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# Impact of Leadership Style on Moral Conduct in the Ghana Air Force

Kwabena Krampah Antwi  
*Walden University*

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# Walden University

College of Health Sciences and Public Policy

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2022

Abstract

Impact of Leadership Style on Moral Conduct in the Ghana Air Force

by

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MPhil, Walden University, 2021

MA, Maxwell Air University, 2013

BS, Valley View University, 2012

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Public Policy and Administration

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August 2022

## Abstract

The conduct of personnel in the military is important in maintaining professionalism. The traditional hierarchical level of interactions in the military environment imposes on commanders a critical role to balance their authority in shaping the attitudes of subordinates to achieve objectives. This study was conducted to address the lack of awareness of how commanders' leadership styles influence the moral conduct of personnel in the Ghana Air Force. The theoretical framework for this study was Bass and Avolio's full range leadership model. The research question focused on subordinates' perceptions of operational commanders' leadership on subordinates' moral conduct. This non-experimental correlational design used convenience sampling with Bass and Avolio's multifactor leadership questionnaire and Moore et al.'s eight-item scale on moral disengagement. An online questionnaire was used to collect data from 147 officers and noncommissioned officers below the rank of squadron leader from a selected Ghana Air Force base. Data were analyzed using linear regression and multivariate analysis of variance. The results indicated a significant correlation between leadership styles and conduct with no significant difference in the interaction between gender and rank status on leadership style and moral conduct. The findings of this study have potential implications for positive social change that include the opportunity to improve leadership practices in the Ghana Air Force and other state institutions.

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## Dedication

I dedicate this research paper to my dear wife Eugenia and children for their support, patience and inspiration throughout my studies. I forever remain grateful to you all, thank you.

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I thank all faculty, family members, and friends who have helped me to reach this point in my academic career. Special acknowledgement goes to Dr. Marcel Kitissou, my chair for the immense support and dedication throughout the dissertation stages. Sincere thanks to Dr. Lori Demeter, committee member for the guidance and continuous feedback including Dr. Michael Brewer, my university research reviewer, for the timely review and feedback. I am also grateful to the military for the encouragement and support in the conduct of the research.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

### **Introduction**

Leaders with the relevant leadership style are vital for the sustainable ethical development of personnel and organizational goals. The significance of leadership practices in public administration, including the military, and the desire for the ethical conduct of employees have made leadership studies continue to attract academic interest (Trachik et al., 2020). Military institutions are characterized by commitment, loyalty, and performance, which emphasize values.

Individuals in the military should exhibit ethical practices; scarce research on the institution, significantly in Africa, has led to the increased demand for academic literature in the military (Bishop & Ross, 2018; Charbonneau et al., 2020; Trachik et al., 2020). Kure (2020) argued that inadequate leadership in Africa has caused horror and tyranny, with loss of human dignity influencing citizens' conduct. However, Adegbite (2019) emphasized that the military profession, notwithstanding the societal conduct, is a model of discipline and has to demonstrate virtues and moral principles because of the institutional culture.

Military commanders face a complex challenge with leadership in managing the generational differences among military personnel, the changing environment, and responding to citizens demanding accountable leadership (Bass, 1985, 1998). Alessandri et al. (2020) argued that the current change in society is a challenge with grave consequences and requires leadership to provide guidance that would significantly influence an individual's behavior. The hierarchical bureaucracy in the military with code

of service regulation gives commanders power and authority to instill discipline (Adegbite, 2019). With the call for leadership in Africa, the lack of required leadership in the military can plunge the institution and a country into chaos (Umeanwe, 2019). But focusing on specific subordinates' behavior without the characteristic leadership style that adapts to the emerging complex environment presents administrative challenges (Bass & Riggio, 2006).

Leadership researchers have argued that a full range leadership model is essential in understanding the leadership dimensions that enhance ethics, values, and organizational interest to manage subordinates while raising awareness of organizational norms (Esia-Donkoh & Quansah, 2021; Guhr et al. 2019; Kindarto et al., 2020). Despite the growing demand for research on leadership, public policy researchers over the years have shown limited attention to the military in Africa, with Ghana not an exception (Charbonneau et al., 2020).

Subsequently, there is a lack of academic studies on leadership and how it relates to individuals and collective moral conduct in the military (Newman et al., 2020). Nazri and Rudi's (2019) analysis of leadership in the military in the past 10 years indicated the changing contextual setting of the environment because of sociopolitical and technological development, which challenges commanders. The authors, however, stressed the need for further studies on military leadership in Africa due to the scarcity of literature to advance knowledge on the concept (Nazri & Rudi, 2019).

Notwithstanding the academic discussion on leadership, the challenges of military leadership have changed drastically at an unimaginable pace and the dearth of literature

in Africa limits its discourse, which affects its practice. The management of personnel conduct in the military is a command responsibility (Agyekum, 2021b; Stănciulescu & Beldiman, 2019). Besides, operational commanders in the military bear the immediate responsibility of subordinates in determining acceptable unit standards in shaping attitudes at work. Considering the scarce literature on the military in Africa, in this study, I examined the impact of leadership style on moral conduct in the Ghana Air Force to offer a depth of knowledge on organizational leadership practices.

Chapter 1 of the study covers the background, problem statement, purpose of the study, research question and hypotheses, and the theoretical framework. The chapter then continues with the nature of study, definitions, assumptions, scope and delimitations, limitations, and significance of the study.

### **Background of the Study**

Military leadership is demanding with its multiple dimensions of exercising authority and adherence to the chain of command whiles guiding subordinates. The military undoubtedly is a formidable government institution with individuals of diverse skill sets, cultural orientations, and social upbringings (Droz-Vincent, 2020). The commander needs to lead all personnel, maintain discipline, foster esprit de corps, and provide lethal force in the defense of a nation (Bailie, 2020; Franklin & Marshall, 2019; Koehlmoos et al., 2020).

Thus, control and management of personnel in the military is significant. Considering the talent level of personnel and increasing military expenditure of the government (World Bank, 2020), the military institution requires leaders to manage

personnel for the sustainability of operations, organizational values, and efficient use of resources.

However, the military's dynamic environment and the huge workforce with diverse needs present a leadership challenge. Significantly, technology has infiltrated all facets of an individual's life, breaking barriers and making actions of personnel accessible to media scrutiny with its challenges (Umanilo et al., 2019). This has changed the organizational environment with commanders required to manage and to meet the expectations of subordinates while providing leadership (Hassan et al., 2019).

Societal factors are driving the change in the environment with influence on personnel that demand commanders to adopt the leadership style for success (Chang & Wang, 2016). Considering the force of change, the military as an institution is not immune to the dynamic nature of the environment that affects its personnel. Nonetheless, the profession demands a lifestyle to maintain discipline and order for operational readiness, which sets it apart from civil organizations (McCormick et al., 2019).

