

FOLLOWERSHIP: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY IN BRAZIL

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Followership is a theme relatively new in academic literature and according to Bennis (2010) and Avolio, Walumbwa and Weber (2009), it has been largely neglected in the study of leadership, maybe one of the most interesting omissions in the theory and research about leadership. The reverse of lens from leader to follower is something relatively new in academic literature and particularly in Brazil, where there is not even a correct translation for the term followership and research in academic sources reveals no publications about the theme in Brazil (Scripnic, 2010). That is one of main justifications to start development of the theme in Brazil through an empirical research aiming to better understand the role of the follower. The approach selected was the followership perspective, when followers describe their own view and perspective about their role. The main objective of this paper was to identify how followers in Brazil describe the role of being a follower. It was used qualitative methodology, through an exploratory research to identify how followers describe their roles. It was conducted a semi-structured interview with 14 employees from a variety of industries in Brazil. The results revealed that followers in Brazil initially describe the role of being a follower in the majority of aspects very similar to what previous foreign literature had already revealed (Zaleznik, 1965; Kelley, 1988; Chaleff, 1995; Kellerman, 2008; Carsten et al, 2010). The compiled answers of all respondents pointed descriptions to an effective follower as someone that is very committed, does more than expected, always proposes some new and different initiative, is the first to offer as voluntary to some new initiative, keeps optimistic besides difficulties, is loyal to the chief and always enthusiastic. All theses description is very consistent with effective follower characteristics previously pointed by other researchers. There were only two aspects related to effective followers' characteristics that revealed divergence to researched literature: a) Know how to show what they do and; b) Usually agree with the chief. Both descriptions do not appear in literature as related to effective follower and are even contradictory to what Chaleff (1995) and Kelley (1988) posit as effective followers. Given the current state of art about followership in academic literature, the lack of information regarding the theme in Brazil and some initial contradiction found in this empirical study compared to foreign literature, the present work can give its contribution, putting new lens in the leadership research and collaborate to expand knowledge about followership in a different culture than what has been studied during last decades.

1. INTRODUCTION

Followership is a theme relatively new in academic literature and it has been largely neglected in the study of leadership, maybe one of the most interesting omissions in the theory and research about leadership (Bennis, 2010; Avolio, Walumbwa & Weber, 2009). Although the discussion about followership in literature has started with Zaleznik (1965) publication “the dynamics of subordinacy”, the number of new articles and greater attention to the theme only emerged less than thirty years ago, when Meindl, Ehrlich and Dukerich (1985) published the classic article “the romance of leadership”, criticizing the heroic vision about leadership that usually stereotype the leader as totally responsible for organizational success, suggesting that to attribute organizational outcomes to individual leaders is a romantic oversimplification. Three years later, Kelley (1988) brought more light to the theme proposing that followers had also an active role to play in organizational success and heroic leaders could not be only the central focus to be pointed as the main cause. This initial idea, that followers could be more than passive subordinates were further and deeper explored by Chaleff (1995) in his book about courageous followers. In his book, Chaleff (1995) explores the dynamic of the leader-follower relationship and points the active role a follower can have, assuming responsibilities, challenging the leaders, speaking to hierarchy and participating in the transformation of leaders and companies. He calls attention to the need of reversing lens from leaders to focus also on followers and affirms in the third edition of his book, (Chaleff, 2009), that no serious student of leadership can any longer ignore its essential counterpart, given the new landscape and the growing body of scholarly research and practitioner experience on followership within the last two decades.

If leadership researches on follower-centric view are relatively new in global academic literature and publications still scarce in comparison to traditional leadership studies that usually focus on leaders' role and put follower just as an outcome of the leadership process, it is possible to guess beforehand the limited and rare knowledge regarding followership in Brazil or even in Latin America. The challenge begins with the difficulty to find an appropriate word to better translate “followership”. In spite of existing translation for follower, that in Portuguese means *seguidor*, there is no word in Portuguese to express a translation of the concept “followership” (Scripnic, 2010). Search in the main Brazilian academic publications shows no result for abstracts mentioning the word “followership”. Searching in google academic advanced tool, filtering the language Portuguese and followership, it brings only 12 articles as result and none of them related to leadership studies, while using the same Portuguese filter, but with the word “leadership”, more than eight thousand are available. Searching in other academic tools, such as *Scielo* or *Anpad*, also show no result for the same theme. This landscape reveals the great opportunity there is to advance knowledge in this new field in Brazil, once the majority of publications on the topic come from abroad.

