had to be established.

In the area of "supervision", the handling of the error policy was addressed, which has an influence on employees in terms of motivation, but also task performance.

In the subcode "engaging voluntarily", interviewee #1 stated that each employee has their own area for which they are responsible, in which they are particularly knowledgeable and from which they support their colleagues in other areas. Interviewee #7 stated that motivated employees will look beyond their "own nose" and seek contact with other interface partners in order to provide support.

Interviewee #13 described an example, for the subcode "enthusiasm", where a staff member had familiarised himself with a new area within a short period of time in order to create a new annual report. Interviewee #4 cited enthusiasm in working on tasks as becoming apparent in the motivation of staff.

The subcode "commitment" was described by interviewee #1 as a higher willingness of employees to work on interesting topics where employees saw potential for development. Interviewee #3 described an increased willingness of employees to take on new tasks assigned by the leader.

Interviewee #4 described the subcode "providing support" with the support for the employees and the joint search for solutions, which was seen as appreciation by the employees. Interviewees #7 and #13 described the mutual support of employees in solving problems or coping with tasks.

**Evaluation of the assumptions**

**Assumption 1 - Leadership behaviour has an impact on staff motivation and thus on team performance:** The evaluation of the interviews indicated that the interviewees see the leadership behaviour of the leader as having a decisive influence on the motivation of the employees. All interviewees involved their employees in the implementation of new ideas and concepts and included them in the solution of problems. This was evident from the fact that the employees were seen as experts in their respective fields of work and the leader was not as deep-rooted in the respective topics and thus depended on the advice and knowledge of their teams. When it came to implementing new ideas and concepts, another factor was
that employees were directly affected by these decisions in their daily work.

Poor decisions made by the leader alone could thus have a negative impact on motivation. Furthermore, this was reflected in the consistently fair treatment of the leaders with the employees. Dealing with mistakes or deviations from standards was seen by all interviewees as an important factor for staff motivation. Here, a supportive and cooperative approach by the leader has a decisive influence on employee motivation. This also became apparent in the case of assertiveness: here, too, moderation and participation were more important in relation to employees. Assertiveness was seen more in decisions towards the next higher management level. The effects of the resulting motivation on team performance could be derived from the anchor examples found in the area of contextual performance (voluntariness of engagement, enthusiasm and commitment).

Assumption 2- A shared vision has a positive impact on teamwork and performance (II/IM): All interviewees described the importance of an existing vision of the company in order to derive the goals for the respective department and to communicate the purpose and content of the tasks to the employees. While some of the interviewees had broken down the vision for their departments to their respective areas, others had defined their own goals from the company vision and the goals together with their employees. These were then developed with the participation of the employees, so that an increase in motivation could be derived from them. On the basis of these evaluations, it also became clear that employees and also leaders demand this vision in order to motivate themselves, to orientate themselves and to have a clear outlook.

It seemed important to all interviewees that the company’s vision and goals must be communicated clearly and comprehensibly to the employees as well as the goals for their department and finally the goals for the employees.

Assumption 3- The leader’s commitment has a positive impact on the team’s performance (II/IM): In order to evaluate the performance of the team, the performance of the individual had to be considered. Thus, the commitment of the leader was reflected in the way he dealt with their subordinates. This can include the handling of mistakes or deviations from the standard, as here the behaviour of the leader has a decisive influence on how this is communicated to the employee. Conversely, the participation of the employees in problem solving or the development of new concepts and ideas has an influence on the performance of the individual and can thus be scaled up to the team.

The aforementioned assertiveness of the leader is also considered important by the interviewees: differences become apparent in the way this assertiveness is implemented. For example, assertiveness towards employees is equated more with persuasion, moderation, setting framework conditions and finally, consistent behaviour. The leader’s assertiveness is more likely to be seen in relation to the next higher hierarchical level for example to represent project goals or decisions.

All interviewees described that the motivation of the individual employees had an influence on the achievement of the company’s goals. Since these goals can only be achieved together as a team and the motivation of the employees depends on the commitment of the leader, a connection can be derived from this.

Assumption 4- Team cohesion will positively influence team performance: Team cohesion is characterised by various factors. The performance of the team can be increased through professional and considerate interaction which becomes apparent, for example, in the mutual support of the team members. In addition, communication within the team as well as clear responsibilities and competences of the team members have a decisive influence on team performance. This, also, becomes clear in the quick adaptation to changing priorities, as only a functioning team can cope with them.

All interviewees once again highlight the special challenges that are currently becoming apparent in all areas due to the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, working in a home office or also generally cross-location departmental structures pose different and/or new challenges for communication between leaders and their employees, but also between employees themselves. One example is communication via email, messenger or online meetings which are now increasingly used for coordination among each other. This gives room for misinterpretations that might not occur in a "face to face" communication.

Assumption 5- Empowerment of team members by the leader has a positive impact on team performance (IC): By involving the employees in decision-making processes, the leader increases the motivation of the employees as well as the general commitment. This is made clear by the fact that all interviewees try to involve the employees within the scope of possibilities, for example by giving them the opportunity to actively participate in the redesign of a therapy centre or to design their own work area. This also includes the targeted further development of staff, whether through qualification measures to develop knowledge across the board or to take the next leap on the career ladder. All responses reflect the fact that these measures increase the motivation of individual employees and thus lead inevitably to an increase in team performance.

Assumption 6- Intrinsic motivation increases team performance more than extrinsic motivation: In addition, as the previous assumptions have made clear, the performance of the team or department is always dependent on the performance of the individual employee. The performance of the individual employee depends on various
factors of motivation. For example, target agreements in the classic sense of extrinsic motivation through monetary incentives are no longer considered appropriate by some of the interviewees. This is partly due to the fact that employees only focus on achieving the respective goals, which are not always feasible in today’s fast-paced world.