The Ghana Armed Forces is a voluntary service and, since its establishment in 1957 from the Gold Coast Regiment of the colonial Royal West Africa Frontier Force, has played a significant role in contributing to national and international development (Agyekum, 2020). However, the complexities of the workplace environment have led to personnel involvement in unethical issues, which is a challenge to command. Despite this, the credibility of Ghana's military in international multinational operations remains undoubted due to their professionalism and discipline (Salihu, 2019). Salihu further affirmed that the historical involvement of the Ghana Armed Forces in governance and



the unethical conduct of personnel amidst the changes in organizational environment erode public trust, affecting civil–military relationships that have tainted the image of the institution. Agyekum (2021a) discussed how the sociocultural dynamics in Ghana have infiltrated the Ghana Armed Forces, undermining the cherished professionalism of the institution.

Statistically, from 2016 to 2020, the percentage of Air Force officers to airmen with disciplinary cases in the Ghana Air Force showed 15% to 85% (Briefing report, 2020). The percentage reflects how personnel considerably within the years were involved in unethical actions. Most of these actions resulted in disciplinary cases amidst media scrutiny affecting the conduct of operations. Similarly, the ratio of cases under inquiry involving officers and airmen recorded a percentage of 3% to 97% from 2016 to 2020 (Briefing report, 2020). Statistically, the disciplinary cases increased by 5% in the first quarter of 2020 compared to the previous year, which involves personnel in alleged assault cases of military brutalities of civilians, vandalization of police barracks, extortion, and other related offenses (Briefing report, 2020).

The disciplinary cases in the Ghana Air Force affect the discharge of functional duties and the conduct of military operations. The institution has leaders trained to maintain discipline and to manage the challenges of their personnel (Adegbite, 2019). The nature of the profession places responsibility on commanders to lead their subordinates, who are to exhibit values at all times (Agyekum, 2021b). Notwithstanding, individuals, through their social environment and identity, develop their moral values, which reflect in their conduct. The attitudes displayed by personnel in society have led to

an increase in unethical conduct contrary to the military code of discipline, which necessitates awareness and measures to avert any negative consequences for the military and on national security.

The military code of conduct is strict, and personnel must adhere to it for unit cohesion (Adegbite, 2019; Hundman & Parkinson, 2019). Noncompliance with the service code of conduct has consequences that lead to dismissal (Buehler et al., 2019). Thus, personnel must comply with the professional standard despite the changes in society that influence their behavior, making the role of leadership critical. Irrespective of the disciplinary consequences, the unethical attitude of personnel affects leadership and the institution, which influences attitude at work. Newman et al. (2019) stressed that the engagement of personnel in an institution is a moral obligation to conform and submit to regulations.

However, the neglect of disciplinary measures by individuals to rationalize unethical conduct remains a challenge. Huang et al. (2017) argued that disengaged personnel demonstrate unethical conduct with deviant behavior at the workplace. The authors further asserted that individuals engaged in unethical conduct thrust their energy into such activities as they are cognitively and emotionally withdrawn, leading to their negative behavior that results in an increase in misconduct and lack of eagerness and enthusiasm toward work (Huang et al., 2017).

Albrecht et al. (2018) cited research indicating deviant behavior at work leads to negative work attitudes that suggest crises in the relationship between leadership style and subordinates. The challenge in the management of personnel's moral conduct is a

concern to commanders. But with little knowledge on the relevant leadership practices to manage the issue, Buehler et al. (2019) affirmed that individuals have the propensity to neglect guidance on security that have grave consequences in the military, which is a threat to the peace and security of a society.

Nonetheless, with the growing interest on leadership in academic research and the scant research work on leadership issues in the African military, a depth of knowledge on how commanders' leadership affect subordinates is relevant as leader's behavior significantly influence their subordinates (Northouse, 2019). The specific research problem this study addressed was the understanding of the leadership styles of operational commanders to prevent any unethical conduct of personnel in the Air Force. Although researchers have investigated leadership issues, none has explored the topic by examining the impact of operational commanders' leadership styles on the moral conduct of squadron personnel in the Ghana Air Force.

### **Problem Statement**

There is a problem in the Ghana Air Force with an increase in disciplinary cases that affect the discharge of functional duties and operations. Researchers do not know to what extent leadership styles affect the unethical conduct of personnel at work. This problem impacts the Armed Forces because, irrespective of command directives, personnel's negative behavior affects the military image and erodes public trust and mission success (Bonaa, 2020; Brako, 2020; Naeem & Khurram, 2020; Yanchus et al., 2020). There are many possible factors contributing to this problem, among which are financial insecurity, organizational politics, and limited resources.

In the literature reviewed for this study, I identified other researchers' have investigated this problem by focusing on leadership and management, personality, and behavior constructs as the foundation of their studies (Kałużny & Pietrakowski, 2020; Muddle, 2020; Vasilescu, 2019). None of the literature I reviewed was conducted to examine the impact of operational commanders' leadership styles and personnel's moral conduct in the Ghana Air Force. My study fills this gap by contributing to the body of knowledge needed to address the problem by providing data to public policy decision makers to formulate and or change policies to enhance leadership practices.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this quantitative study was to examine the impact of operational commanders' leadership styles on moral conduct in the Ghana Air Force. The study focused on the relationship between the construct of operational commanders' leadership styles and subordinates' moral disengagement in the Ghana Air Force operational squadrons of personnel serving as commissioned and noncommissioned officers to include warrant officers. Examining the relationship between the variables of moral disengagement and the three leadership styles of transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire, the study offers an understanding of the relationship to help address the research gap.

### **Research Questions and Hypotheses**

The central research question for the study was: What is the impact of the perceived operational commanders' leadership on subordinates' moral conduct in the Ghana Air Force? The derived subquestions and hypotheses for the study are:

RSQ1: What relationship exists between subordinates' perceptions of operational commanders' leadership styles and subordinates' moral disengagement?

$H_01$ : There is no statistically significant correlation between subordinates' perceptions of operational commanders' leadership styles and subordinates' moral disengagement.

$H_a1$ : There is a statistically significant correlation between subordinates' perceptions of operational commanders' leadership styles and subordinates' moral disengagement

RSQ2: To what extent do subordinates' perceptions of operational commanders' leadership styles and subordinates' moral disengagement differ according to gender or rank status?

$H_02$ : There is no statistically significant difference between subordinates' perceptions of operational commanders' leadership styles and subordinates' moral disengagement according to gender or rank status.

$H_a2$ : There is statistically significant difference between subordinates' perceptions of operational commanders' leadership styles and subordinates' moral disengagement according to gender or rank status.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The theory of the full range leadership model is a prominent theory across diverse cultures (Esia-Donkoh & Quansah, 2021) and has a unique leadership continuum that all leaders use that focuses on followers responding to organizational norms through various leadership styles to advance institutional goals (Northouse, 2019). Burns (1978)

originally developed the transformational leadership concept and this leadership theory was later expanded by Bass (1985) emphasizing followers' needs for change.

In theory development, Bass and Avolio (1994, 2004) focused on three leadership styles in the model, categorizing leadership into nine components that include five transformational, three transactional, and laissez-faire approaches that show the array of leadership style characteristics leaders can use in an organization. The leadership construct approach is one a researcher can use to identify the leadership behavior that affects subordinates' conduct (Northouse, 2019). The three distinct leadership approaches of the theory were used to assess squadron operational commander leadership styles.