Given the current state of art about followership in academic literature, that is still in its first steps toward a consistent knowledge and the lack of information regarding the theme in Brazil, the present work can give its contribution, putting new lens in the leadership research in Brazil and collaborate to expand knowledge about followership in a different culture than what it has been studied in last decades.

1.1 Research problem

Although followership studies seek to reverse the lens from the leaders to followers, different approaches have been explored in literature regarding the theme. The first one can be called as “follower-centric approach”. In this scenery, the main interest is to reveal the followers’ perspective about the leader. Uhl-bien and Pillai (2007) point out that many studies using this perspective of followership have examined the social construction that followers make of leaders and their relationship to leaders. Despite changing the lens to the followers’ point of view and be considered a “follower-centric approach” to leadership, these studies is still somewhat leader-centric, once it maintains focus on leader, even if from a follower point of view (Uhl-bien & Pillai, 2007).

Another different approach pointed by Uhl-bien and Pillai (2007) refers to “followership approach”. In this perspective the discussion focuses on how followers construct “followership”. It is totally follower centered. According to Meindl (1995), the “followership approach” differs from “follower-centric approaches to leadership”, once the issue of interest is not follower perspectives of leadership but instead, follower perspective of followership. Rather than considering how followers view their leaders and their leaders’s behaviors, a focus on followership would consider how followers view their own behaviors and roles when engaging with leaders. Shamir (2007) states that such perspective helps to reverse the lens by addressing focus on followers’ behaviors and roles according to own follower view of themselves.

Carsten, Uhl-Bien, West, Patera and MacGregor (2010) have recently developed an empirical study focusing exactly on the followership perspective approach, conducting a qualitative research with thirty-one participants (followers) from various industries in US and Canada, aiming to examine how individuals socially construct their roles as followers and exploring followership schemas and contextual influences that relate to these constructions. The results revealed that followership hold a multiplicity of meanings for individuals occupying the role, varying in a continuum from more passive (e.g. blindly obedient) to more pro-active (e.g. change agent) and this social construction in particular workplaces seems to be related to contextual variables of leadership style (authoritarian or supportive / empowering) and climate (bureaucratic/ hierarchical or empowering). Carsten et al (2010) conclude pointing the implication with organizations desire for passivity (e.g. blind obedience and deference) or pro-activity (e.g. partnership, co-leadership) among their employees and whether employees’ followership schema fit with organization climate.

Carsten et al (2010) highlight the limitation of the study that gathered data only from North America, affirming that it is possible that social construction of followership could vary across different cultures. As stated by Carsten et al (2010), it could be, for example, that more individualistic cultures may place greater value on proactive behaviors in a followership role than collectivistic cultures. Similarly cultures that are high in power distance will tend to have more autocratic styles of leadership in which employees are expected to follow established patterns of communication and be heavily dependent on supervision and the organization for instruction (Hofstede, 1980). Such cultures may socialize individuals into a more passive schema of followership emphasizing obedience and deference.

Part of Carsten et al (2010) empirical work was based on Kelley (1988) previous researches. Interested in understanding the different types of followers, Kelley (1988) divided them into five different groups, considering basically the combination of two dimensions, 1) how active

the follower behaves and 2) how independent and critical thinking the follower acts. The combination of these dimensions turned out in one of the four types of follower. The fifth type, the pragmatic follower, was the one stuck in middle, being a little of each dimension.

One interesting issue related to follower behavior found in both works Kelley (1988) and Carsten et al (2010), are the words “activity” and “passivity”. They claim that there are different types of followers and one of the prominent characteristics that could differentiate “exemplary” followers, as stated by Kelley (1988), are how active or passive they act.

Considering the basis of followers typology researched by Kelley (1988) and the empirically study conducted by Carsten et al (2010) on followership perspective (followership by followers), and also the differences between cultures from North America and Latin America, it could be rich for advance in the theme to explore the same issues in Brazil and understand how different the conception of followership by the own followers could vary within Brazil reality.