In contrast, target agreements are seen as helpful in determining the focus of employees. Depending on the respective industry, for example in sales or also for employees who are paid outside of collective agreements, target agreements are quite common. Employees then receive a bonus or other benefits. However, all interviewees share the opinion that extrinsic motivation only provides temporary motivation and does not motivate employees in the long term.

The increase of intrinsic motivation, for example through interesting and appealing tasks and ability to influence those tasks, is seen by all interviewees. The overall portfolio of tasks plays a role in creating a balanced relationship between regular and challenging tasks.

Discussion

It became apparent, in the expert interviews, that leadership behaviour has a decisive influence on staff motivation. Since employees are seen by the leaders as experts whose advice and opinions are important, there is a high level of participation by these experts in decisions which set the function’s direction. This participation makes the employees feel valued and motivated, which ultimately has an impact on the performance of the individual and thus on the collective performance of the team. It was also found that the vision and goals of the companies are an important factor in terms of employee motivation and performance. These are broken down to the departments and form the framework for the tasks of the employees.

Once again, employee participation has a special influence here, insofar as the goals or guiding principles can be co-drafted by the employees. Furthermore, it turned out that the commitments of the leader, be it through the lived error culture, the general handling or the participation of the employees in problem solving, are important elements in employee leadership. Especially in the current situation with COVID-19, new challenges arise for the leader as well as for the employees in terms of cooperation in the department. For example, internal communication via new communication channels or the clear regulation of responsibilities and competences of employees through home office or in virtual teams are important points.

Other important findings are the empowerment of employees through a high degree of participation in decision-making processes as well as the continuous development through qualification measures in order to be able to cope with the ever faster technical change. With regard to intrinsic motivation, it became clear that target agreements in the classic sense of extrinsic motivation, such as monetary incentives, are no longer regarded as up-to-date by a large proportion of the interviewees and are rather used to work out clear goals with the employees.

The data obtained from the expert interviews allowed a deep insight into the actions and behaviour of the respective participants. It became apparent that the elements of transformational leadership are widely applied in the various business sectors and fields of activity. Areas of transactional leadership are also addressed. For example, as mentioned earlier, target agreements are used without linking them to monetary rewards.
The results of the Gallup Engagement Index with regard to employee loyalty to their company become apparent in the statements of interviewees #04 and #8 to the effect that employees who are not promoted or are assigned to the wrong position are more likely to change jobs and look for a new employer. The results of the Deloitte Millennial Survey 2016 also become apparent in the statements of interviewee #06 regarding a low turnover rate.

Due to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, there are new conditions for both leaders and employees, which are having an increased or accelerated impact at the present time, for example, increasing digitalisation or where possible, working in virtual teams. This will play a decisive role in future research on leadership behaviour.

In practice, it becomes apparent that leadership behaviour is dependent on the company structure and the structure of the departments and employees. This was expressed in the case of the leaders who have other leaders under them and thus have less direct contact with employees. With regard to leadership style, a spectrum of elements of transformational and transactional leadership became apparent. The implementation of the measures currently demanded by the German Government with regard to home office also presents leaders and employees with new challenges in communicating with each other and in organising work processes, unless they have already been working in virtual teams or with remote workplaces.

According to Faupel and Süss transformational leadership is conducive to the successful implementation of these change processes. They justify this with the positive effects that transformational leadership has on employee engagement.

Limitations and Future research directions
The validity of this study is limited due to methodological restrictions which will be critically examined in the following.

One limitation is the qualitative study with a sample of 13 expert interviews. The primary data was collected exclusively from leaders who work in various economic sectors of German companies and at various hierarchical levels. However, the results obtained in this way cannot be applied without exception to other companies or departments from the same or other sectors and are therefore not to be regarded as representative.

Another limitation can be seen in the gender distribution with ten male and three female participants. The age structure with a total of eight participants over 40 years of age can be seen as a further limitation. The restriction of the sample exclusively to leaders did not cover the multiplicity of employees and their perceptions with regard to leadership behaviour, leadership style, motivation and team performance.

The limitations mentioned offer various possibilities to substantiate the primary data obtained qualitatively in this work. On the one hand, this can be done through a larger sample with a qualitative study, or through a quantitative study among leaders. An expansion of the selected sectors as well as the structure of the participants with regard to gender and age group offer further fields for follow-up studies. Likewise, follow-up studies can extend the restriction to companies in Germany to the European Union or to other continents. Furthermore, it is possible to carry out the collection of primary data from the perspective of the employees and thus obtain new or further insights.

Conclusion
Motivation and team performance are the building blocks in the world of work which are directly influenced by the actions of the leader. The type of leadership applied in the workplace has a direct impact on the motivation of employees, who can only perform their tasks and exceed expectations if they are positively motivated. This has a consequent impact on the performance of the team because motivated employees spur their colleagues on to higher performance, so that the team is ultimately uplifted and successful.

Thus, leadership and job satisfaction are important issues which every organisation needs to address as they have a strong impact on effectiveness and goal achievement. In these fast-moving times characterised by constant change, motivated employees are therefore a decisive factor in business.

The currently prevailing COVID-19 pandemic, which must be seen as an additional driver of digitalisation and the changeover to remote workplaces, becomes apparent with the need to adapt leadership style and also to implement new techniques and tools quickly and smoothly, for example in communication within departments. Here, too, the motivation of the employees must be constantly maintained.

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