The theory is significant, as the multifactor leadership questionnaire (MLQ) provided the data required to understand the relationship between the research's constructs considering the reliability of the instrument in a study (Guhr et al., 2019). The theory provides evidence on how the three leadership styles of operational commanders can influence subordinates in the Ghana Air Force in various ways. The full-range leadership theory helped to fill the research gap by enhancing understanding of the impact of leadership styles on the moral conduct of personnel.

### **Nature of the Study**

This study was quantitative, and I used a cross-sectional design with standard instruments of measurement to represent the research construct in numerical data to explore the relationship between operational commanders' leadership styles and subordinates' moral disengagement (Burkholder et al., 2016). The research question determined the nature of the study. The quantitative method produced the statistical result

for a researcher to use in the analysis of the study construct to answer (Kothari, 2004). The method provided evidence to understand the impact of operational commanders' leadership styles on the moral conduct of squadron personnel in the Ghana Air Force.

Researchers use quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods in studies to understand social behaviors (Creswell, 2018). The use of a qualitative method by researchers involves a depth of understanding of a phenomenon using textual or narrative responses from participants in their natural setting to derive meaning (Burkholder et al., 2016). A mixed-method researcher integrates quantitative and qualitative methods, which provide the needed triangulation if a single method cannot answer the research question (Creswell, 2018). Using a quantitative method for this study relied on statistical data that aligned with the purpose of the study to answer the research question.

Quantitative methods are used to address research questions with numerical data to test hypotheses using variables from the constructs in a research phenomenon to determine relationships (O'Sullivan et al., 2017). The process involves the use of statistical values collected with a standard instrument of measure to represent the phenomenon in numerical data for analysis (Burkholder et al., 2016). Quantitative methods provide a researcher the ability to examine the relationship between the research construct as variables (Bloomfield & Fisher, 2019). Quantitative research is a primary tool for a researcher to use in quantifying and analyzing statistical data for results.

A researcher using a quantitative approach to research can use randomized experimental, quasi-experimental, and non-experimental designs to achieve the study objective (Kumar, 2018). The quantitative method aims at collecting numerical data and

analyzing these data using statistical measures to examine the relationship between the variables. The Ghana Air Force has over 2,500 active-duty personnel and civilian employees stationed at a base. The target uniform personnel were approximately 1,200 individuals and the estimated G\*power calculation was to have a minimum sample size of 114 participants.

I used an online survey with the MLQ and moral disengagement scale to collect data from squadron participants. These data were analyzed using the Statistical Package of Social Science (SPSS) software. The goal of this study was to understand the nature of the association between the variables of interest, which made correlation non-experimental design an appropriate choice. The research purpose was to examine the impact of operational commanders' leadership styles on moral conduct in the Ghana Air Force and the extent of the relationship between the construct of leadership styles and moral disengagement.

The correlational design is applicable when a study is testing association between two or more variables (O'Sullivan et al., 2017). The design structures the study to answer the research question (Burkholder et al., 2016). Understanding human behavior is subjective, but the use of measurable variables with a validated instrument ensured objectivity with the quantitative method. The derived research question from the problem statement showed two variables to help determine the association, which made the correlation design suitable for the study.

In using statistics to determine the extent of the relationship, the quantitative method offers a researcher reliability and objectivity in the data analysis (Kumar, 2018).



Similarly, the correlation design allows a researcher to examine whether a relationship exists between the study variables (O'Sullivan et al., 2017). Hence, the use of quantitative correlation design gives adequate information on the relationship between the variables in answering the research questions to achieve the purpose of the study.

### **Definition of Terms**

The study used the following operational definitions to achieve the research purpose.

*Laissez-faire leadership:* A leadership style that does not show presence and allows subordinates the freedom to operate (Northouse, 2019).

*Military leadership:* The ability to ensure subordinates' well-being while emphasizing clear rules and regulations with a concise mission by coping with the changing environment (Squires & Peach, 2020).

*Moral conduct:* The behavior of an individual irrespective of the status that conforms to acceptable social norms (Kohlberg, 1976).

*Moral disengagement:* The act in which an individual sets aside the consequences of a behavior, ignoring the moral components to rationalize the action while coping with the situation (Tillman et al., 2018).

*Transactional leadership:* A leadership style that encourages subordinates to achieve goals through rewards and punishment (Bass, 1985).

*Transformational leadership:* A leadership style that influences followers to achieve beyond expectation by transforming their values and ideals (Bass, 1985).

### **Assumptions**

Burkholder et al. (2016) stated that assumptions are critical conditions that must not be trivial, have relevance, and are beyond the control of a researcher. Consequently, the assumption of the study was to have the approval to access personnel at the selected base and for the personnel to answer the survey questions truthfully within the time frame. The survey method was online with the intent of having participants maintain their anonymity to answer the survey questions honestly, with no form of bias and fear of any authority. Additionally, I assumed the full-range leadership theory by Bass and Avolio (1994) used as the theoretical framework to provide an explanation of the leadership characteristics of the squadron commanders.

### **Scope and Delimitations**

The study aimed to understand the impact of leadership styles on the moral conduct of subordinates in the Ghana Air Force. In achieving the aim, the research operationalized moral conduct as moral disengagement and the leadership styles as transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership of the full range leadership model. These defined the scope of the study to have a standard instrument of measures, which helped focused the research on the relationship between operational commanders' leadership styles and subordinates' moral disengagement.

I limited participation to serving personnel from a selected Air Force base in Ghana and this challenges the generalization of the findings. Research delimitation defines the boundaries of a study (Burkholder et al., 2016). The study participants were personnel actively serving in Ghana Air Force squadrons in the selected base. Personnel

not assigned to a squadron were excluded from the study, as they did not meet the eligibility to provide the information needed to answer the research question.

### **Limitations**

A lack of interest in the survey may have led some personnel to not take part in the research, which could have reduced the response rate. Not achieving adequate response rate could have delayed the research process. As an active member of the military and the sole researcher, I was fundamentally limited by my bias in the research method and survey. My role as a researcher and a member of the Ghana Air Force limited my choice to use the quantitative method and online survey in preventing any undue influence on respondents during data collection.

Participants may not have been factual with information with the online survey to appear in compliance with military norms, which could have affected findings. The online survey did not allow respondents to ask for clarification on the questionnaire, which could have also made participants respond inaccurately if they did not understand the questionnaire.

Research within the military requires approval from the Armed Forces General Headquarters. The commander of the base also required assurance the data collected would remain anonymous, an explanation of the research, and the practical application of the study to avoid any ethical concerns. The assurances were mandatory before I was given permission to gain access to participants for data collection. The process involved stages that prolonged the data collection and the completion of the research.

### **Significance of the Study**

This quantitative correlational study was conducted to examine the impact of operational commanders' leadership style on the moral conduct of personnel in squadrons in the Ghana Air Force. The study constructs of leadership styles, using the full range leadership model, and moral disengagement will contribute to existing academic literature. The research is significant to create awareness of leadership practices and effect change in the military as a state organization. Awareness is necessary for commanders to develop knowledge and skills competency to lead change within their positions of authority. The study has the potential to set the stage for further research to deepen the academic literature on the construct of leadership and leadership in the African military.