The traditional studies focusing on leadership have already addressed the impact different cultures can have on leaders’ behaviors (Behrens, 2009), but as previous mentioned, there is no empirical studies focusing followership perspective in Brazil and such work could contribute identifying the role of followership by Brazilian followers and bring more light to the theme under a different culture.

1.2 Objective

The main objective of this paper is to identify how followers in Brazil describe the role of being a follower. The intention is to use the followership approach previously commented as the basis for such work. In this approach, the followers describe their own view and perspective about their role.

In order to achieve the main objective and explore the two extremes of possible follower’s behaviors, two specific objectives were formulated regarding the followers attitudes:

- a) Identify how followers describe an effective / productive follower.
- b) Identify how followers describe an ineffective / nonproductive follower.

2. THEORY REFERENCE

2.1 Followership concept

The first step to clarify the understanding about followership is to define who exactly is a follower, once the concept is relatively new and there are different meanings. According to Kellerman (2008), there are two possible definitions about followers: “Followers can be defined by their *rank*: They are subordinates who have less power, authority, and influence than do their superiors”. And “followers can also be defined by their *behavior*: they go along with what someone else wants and intends”.

Kellerman (2008) uses rank and behavior as determinants to define follower, affirming that sometimes they are coincidence. That means that followers are usually below in the rank and

usually behave according to what someone else, the leader, wants and believes. But it is clear that the coincidence between rank and behavior can not be assumed as common practice, once deviations are usually seen. Sometimes those ranked as superiors follow, and those ranked as subordinates lead.

This same approach about the concept is also pointed by Rost (1991), considering rank and behavior. In spite of being below the one who is superior in the organizational rank, many followers do not follow the leader's direction, they most time pick and choose, or their views of leader's direction are not the same as the leader's view. When the leaders do leadership by deciding the direction, the people who are supposed to be doing followership may go in different directions.

Howell and Shamir (2005) also brings the behavior aspect to discussion, pointing that followers have always been defined in traditional leadership literature as an output of leader's behavior, as the followers were the independent variables, and would act accordingly to leaders' inputs. They criticize this traditional view about followers and affirm that followers have assumed a more centric-view in literature and gone from a more passive perspective to an active actor that can influence leaders and organization. That is why a definition of a follower like someone who goes along with what someone else wants can no more be taken as stereotyped definition of a follower.

Besides the discussion about the concept of followers that can be viewed from a rank or behavior perspective there is also another issue that brings some polemic to theme and it is related to the term follower itself. Rost (1991) criticizes the term follower as used in literature. According to the author, the word follower, when seen from a behavior perspective, is a very industrial term connoting subordination, submissiveness, passivity, lack of responsible judgment, and willingness to allow others to control their lives and activities. Rost (1991) proposes that the title can be changed from "follower" to "collaborator", once in a postindustrial scenario, it is not expected to have followers who blindly follow, but collaborator that decide to follow, that would sound more inclusive, active, involved, influential, and more responsible.

In spite some author's divergence of follower concepts or even the term itself, researchers have frequently used the term follower and operationalized it by subordination considering follower everyone that has someone else hierarchically superior (Carsten et al, 2010).

2.2 Followership study development

Zaleznik (1965) was one of the first authors to reverse the lens from leaders to followers, arguing that individuals on both side of the authority relationship were important on how well organizations perform. In order to differentiate the types of followers, Zaleznik (1965) placed them along two axes, 1) dominance and submission and 2) activity and passivity. The first axis ranged from subordinates who wanted to control their superiors to those who want to be controlled by them. The second axis ranged from subordinates who initiate to those who do little or nothing. According to the intersection of the two axes, followers were divided into on of the four groups: 1) Impulsive, 2) Compulsive, 3) Masochistic and 4) withdrawn subordinates.

According to Zaleznik (1965), the impulsive followers are those who challenge the leaders. They usually can be constructive, even spontaneous and courageous and have the need to create and achieve. The compulsive followers also seek to control people in command, but through passive means. They have strong guilt feelings that derive from their wish to dominate. The masochistic followers are those ones who want deliberately to submit themselves to the control and assertiveness of the leaders. And the last group, the withdrawn followers are those who care little or even nothing about what happens at work and they behave accordingly.

Although Zaleznik (1965) typology was follower-centered, it was more about dysfunctional (not effective) followers rather than functional (effective) ones. His work was important to the issue because he was one of the first leadership experts to point out that followers were important and that there were differences to be made among them. It was a first attempt to explore a theme long neglected in literature.

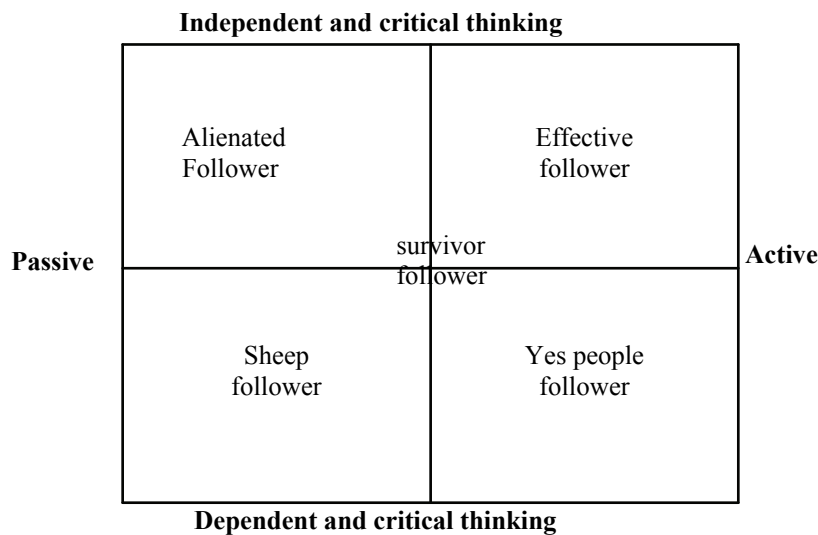
Unlike Zaleznik (1965), Kelley (1988) interest was primarily in functional followers, those ones “effective”, as stated by the author. Kelley (1988) attention was on exemplary followers. He examined the follower’s behavior that lead to effective or less effective following among people committed to the organization and came up with two underlying dimensions that help to explain the difference.

The first dimension pointed by Kelley (1988) measures to what degree followers exercise independent and critical thinking and the second dimension ranks them on a passive/active scale. The result of the intersections among the dimensions identifies the follower into one of the five followership patterns stated by Kelley (1988). As shown in picture one, The five patterns are:

- a) Sheep: These are the passive and uncritical followers, lacking in initiative and sense of responsibility. They perform the task given them and stop at this point.
- b) Yes people: These are the followers who depend on leader for inspiration. In spite of being active, they can be aggressively servile. Bosses weak in judgment and self-confidence tend to like them and to form alliances with them that can prejudice the organization.
- c) Alienated: These followers are critical and independent in their thinking, but passive in carrying out their role as follower. They seldom openly oppose a leader’s effort. They are often cynical and tend to sink gradually into disgruntled acquiescence.
- d) Survivors: These followers are in the middle of the diagram. They go to some direction according the wind and usually live by the slogan “better safe than sorry”.
- e) Effective: These are the followers who think by themselves and carry out their work with energy and assertiveness. Because they are risk takers, self-starters, and independent problem solvers, they usually get consistently high ratings from peers and many superiors.

As shown in the diagram below, Kelley (1988) consider as effective followers those positioned in the right and upside part of the picture. These are the well balanced followers

that act as responsible adults and can succeed without a strong leadership. They usually offer much value for the organization as leaders do, especially in projects or task-force situations.



Picture 1. Followership Types

Source: Kelley, Robert E. (1988, Nov). In Praise of Followers. Harvard Business Review.

Kelley (1988) kept the main focus of his work on effective follower and stated that these followers share a number of essential qualities that organizations should cultivate, once in many companies, leadership is taught and encouraged while followership is not and leadership track is usually seen as the road to career success. Spite of this common way, Kelley (1988) points out that there is no successful organization without effective follower and that the old idea of a hero leader totally responsible for success has been long contested.