This research fills a gap; there is a dearth of literature on military leadership and behavior of personnel, particularly in Ghana and the West African subregion (Nazri & Rudi, 2019). Understanding the impact of operational commanders' leadership styles on the moral conduct of personnel in the military as a state and purposeful organization is valuable to supporting leadership practices and the practical application for policy improvement and development.

Furthermore, for positive social change, the study provides commanders added knowledge to develop the leadership styles needed to mitigate moral disengagement within a similar environment. Greater understanding of the relationship between commanders' leadership style and moral disengagement of personnel can advance change in leadership practices to reduce misconduct (Buehler et al., 2019).

The nature of the relationship between the research construct in this correlational study is relevant for the Air Force command hierarchy to develop the necessary leadership programs to build the capacity of personnel. Individuals' development of their leadership capacity is necessary for troop morale and for personnel to serve as agents of change in their respective areas of responsibility. A healthy working relationship and environment provide job security, which affects the quality of life of personnel and their families (Albrecht et al., 2018).

Talented human resources are vital for the sustainability of operations in ensuring peace and security (McCormick et al., 2019). The leadership capacity building is to encourage personnel to focus on their work with secured employment and career advancement essential for a healthy working environment. The study aims at empowering individuals to effect the needed change within their position to advance policies in equipping future commanders with the skill and knowledge to influence any unethical conduct of personnel.

### **Summary and Transition**

The study was quantitative with correlation design to determine the impact of operational commanders' leadership styles on the moral conduct of personnel in the Ghana Air Force. The background of the study showed how the behavior of subordinates affects the armed forces and the need to understand the leadership style that affects the conduct of personnel. Full range leadership model formed the theoretical framework of the study. The theory encompasses a continuum of leadership that provides a wide perspective on commanders' leadership styles in leading subordinates.

Leadership is paramount in the military to drive personnel in the attainment of operational goals. Thus, it is imperative to understand the impact of operational commanders' leadership style on subordinates' moral conduct in a military environment, such as the Ghana Air Force. The outcome of the study enhances the understanding of academic literature on leadership within the military, specifically in Africa. Chapter 2 will include a review of current literature on the research construct of leadership and moral disengagement.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

### **Introduction**

In this study, I examined the impact of leadership styles on the moral conduct of personnel in the military environment. Though leadership studies have revealed a substantial amount of research, individuals use their cognitive mechanisms differently. This can influence their values that can drive them to behave in deviant ways (Kacmar et al., 2019). Moreover, the changing environment and the differences in individual behavior make the concept of leadership difficult to understand (Burns, 1978).

Leadership style can strengthen an organizational environment that shapes individuals' performance and professional values. The behavior of subordinates in the military is critical, and researchers agree that the adoption of the required leadership style is important to match subordinates' moral challenges (Rahman et al., 2020; Murray et al., 2019; Musa et al., 2018). The recent concern of the conduct of personnel in the Ghana Air Force has increased the call for operational commanders to lead their subordinates to prevent unethical conduct.

With the growing interest in leadership in academic research, having a depth of knowledge in how operational commanders' leadership styles impact subordinates is relevant; leaders' behavior significantly influences their subordinates (Northouse, 2019). Adewale (2019) emphasized that despite the recent research in an attempt to provide insight into African leadership, scholars have concentrated their attention on actions rather than the actors who experience the challenge of moral issues (p. 749). This study addresses the lack of awareness of the type of commanders' leadership style that impacts

subordinates' moral conduct, which contributes to the discourse in Africa's military leadership.

### **Literature Search Strategy**

Peer-reviewed articles used for this literature review were published within the past 5 years; earlier years were added to explain a theory or concept. The following keywords and databases were used for the search articles. Keywords included *deviant behavior, employee conduct, moral conduct, employee performance, employee management, moral disengagement, organizational behavior, leadership, military leadership, and leadership styles*. I then looked in a host of databases using Google Scholar and the Walden University Library to access EBSCO Host Online Research Databases for Emerald Management, Sage Premier, Academic Search Complete, ProQuest Central, and Business Source Complete.

### **Literature Review**

In this literature review, I discuss the concept of leadership, highlighting definitions, theories, leadership styles, and moral conduct. Specifically, I focus on the construct of moral disengagement and how it relates to leadership style and workplace behavior of personnel in the Ghana Air Force. I then discuss how leadership styles influence the conduct of subordinates.

### **Concept of Leadership**

Significant studies have been conducted on leadership. Despite the attention leadership studies have gained in academic discourse, the definition and precise meaning of leadership continue to elude scholars (Burns, 1978). Burns indicated that the



phenomenon of leadership is the least understood in behavioral science. Umeanwe (2019) affirmed Burns' assertion of the lack of understanding of the concept and emphasized the need to avert the leadership crises, particularly in Africa. According to Marques et al. (2020), leadership is an art that an individual exhibits in leading others by gaining their attraction and influencing them to behave in a desired way.

Northouse (2019) indicated that leadership, though difficult to define, is a process a leader uses to influence followers. The process is an interactive relationship between a leader and follower, but unique to an individual. The unique nature of the concept makes it lack a definite style, accounting for the significant studies that underline its complexity and understanding.

The ambiguity in the definition of leadership makes the meaning dependent on the institution or group that requires leadership, and despite the lack of a simple definition, leadership affects an organization (Bass, 1985). Thus, leadership is crucial in the function of an institution; a leader wields power due to the control of resources to achieve an organizational goal, making the concept most commonly discussed in organizational studies (Lee et al., 2020; Rüzgar, 2019).

Peters and Haslam (2018) acknowledged that the identity of an individual in a group makes them internalize their role as a leader and that organization needs to develop the identity of their subordinates for better outcomes. Knies et al. (2016), however, opined that a leader need not be a member of the group. But the unique characteristics which a leader contributes in terms of skills and abilities to project an institution signify its wide discourse in academic literature.

Notwithstanding, Nelson and Squires (2017) suggested that leaders must understand, solve problems, and accept responsibility for subordinates' actions. Smet et al. (2018) explained that a contemporary leader understands emerging challenges of subordinates and can build the desired relationship in safeguarding the workplace. Despite the lack of clear definition and meaning, leadership is vital in any institution and felt when absent.

### **Leadership Theories**

The theory of leadership formally developed in the 20th century through the study of traits, behaviors, and relationships (Northouse, 2019). Since the emergence of the theory on leadership, researchers have delved into the concept to enhance its understanding. Early studies of leadership dwelled on leadership as a trait in an individual and later on how leaders interact with their followers and the influence of the situational factors within the organizational environment.

#### ***Traits Theory***

The traits theory of leadership evolved between 1920 and 1950. The focus of studies was on the leader as an individual (Person et al., 2021). Researchers focused primarily on a person as a leader and believed an individual was born as a leader and the art of leadership was not acquired (Kesgin & Wehner, 2021). Early researchers assumed the qualities of a leader make them effective, and without those qualities, the individual cannot succeed as a leader (Rabini et al., 2020). Proponents of the traits theory approach to leadership argued that leadership, biologically determined and demonstrated as innate

to the male gender affirms the Great Man theory (Rüzgar, 2019). The trait theory views leadership capacity as inherent and that it emerges through experience.

### ***Behavioral Theory***

Behavioral studies on leadership focused on the behavior of an individual, which makes a leader distinct but not any distinguished characteristic peculiar to that individual (Vasilescu, 2019). Studies on behavior theory were interested in what effective leaders do in task assignments, communication, etc. (Balbuena et al., 2020; Northouse, 2019). The proponent of a behavioral approach views the behavior of a leader as that which is learned through training (Noor, 2018).

Primarily, McGregor's Theory X and Theory Y in behavioral studies examined how leadership relates to motivation (Sivarat et al., 2021). The assumption of a leader considering the theory is how a manager perceives an individual, which causes a behavior. According to Balbuena et al. (2020), the theory is a framework for leadership to assess the execution of a task and how to relate with subordinates, emphasizing leadership actions in fulfilling a task.

### ***Contemporary Theory***

Contemporary leadership seeks to address the challenges of the competitive environment. The leadership model emphasizes both tasks and employees contrary to the earlier models, which were task-orientated and encourages subordinates to show organizational commitment and be socially responsible (Qois, & Rahmi, 2021). Societal awareness, events, and emerging challenges have significantly affected the behavior of leaders. These have caused changes in the process of leadership, causing leaders to adopt

new competencies, making them visionary, values orientated, and committed to followers (Vecchiotti, 2018).

The most popular research study of contemporary leadership is the transformation approach (Northouse, 2019). Lee et al. (2020) noted that the application of the approach in a variety of research studies is due to its emphasis on intrinsic motivation and the development of followers. The appeal of the leadership approach is how it provides a general view of leadership. However, Balbuena et al. (2020) suggested that societal challenges demanded further a genuine work leadership approach, which led to the emergence of authentic leadership.

Transformational leadership has gained the attention of researchers (Mrak & Kvasić, 2021; Murari & Mukherjee, 2021). The purposefulness of the leadership approach is the authenticity of the interaction between leaders and followers (Sağbaş et al., 2021). Other contemporary approaches to leadership are servant leadership, with a unique leadership that emphasizes the leader's perspective, which empowers subordinates to develop their potential (Bennett, 2021; Gocen & Sen, 2021; Zhang et al., 2021).

The adaptive leadership and the psychodynamic leadership approach focus on subordinates to address their challenges amid the continuous environmental changes (Northouse, 2019). The numerous leadership approaches have increased the literature on the concept of leadership. However, there exists a lack of studies that have examined the impact of leadership styles on the conduct of subordinates within the Ghana Air Force, which is worth noting.

### **Full Range Leadership Model**

In this study, I examined the leadership styles of squadron commanders and how these styles affect the conduct of their subordinates using the full range leadership model by Bass and Avolio. Despite the development of theories on leadership within the public organization, the full range model presents an ideal perspective to examine leadership styles within the military as it promotes subordinates' attitudes and behavior (Sadler et al., 2018).

The theory expands transformational leadership, primarily based on Burns' (1978) and House's (1976) work on leadership. In discussing Burns' work, Bass (1985) explained leadership in a single continuum rather than originally purposed as independent. The leadership full range model uses several leadership dimensions grouped into transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership styles (Kindarto et al., 2020; Northouse, 2019). The leadership continuum offers an individual a way to behave in relation to subordinates in the advancement of institutional goals and management of challenges (Sivarat et al., 2021).

The style of the leader to achieve goals explains the behavior they choose as suitable (Kindarto et al., 2020). Using the full range model, I categorized the leadership style of operational commanders into transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire (Bass & Riggio, 2006). The leadership style reflects a pattern of an individual's behavior, which shows how a leader lead subordinates (Kaleem et al., 2021). The style of the leader that appeals to subordinates encourages them to act appropriately, as it fosters trust, which promotes positive institutional outcomes.

## **Transformational Leadership Style**

The transformational leadership style makes an individual view leadership more attentively to subordinates rather than function (Northouse, 2019). Northouse further noted that strong values and ideas that motivate subordinates in the organization's interest are essential characteristics of the leadership style. Admittedly, the transformational leadership style remains the most studied form of leadership (Musa et al., 2018; Peng et al., 2021). The leadership style inspires followers, raising subordinate morale to effect organizational change (Khan et al., 2021). Leaders practicing transformational leadership focus on the wider interest of the group rather than their own (Islam et al., 2020).

Transformational leaders have integrity and are a role model to subordinates; they have the ability to communicate their objectives with clarity (Hamidah & Saerang, 2020; Rindipati & Hinduan, 2021). Essential to transformational leadership is the dimensions of idealized influence, inspirational motivation, inspirational consideration, and intellectual stimulation (Northouse, 2019; Peng et al., 2021). First, idealized influence serves as the emotional factor in leadership with subordinates identifying themselves with the leader (Thomas & Cangemi, 2021).

The leader demonstrates desirable moral and ethical conduct, exhibiting integrity at all times (Garwe, 2019; Hamidah & Saerang, 2020). The dimension of idealized influence promotes values and beliefs pertinent to leadership relationships (Pradhan et al., 2020). Second, inspirational motivation involves the encouragement of subordinates to share an organizational vision that allows subordinates to achieve beyond expectations (Sever & Atik, 2021). Third, intellectual stimulation involves the leadership dimensions

that make subordinates creative and innovative, prioritizing solutions to challenges (Bass, 1990). Last, individualized consideration is the leadership dimension that supports subordinates through coaching and mentoring for growth in the organization (Setyaningsih & Sunaryo, 2021). The conduct of subordinates depends on the leadership dimension the leader exhibits.

### **Transactional Leadership Style**

Burns (1978) explained that transactional leadership entails an exchange between leaders and subordinates. The leadership style makes employees stand to gain from their leaders when they exhibit certain value outcomes determined by the leader (Puni et al., 2021). The style demands that a leader clarify the expectations of subordinates (Crews et al., 2019). Leaders often set a reward in demand for subordinates' behavior.

The style of leadership ensures behavior that can guarantee success (Aboramadan & Kundi, 2020). A contrary behavior to the expectation of the leader results in punishment. Transactional leadership within an organization encourages subordinates while instilling desirable behavior (Puni et al., 2021). Burns (1978) identified the leadership style as a reciprocal relationship to facilitate goals. There is a tendency for subordinates to experience the negative consequences of flouting expected behavior.

The leadership dimensions of transactional style include contingent reward, where positive behavior results in reward and management by exception (passive or active); this entails leadership actions of monitoring and attending to failures and intervening when necessary (Barnett, 2018; Northhouse, 2019; Muhammad et al., 2020). Transactional leadership style reduces subordinate deviant behavior (Adekanmbi & Ukpere, 2019). The

practice of transactional leadership has the potential to limit unwarranted conduct if instituted in an organization. However, the exchange of reward, which enforces the relationship between the leader and subordinates, makes the style of leadership short-lived, as it can create resentment (Burns, 1978).

### **Laissez-faire Leadership Style**

The laissez-faire leadership style is characterized with lack of intervention by the leader in decision making (Chatwin, 2018). The leadership style does not involve any reward or subordinates' motivation for behavior output, and it is not desirable in the workplace (Glambek et al., 2018). The leader style abdicates responsibility, does not use their role authority, and cannot cognitively prioritize (Burns 1998; Robert & Vandenberghe, 2021).