The main essential qualities an effective follower can share, according by Kelley (1988), are: a) They manage themselves well, b) They are committed to the organization and to the purpose, principle or person, c) they build their competence and focus their effort for maximum impact, and d) they are courageous, honest and credible.

Kelley (1988) emphasized courageous as an important quality, once this kind of follower can avoid a lot of embarrassment, unnecessary expenses and litigations for the companies. Since they establish themselves as independent, critical thinkers whose knowledge and judgment can be trusted, they give credit where credit is due. They form their own views and ethical standards and stand up for what they believe in, not only for the superior but to everyone in the company.

Some years later, Chaleff (1995) kept the same track Kelley (1988) had begun and brought more light to topic related to the “courageous follower”. Chaleff (1995) pointed out that was the most important quality a follower should have to become effective. He affirmed that followers have far more power than they generally understand, but what they do not usually have is courage. Courage to assume responsibility, courage to serve, courage to challenge and participate in transformation, courage to take moral action, to speak to hierarchy and courage to listen to followers.

Chaleff (1995) also divided the followers into several different groups. But the two variables considered by him were the degree of support the follower provides the leader (high or low) and degree the followers challenge their leaders (high or low).

As a result of the combination of these variables, Chaleff (1995) stated four different possible followers' types:

- a) Implementer: High support, but low challenge toward the leader. These are the most common, mainly in large organizations in which superiors depend on subordinates to get the work done. They are always dependable and supportive.
- b) Partners: High support and high challenge toward the leader. These followers fully support their leader and they are also ready and willing to challenge; if necessary. They are goal-oriented and risk-takers.
- c) Individualist: Low support and high challenge toward the leader. These followers tell their leaders and everyone else just what they think and how they feel. But because they do not support their leaders, they are usually marginalized. They are independent, self-assured and forthright.
- d) Resource: Low support and low challenge toward the leader. As stated by Chaleff (1995), these followers “do an honest day's work for a few days” pay but do not go beyond the minimum expected of them”. They are always available to their leaders but not committed to them.

There are some similarities between Chaleff (1995) and Kelley (1988) in their ideology and intentions. Both are dismayed by the leadership myth and try to counteract it. Both describe the follower power and how it might be actually used. And both categorize followers into different groups, highlighting the most effective as those ones who think by themselves, who are courageous, active and challenge the leader.

Another author that has explored the followership theme, but claim some distinctions between her work and precedent researchers is Kellerman (2008). She defines her work as more descriptive than prescriptive as she considers there must be so many variables influencing the followers' behaviors that it would be difficult to be instructive. That is why Kellerman (2008) prefers to bring new light to theme, illustrating real histories in different contexts.

In spite of claiming some difference to precedent authors, Kellerman (2008) also proposed a five different follower categorization, dividing them into five groups, according to one only single metric: The level of follower's engagement.

Kellerman (2008) proposes that followers can be classified in five different types, according to where they fall along a continuum that ranges from feeling and doing absolutely nothing on the one end to being passionately committed and deeply involved on the other. The five types proposed by Kellerman (2008) are:

- a) Isolate: These followers are completely detached. They do not care about their leaders. They are alienated from the system, from the group or organization that constitutes the whole.

- b) Bystander: These followers observe but do not participate. They make a deliberate decision to stand aside, to disengage from their leaders and from whatever is the group dynamic.
- c) Participant: These followers are in some way engaged. They clearly favor their leaders and the groups and organizations of which they are members or they are clearly opposed.
- d) Activist: These followers feel strongly about their leaders and they act accordingly. They are eager, energetic and engaged.
- e) Diehard: These followers are as their name implies, prepared to die if necessary for their cause, whether an individual, or a purpose or both.

Kellerman (2008) admits that to pursue a typology of any kind is to invite argument and states that the main purpose of this typology is the possibility to make simple but significant distinction among different sorts of followers and to impose an order on the whole that up to now has been largely lacking, besides enabling both parties to the relationship, leaders as well as followers, to translate what they know into what they do.