Laissez-faire style is a passive behavior, and the approach differs from passive management by exception as the leader does not act (Burn & Riggio, 2006). The leadership behavior has undesirable consequences on the organization and the most negative (Kaleen et al., 2021). Robert and Vandenberghe (2021) in their research study concluded that the leadership style is destructive with reduced subordinate effort.

A unique leadership style, as the individual shows inactive behavior, which is an absence of any proactive attitude compared to the other leadership styles (Gulmez & Negis Isik, 2020). The inactivity of the leader leaves subordinates with the sole responsibility to decide and manage problems. However, Khan and Saleem (2021) in their study concluded that for subordinates to have independence in decision making, the laissez-faire style is the most appropriate to foster creativity and innovation among



subordinates. Notwithstanding, Donkor and Zhou (2020) affirmed the leadership style is associated with negative behavior.

### **Military Leadership**

Military leadership is bureaucratic and historically hierarchical. Meerits and Kivipõld (2020) noted that the traditional system of communication and compliance with authority within the military facilitates timely and accurate dissemination of order. The authors explained military leaders work under extreme pressure with a duty to lead in the garrison and during combat. They affirmed that the nature of their work demand makes military leadership require high skill and expertise (Meerits & Kivipõld, 2020).

Military institutions naturally have the mandate to exert force in the face of aggression to defend a nation's service environment (Pleşcan, 2021). Consequently, the decisions commanders make can have grave effect on a country. Leadership in the military is thus inevitable and demands commanders exercise it rightly. As an arm of government and allowed to use lethal force, Pleşcan stated that they have a mission to accomplish in an uncertain environment that needs a chain of command at all levels to work efficiently (Pleşcan, 2021). Additionally, the military workforce makes it extensively a large organization with diverse individuals with roles and talent which necessitate unique skills of command (Kałużny & Pietrakowski, 2020).

The nature of military leadership ensures careful selection of individuals' who are assigned authority and the requisite training to build their capacity for their position (Malinowski, 2019). The military commander, through capacity building, cultivates the relevant leadership style depending on the need. Hence, individuals in command

positions must know their leadership style that positively impact subordinates. The choice of leadership style a commander thus demonstrates is situation dependent, extent of the influencing ability of the leader, and the latitude of time in authority (Kałużny & Pietrakowski, 2020). Understanding military leadership lies in the dimension of authority, responsibility, and subordinates under command (Malinowski, 2019).

The unstable operational environment and the complex duties assigned to military commanders make the leadership perspective unique. The leaders must have a good relationship with subordinates while maintaining authority to effect tasks (Jansen & Delahaij, 2020). Military leadership is transformational, as the leaders are role models and the epitome of discipline (Jansen & Delahaij, 2020). Likewise, Trachik et al. (2020) explained that the military leader must balance creativity and discipline while showing social responsibility and support of subordinate well-being.

Additionally, the unit commander provides purposeful leadership, which supports unit cohesion and the psychological needs of subordinates to reduce any adverse outcome. Military leaders have the primary task of maintaining national security demanding force characterized by danger, psychological stress, and physical risk to personal making cohesion of personnel significant (Malinowski, 2019). The military commander has control over subordinates, which creates a strong leader relationship to ensure trust.

Moreover, the strict hierarchical structure makes the commander follow formal procedures in the chain of command as a leader due to the rank structure (Kałużny & Pietrakowski, 2020). This makes any decision by the military leader to follow the system

of a chain of command through a large body of personnel affecting each member of the enormous population base in the command. The impulse of the military leadership makes it important for commander's critical assessment of decisions not to jeopardize discipline within a command while maintaining professionalism.

According to Fosse (2019), the nature of the environment dictates that military leaders must be effective and flexible to operate in a fluid environment with the required skills and experience. The commander must have the ability to balance professionally the tension between regimentalism and flexibility to cope with routine works while adapting to a crisis. Military leaders serve the civil authority and their subordinates, which require a balance in leadership skills to promote the decisions of the political authority and uphold the moral fabric of the unit (Malinowski, 2019). The demand and use of multiple styles of leadership is essential for the military commander.

### **Moral Conduct**

Moral conduct involves the behavior practices of an individual in conformity to social norms. Individuals who fit into society or a community share commonly expected values and beliefs binding the group (De Cremer & Vandekerckhove, 2017). The conduct of an individual usually refers to their behavior characteristic; wrong or right depending on the society. Kohlberg and Hersh (1977) mentioned that the moral development of a person is an ongoing process with constant interaction with the societal environment.

The development process makes the society view individuals as morally upright when they can make decisions to resist any influence that will cause the deviation from fundamental rules (Kohlberg, 1976; Thompson & Wu, 2018). Hogan (1973) in discussing

moral conduct emphasized that character is the reason underlying individual behavior that defines their actions. Further reflecting that individuals' ability to recognize the consequences of their actions makes it relevant in shaping their conduct. Kohlberg et al. (1984) noted that the rationale for an individual to act against norms is important in understanding behavior.

The complexity of the organizational environment makes it stressful and challenging to cope with norms (Frempong, 2019; Veleva, 2017). The conduct of individuals remains strongly their moral responsibility towards others in an organization. This makes moral conduct an institutional issue in preventing negative consequences (Kohlberg, 1969). However, the lack of moral awareness can aggravate unacceptable conduct without regard to the outcome (Kohlberg & Candee, 1984). Critical importance in the study of moral conduct is the much knowledge it offers in the field of leadership. It provides further discussion and depth of knowledge on how leadership styles impact the conduct of subordinates.

Hogan (1973) emphasized that the concept of moral conduct remains embedded with intriguing and paradoxes in its discourse (p.217). Society accepts individuals that follow norms and practices as morally noble citizens (Grác et al., 2021; Haara & Lahdenranta, 2018). Haara and Lahdenranta (2018) further concluded that self-esteem motivates people to behave morally, which society adores. However, Stănescu (2020) argued that moral degrading motivation stem from money, status, sexuality, magnification of conflict, which persists in the community and is a bane to human society.

The difficulty in understanding why an individual will deviate from norms to behave contrary to acceptable behavior remains an academic challenge (Castille et al., 2018). Society has advertently separated from morals, and individuals are now not awakening to moral principles leading to deviant patterns of unethical behavior (Stănescu, 2020). The crises in the lack of moral values permeating in the society have engulfed every institution with the military affected.

The military environment, notwithstanding the nature of the operation, is the hallmark of discipline and custodian of values (Malinowski, 2019). However, the moral conduct of personnel demands understanding due to rapid changes in society that impacts institutions. The research conclusion on the notion of why good people engage in bad things suggests a further understanding of moral behavior (Bennett et al., 2019).

Bandura (1986) mentioned that individuals in their actions are cognitively aware of their consequences. Qiu and Rooney (2019) noted that causes of unethical conduct result from interrelated cognitive mechanisms that cause individuals to deactivate their moral self-regulatory process in decisions. According to Bandura et al. (1996), conducting one's self is through a pattern of a self-regulatory process that guides individuals to control their actions. Similarly, Ellemers et al. (2019) emphasized that in moral conduct, self-regulatory controls our behavior in reference to our moral standards and the value that individual shares with others in a group.

### **Moral Disengagement**

Individuals conduct themselves unethically without apparent guilt when cognitively separates their moral regulatory process. Invariably, as concluded by Bandura

et al. (1996) the moral awareness of an individual underlies their conduct and decisions. Thus, the mechanism of moral disengagement encourages deviant actions for people to act with no form of guilt when engaging in unethical conduct (Bandura, 1999).

Newman et al. (2019) acknowledged that the fundamental psychological mechanism that governs the moral conduct of individuals is the self-regulatory process that, when disengaged, causes negative conduct due to moral disengagement. Researchers agree that moral disengagement, a cognitive individual difference, affects employees' conduct (Castille et al., 2019; Lee et al., 2019; Newman et al., 2019).

### ***Mechanism of Moral Disengagement***

Bandura's (1999) social cognitive theory explained moral justification occurs when individuals in an unethical behavior provide moral justification for their conduct. The cognitive process of reconstruction of such behavior becomes the rationale for a moral purpose. Such actions become dangerous when individuals link them to a worthy purpose (Bandura et al., 1996).

People with moral conduct reflect on their actions and regulate behavior. The self-regulatory mechanism, Bandura affirmed, governs moral conduct when activated. However, when disengaged selectively, an individual then convinces the self that the inhuman conduct is worth the course (Chen et al., 2018). The process of moral disengagement results in the sanitization of language, diffuse or displacement of responsibility, etc. (Bandura, 1999). The concept of moral disengagement provides a depth of knowledge to appreciate how individuals build their moral standards and sanction themselves of any moral infractions (Bandura et al., 1996; Zheng et al., 2017).

Bandura (1996) classified the mechanism of moral disengagement under behavior, conduct, and victims. Bandura (2016) mentioned that mechanisms under behavior rationalize immoral actions to appear moral and these are moral justification, advantageous comparison, and euphemism labeling. Moral justification, according to Bandura, occurs when individuals act according to held beliefs but take contrary action when justified to align with moral values. Bandura emphasized that individuals in their daily social life, economic and ideological beliefs justify their acts when morally disengaged.

In euphemism labeling, individuals through language can manipulate others or their actions through words to make them appear moral and acceptable (Bandura, 2016). Explaining advantageous comparison, Bandura stressed that an individual compare their actions against other negative more reprehensible deeds to make it look good. The process makes a detrimental action appear normal, depending on the extent of comparison.

Under the classification of conduct, Chen et al. (2018) explained that the mechanism of disengagement involves individuals distancing themselves from their actions to avoid culpability. Moreover, displacement of responsibility occurs in the displacement of immoral conduct on another person (Bandura et al., 1996). A person can then engage in the further immoral act if someone is available to assign the responsibility. The mechanism is prominent when there is an authority and subordinate relationship in an organization, which makes it convenient to displace responsibility (Hung et al., 2017; Zhao et al., 2019). In diffusion of responsibility, Bandura et al. (1996) noted a

disengagement mechanism that an individual does not accept responsibility when in a group influenced by social pressure.

Bandura classified dehumanization and attribution of blame under victims that suffer the effect of disengagement. Thus, the value of human life is undermined, and actors of the immoral conduct feel they are more human than victims, thereby treating them with disdain. The mechanism makes individuals adopt an emotional detachment from the harm they cause to victims (Tillman et al., 2017). Attribution of blame mechanism makes individuals rather shift the blame of their actions on the victim (Petitta et al., 2021).

Moreover, the perpetrators of the immoral act portray victims as the cause of the actions and deserve the violation or mistreatment (Steinbauer et al., 2019). The mechanism of moral disengagement affects the conduct of individuals with the inclination to morally disengage. The behavior of such persons violates social and organizational norms (Arain, 2018). The mechanism significantly affects individuals' conduct as they avoid the guilt of a specific immoral infraction (Bandura et al., 1996).

The traditional command hierarchy of the military makes the mechanism of moral disengagement convenient for subordinates to adopt when behaving contrary to accepted norms (De Graaff, 2020). The peculiarity of the occurrence of moral issues makes it difficult to examine. Morally disengaged individuals indulge in reduced work hours, violation of norms, prioritization of family above work, etc. (Kacmar et al., 2019; Valle et al., 2019). Hence, a challenge in evidence of leaders' actions that affect the conduct of individuals and gathering data to affirm such assertion.



Therefore, the study did not seek to determine or establish causality which is often difficult in moral concept due to the lack of disclosure in nature of negative behavior but to understand the existence of a relationship based on the research hypotheses. Thus, the objective of the study is to build leadership literature in understanding the impact of leadership on the conduct of subordinates in the military environment in the form of relating the full range leadership model and subordinates' moral disengagement.

### **Leadership Style and Moral Disengagement**

The concept of leadership style and moral disengagement has predominately gained popularity in academic studies. However, most studies have not linked the concept. Hogan (1973) provided the psychological perspective on moral conduct explaining morals in the dimension of moral knowledge, socialization, empathy, autonomy, and moral judgment (p.217). The dimensions serve as the foundation of individual differences in moral actions.

Bandura et al. (1996) discussed the self-regulatory characteristics of individual differences due to the cognitive mechanism people use in disengaging their moral sanction and termed it as moral disengagement. There is a growing interest in the concept of moral disengagement. However, most studies have focused on the measurement of the construct, antecedent, and outcomes involving individuals, groups, teams, and organizations (Newman et al., 2020). With the significant devastating effect of morally disengaged subordinates, understanding how leadership impacts subordinates is vital for an organization.

Moore et al. (2012) in their study acknowledged the growing interest of scholars in understanding individual behavior in an organization since the introduction of the concept of moral disengagement by Bandura. The authors proposed that moral disengagement is a significant driver of unethical behavior at work and the need to have an effective means of measure. They argued that understanding the cognitive process of individuals in their conduct is essential in behavioral studies.

The authors, in developing a simple adult measure of practical importance in research work, concluded that the propensity to morally disengage is an individual difference that predicts behavior at work relevant to behavioral ethics. In a study by Hadlington et al. (2021) to understand how individual differences in behavior become a threat to organizational security, sampled 718 personnel in an online questionnaire using Moore et al. (2012) scale.

Petitta et al. (2021) examined how employees misconduct themselves at work by faking injury, illegal behaviors, and not reporting incident that can cause an organization using moral disengagement mechanisms to justify actions. According to the authors, the organizational environment can cause emotional anger or joy that can trigger moral disengagement of employees (Petitta et al., 2021). They explained that the negative environmental conditions set by leaders result in moral blindness that can serve as a prerequisite to morally disengage. Thus, individuals through anger violate rules which leaders can minimize by encouraging positive emotions to foster appropriate behavior.

Likewise, Fida et al. (2018) using moral disengagement theory examined how aggression at the workplace influence negative emotions that affect individual's violation

of work norms through deviant behaviors. These negative behaviors at work affect legitimate organizational interests. The authors based their argument using moral disengagement mechanisms (Fida et al., 2018). They found that victims of aggressions experience negative emotions and suggested leadership implementation of supportive programs enhance an individual's well-being that mitigates workplace aggression.