In spite of using only one variable (engagement level) to classify different types of follower and claim her work as a different approach, there is somehow similarity of Kellerman (2008) work with some previous authors, mainly when she affirms that there are different types of followers and give some perspective on what could be the best follower, the most effective one. This is very similar to what Chaleff (1995) and Kelley (1988) had already proposed regarding effective and ineffective followers.

This certain similarity among different authors is reinforced by Carsten et al (2010) in their recent empirical research. Based on interviews conducted with employees in various industries, aiming to better understand the definition of followership by the own followers, they categorized three different types of followers, passive, active and proactive, in a certain way, very similar to previous authors, except by the numbers of categories.

Based on the empirical research, Carsten et al (2010) categorized the followers into three groups:

- a) Passive: This group of respondents saw the follower role as inherently more passive and identified the importance of following through, taking orders and doing things the leaders' way. In addition, individuals with passive perspective about followers emphasized the relatively lack of responsibility that is associated with the follower role.
- b) Active: This group of respondents saw the follower role in a more active way, but when asked for. They emphasized the importance of expressing their own opinions and offering input when it was solicited by the leaders.
- c) Proactive: This group of respondents saw the follower role as more active. The follower was positioned as someone who takes initiative, offers feedback, advice and challenges the leaders, even when they are not solicited to. This group talked candidly about the importance of influence leaders' decision and questioning their directives.

In spite of different approaches, it is possible to evidence similarities among different authors that have started to develop the followership theme, theoretically or empirically. All of them (Zalesnik, 1965; Kelley, 1988; Chaleff, 1995; Kellerman, 2008; Carsten et al, 2010) bring light to theme defending the need to give more emphasis on followership rather than only on leadership as predictor of organizational success and point out that followers are not the same everywhere and all these authors proposed different typologies, as an attempt to better understand and identify the type of follower, characterized as effective or ineffective ones.

The chart 1 exhibits a summary of categorization proposed by different authors, focusing on the extreme points of each follower category, ranging from the most ineffective and less desired follower until the most productive and desirable follower according to each author.

Chart 1:

Categorization of followers by different authors

Ineffective Follower	Effective Follower	Author
Submission and passivity	Dominance and activity	Zalesnik (1965)
Low support and low challenge to the leader (passive)	High support and high challenge to the leader (active)	Chaleff (1995)
Passive and Uncritical thinking	Active and Critical thinking	Kelley (1998)
Doing nothing	Deeply involved	Kellerman (2008)
Passive	Proactive	Carsten et al (2010)

Note. Source: Author.

As displayed in chart 1, it is clear the agreement the authors have regarding being a passive follower or an active one, like one of the main key points, among others, that drives the follower to be effective or ineffective. Despite differences in category types and numbers among the authors, when focusing the extremes categories each author proposes, all of them, except Kellerman (2008) state clearly the term active as an important attitude to be considered an effective follower.

Although there are still a lot to be researched, considering different types of companies, cultures, and other environment that could influence and change followership perception, there seems to be more agreement than discordance among all the authors (Zalesnik, 1965; Kelley, 1988; Chaleff, 1995; Kellerman, 2008; Carsten et al, 2010) that have offered some contribution to the development of the followership study. When focusing on the type every company wishes to have, the effective followers, similar characteristics are cited, such as activity, courage, initiative and high involvement, regardless the author.

3. METODOLOGY

The present study used qualitative methodology, through an exploratory research to identify how followers describe their roles. It was conducted semi-structured interviews with 14 employees from a variety of industries in Brazil.

As the concept of follower can have two different approaches, by the *rank* someone occupies in the organization or the way someone *behaves* in workplace (Kellerman, 2008), to better structure the operational construct of follower in the current research, it was chosen to

consider as followers those ones who are below in the *rank* of the organization, that means, those ones who are subordinates.

In order to obtain a better consistence in the participant's characteristics, it was preferred to select people with similar level within the organization hierarchy. All the employees interviewed were in the first line managerial hierarchy, being coincidentally at the same time leaders and followers. All of them were less than 40 years old and the majority was female (60%). All the participants had university degree and were working at the same company for more than one year.

A questionnaire with seven basic questions (appendix A) to conduct the interview was elaborated and previously tested with two participants before final usage. These two pre-tests were not included in the result analysis. The data was collected personally through interviews and all the detailed notes were gathered in order to facilitate posterior analysis.

The qualitative analysis of the interview data was conducted using a method commonly referred as "inductive analysis" (Patton, 2002). Although this method does not allow a total comprehensive explanation of a phenomenon, it provides a starting point from which researchers may begin to develop hypotheses regarding the constructs discovered. All the participants' answers were compiled and grouped so similarities and discrepancies could be identified and comparisons among answers could be made providing a compiled categorization of participants' answers.

4. RESEARCH RESULTS

The analysis of data was made after all data collection. All the answers were gathered into two different groups. In the first group, it was listed all descriptions related to effective followers (questions 2, 3 and 4) and in the second group, all descriptions of an ineffective follower (questions 5, 6 and 7), according to respondents' answers. All the characteristics cited by participants were listed in order of frequency they appeared, from the most frequent, on the top of the list to the less frequent, on the bottom of the list, as shown in chart 2.

Chart 2:

Number of different descriptions cited by participants

	Ineffective Follower	Effective Follower
1	Not committed	Very committed
2	Only do what is expected to be done, nothing more.	Do more than expected
3	Never propose some initiative	Always propose some new and different initiative
4	Never offer themselves as voluntary for some initiative	The first to offer themselves as voluntary to some new initiative
5	Complain about everything. Nothing is good	Keep optimistic besides difficulties
6	Apathetic	Enthusiastic
7	Do not know how to show what they do	Know how to show what they do
8	Always disagree with the chief	Usually agree with the chief
9	Not loyal to their chiefs	Loyal to their chiefs

10	Not capable to capture others in the company to support their ideas	Capable to capture others in the company to support their ideas
11	See day by day difficulties as an obstacle to execute the work	See day by day difficulties as an opportunity to improvement

Note. Source: Author.

Based on respondent's answers, it is possible to observe some initial similarity with previous literature that attempted to categorize different types of followers. The first most common description observed in all interviews was related to the level of commitment the follower had to the job and to the company. The ineffective follower was always identified by respondents as less committed. This finding is very similar to Kellerman (2008) work that defends this unique type of variable as the most important one to classify the two different extremes types of follower: At one side, the "doing nothing" followers and on the other side, the "deeply involved" followers. The description of an effective follower as a very committed one appeared in 12 out of 14.

The second, third and fourth most frequent description about follower behavior mentioned in respondents' answers about effective and ineffective followers is related to what Zalesnik (1965), Kelley (1998) and Carsten et al (2010) had already cited. It is the level of passivity and activity a follower has. According to participants, an effective follower is someone that always proposes some new and different initiative, does more than expected and is usually the first one to offer themselves as voluntary to some new initiative. These kinds of description appeared in more than 7 out of 14 answers and are very similar to previous followers' types already described by these authors.

Among all other descriptions pointed out by respondents, there were only two ones that could not match to previous literature description about follower's behavior. The seventh characteristic, pointed out by 6 out of 14 participants, that describes an effective follower as someone that not only does a good job, but mainly knows how to show what he/she does. It seems to be more like a political issue, where it is necessary not only to do but also to show that it was done a good job. And of course, on the other hand, an ineffective follower is that one not capable to communicate and show the job he/she has done. This type of description to classify a follower as effective or ineffective is something not found in literature researched and it may have some linkage to local culture or other aspects that would need to be explored further in future researches, once that was not the main propose of this paper.

The other description that seems to have some discrepancy to literature previously researched is the eighth most common characteristic, cited by 4 out of 14 respondents, the level of agreement a follower has to his/her chief. The respondents classified an ineffective follower as someone that always disagrees with his/her chief. That is somehow contradictory to what Chaleff (1995) proposes in his work about courageous followers, affirming that the good and effective follower is exactly the opposite, it is someone that has the courage to challenge his/her boss and speak to hierarchy when there is some disagreement to be shown to the chief. It seems to these participants that the effective followers should most times agree to their chiefs. This is also contradictory to Kelley (1988) arguments about effective follower. According to Kelley (1988) the follower that usually agrees with the chief can be an alienated follower, a not effective type, someone that in spite of being an independent thinker seldom disagree to the boss, even when they wish to. In spite of this answer to be less frequent than others, it calls attention because it is contradictory to previous literature and it may have some implication with the characteristic of population interviewed, once it was not found any publication about followership in Latin America.

In general, the results were very consistent with literature, expect these two items previously mentioned, 1) Know how to show what they do and 2) Usually agree with the chief. As the main objective was only to identify the description of followers and not to explore its possible causes, this is an interesting issue that remains to be further researched, especially considering that in social science results can vary largely in different cultures.

5. LIMITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCHES

As it was conducted an exploratory qualitative research and a small sample size was used, the results should be interpreted with caution until new researches considering a large variety of participants and methodology could be applied. It is also important to notice that interview data are subjective reflection of followers' perspectives and experience, rather than objective measure of the reality. Therefore, these results should not be extrapolated to any other population.

Another consideration that should be kept in mind when analyzing this paper results in the context a follower is inserted in, once it might be different to be a follower according to different contexts. To be a follower in a small group or company may be different from being a follower in a large organization. To be a follower in a private organization may be different from being a follower in a government company. As this kind of sub analysis was not made, it still remains an area to be explored in future researches.

Maybe one of the most interesting findings in this research and that has a great opportunity to be explored in further research is related to the description of an effective or ineffective follower according to the parameter "level of agreement to the chief". It was revealed by some respondents that an effective follower is someone that usually agrees with the boss, while previous researcher (Chaleff, 1995) defends exactly the opposite. He affirms that an effective follower should always have the courage to disagree with the boss. This also remains as an issue to be explored, once it may also have some relation to cultural aspects.

6. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The objective of this study was to identify how followers in Brazil describe the role of being a follower. The intention was to use the followership approach as the basis for such work. In this approach, the followers described their own view and perspective about their role. In order to achieve the main objective and explore the two extremes of possible follower's behaviors, two specific objectives were formulated regarding the followers attitudes: a) Identify how followers describe an effective / productive follower and b) Identify how followers describe an ineffective / nonproductive follower.

The results revealed that followers in Brazil describe the role of being a follower very similar to what previous foreign literature had already revealed (Zaleznik, 1965; Kelley, 1988; Chaleff, 1995; Kellerman, 2008; Carsten et al, 2010). The compiled answers of all respondents pointed descriptions to an effective follower as someone that is very committed, does more than expected, always proposes some new and different initiative, is the first to offer as voluntary to some new initiative, keeps optimistic besides difficulties, is loyal to the

chief and always enthusiastic. All these description is very consistent with effective follower characteristics previously pointed by other researchers.

There were only two aspects that brought a different perspective from what was previously researched and it may have some relation to country culture, once all other followership researches were developed out of Latin America context. The two different descriptions from previous literature pointed by participants about an effective follower were: a) Know how to show what they do and; b) Usually agree with the chief. The first one was not found in literature as a description for an effective follower, but according to participants, to be considered an effective follower, it is not only important to do a good work, but it is also important to show it, to boast it. And the second description reveals some divergence to what has already been pointed out as an effective follower (Chaleff, 1995; Kelley, 1988). Some participants affirm that an effective follower should agree with the boss while Chaleff (1995) defends that an effective follower should sometimes disagree and have the courage to speak that to the boss. That is another issue that may have some relation to cultural aspect and it still remains as a field to be explored by future researchers.

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8. APPENDIX A

Questionnaire applied:

- 1) In your current position, are you a leader, a follower or both?

To answer the following interview, I kindly ask you to consider only your role as a follower and the Brazilian people you have worked with.

- 2) In your opinion, what are the main attributions of an effective follower? And I mean an effective follower as a very productive one for the company.
- 3) What is the best example you could give of an excellent follower? The most productive one. What did she or he use to do? How did she or he use to behave?
- 4) What do you think is essential for a follower to be successful in a Brazilian organization?
- 5) In your opinion, what are the main characteristics of an ineffective follower? And I mean an ineffective follower as a low productive one for the company.
- 6) What is the best example you could give of the least productive follower you have known? What did he or she use to do? How did she or he use to behave?
- 7) What kind of attitudes and behaviors would lead a follower not to be successful in a Brazilian company?