Hadlington et al. (2021) on the other hand found that increase in moral disengagement of personnel at work results in knowledge deficiency in organizational norms and negative work attitude. In a similar study, Afsar and Shahjehan (2018) focused on destructive and constructive deviant behavior at work. They affirmed that examining individual behavior can provide insight into employees' conduct. Kennedy et al. (2017) studied gender differences in moral conduct and noted that the moral identity of women mitigates their unethical behavior.

Frempong (2019) in a study in Kumasi service industry concluded that females conduct themselves ethically than males. The author suggested the importance of culture in the conduct of gender. Similarly, Bintara et al. (2021) mentioned that the leadership style of females significantly impact work ethics, suggesting female leaders influence the ethical behavior of subordinates.

The demand for answers on the morals of individuals has made researchers focus primarily on ethical leadership (Debes, 2021; Shareef & Atan, 2019; Yulianti, 2021). Though leadership studies abound in academic literature, researchers have not paid attention to how leadership style affects self-regulation due to moral cognitive

mechanism, resulting in limited research work that examines the full range leadership model and moral issues.

Nonetheless, leadership practices in addressing organizational challenges are evident in recent academic research. Existing studies suggest the significance of leaders in creating the foundation and maintenance of moral standards due to the complex social pressures (Berkovich & Eyal, 2021; Zhu et al., 2019). However, the available works of literature failed to link the leadership style of the full range leadership model to moral disengagement construct of their subordinates. Admittedly, leaders, through their practical approach, can influence the moral conduct of subordinates by affecting their moral cognitive processes due to the nature of the existing relationship (Detert et al., 2008).

Zhang et al. (2018) argued that leaders' narcissism influence followers' deviant behavior. The authors draw on the social cognitive theory using two mechanisms of moral disengagement. However, the literature contribution to leadership development suggested that future leadership studies must focus on how the nature of leaders affects subordinates' behaviors.

Adekanmbi and Ukpere (2019) worked on leadership styles on deviant behavior in a Nigerian banking industry using a quantitative approach. The researchers found that only transactional leadership styles reduce organizational deviant behaviors. Moore et al.'s (2019) research on leaders' influence on employees focused on how ethical leadership impacts subordinates' moral disengagement. The authors found that ethical leadership affects the moral disengagement of subordinates (Moore et al., 2019).

Gan (2019) on leadership stated that moral justification mediates ethical leadership and employees' conduct and leaders have the influence to limit subordinates' deviant behavior by making them accountable for actions and consequences.

Harris and He (2019) in a similar study focused on unauthorized pilferage at work and acknowledged that ethical leadership inhibits employees' moral disengagement. Lasso et al. (2021) determined the association between ethics and leadership in a quantitative study using the multifactor leadership questionnaire to sample 219 local government officials. They suggested that leaders' ethical values in an organization significantly and positively relate to their style of leadership approach and organizational environment.

Inderjit et al. (2018) in their leadership studies sampled 548 soldiers to identify personnel work commitment of service non-commissioned officers from the perspective of junior ranks. They maintained that transformational leadership has a significant relationship than transactional in the influence of personnel at work. Piriye (2019) noted that leadership in the military is vital in the development of moral standards. The author stressed that the conduct of military personnel is necessary to gain trust while commanders strive to maintain professionalism.

Junaidah et al. (2020) determined the leadership styles of military personnel and the social demographic factors that influence their leadership approaches in a quantitative study. They mentioned that transformational leadership has a significant advantage over other leadership behaviors. Moreover, the authors concluded that males and longer

serving personnel lean towards the practice of transformational leadership, with educational level a significant factor in the leadership approach.

Popoola et al. (2019) examined the influence of leadership on ethical climate in a quantitative study using 165 police officers. They found that leadership style affected the behavior of personnel in the force. De Graaff's (2020) work on moral identity and moral disengagement argued that military leaders have conscious moral identity than their subordinates. The author suggested that senior military personnel can describe values and principles when challenged with ethical issues than subordinates due to the level of training, self-awareness, and the importance of assigned roles (De Graaff, 2020).

Erkutlu and Chafra (2018) however, studied how leaders' anti-social and uncooperative behavior affect the psychological health of employees leading to organizational deviance. They argued that moral disengagement is the boundary condition for leaders' behavior, such as exploitation of subordinates without the concern of their needs. The authors affirmed how such traits of a leader elicit organizational intolerance, distrust, and workplace deviance.

Despite the study explaining how a leader's behavior affects negative outcomes of employees, they limited it to research participants with a year of experience in their job tenure at a university hospital. Qi et al. (2020) on employees conduct found that employees' deviant behavior can arise due to an authoritative style of leadership in an organization and according to Dang et al. (2017) leaders that use moral disengagement languages at work lower subordinates propensity to morally disengage. This Fehr et al.

(2020) affirmed, indicating the tendency to morally disengage encourages subordinates to trust their leaders even if they behave unethically.

Haug et al. (2017) explained how the strong relationship between employees and leaders reduces the willingness for an individual to morally disengage. They explained that job insecurity impacts employees' moral disengagement and is prevalent when leader subordinate relationship is low. They concluded that job insecurity relates positively to employees' deviant behavior and intention to leave an organization. The authors affirmed insecurity in an organization increases deviant behavior with leaders' relationship with subordinates significant to encourage leveraging on to improve security at the workplace in mitigating moral disengagement.

Ruffin et al. (2019) on the other hand focused on the moral consequences of incentives in the public sector on the behavior of employees. The authors noted incentives designed to achieve set targets affect the sense of guilt and moral code of employees because of the crowding-out effect. They asserted that ineffective management of incentives in state institutions affects intrinsic motivations of employees, which leads to moral disengagement.

Admittedly, most leadership studies have focused on effectiveness, productivity, commitment, and other organizational outcomes. However, Surace (2019) argued that leadership is not about skills and logical results but how a commander can manage subordinates in the complex, unpredictable environment that is beyond leadership control. This affirmed by Barnes and Spangenburg (2018) the need for further leadership studies to unravel organizational challenges. Vogt (2015) in discussing ethical and moral

issues affecting the military argued that despite the military commanders' stance of strict discipline, it has not served its deterrence. However, commanders at the pinnacle of the profession exercise their leadership role during all hours and are thus accountable for subordinates' actions.

### **Summary and Transition**

In this chapter, I reviewed the literature relating to the concept of leadership and moral conduct, specifically highlighting moral disengagement and its mechanisms. The chapter included the search strategy and the terms used for the search of current literature on leadership and moral conduct. In the literature on leadership review, I discussed the theory of leadership from the trait theory to contemporary leadership concepts, which included the theoretical framework of the full range leadership model. The next chapter will outline the research method and design for the study.



## Chapter 3: Research Method

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this quantitative study was to examine the impact of operational commanders' leadership styles on moral conduct in the Ghana Air Force. The study was a quantitative, cross-sectional, and descriptive correlational design used to evaluate the relationship between the research's constructs. The study involved the use of variables from the research construct to examine the relationship. In this chapter, I discuss the research method and design, explaining their rationale. The chapter additionally includes the sample population, instrumentation for the study, data collection procedure, analysis, and ethical considerations to help deepen the literature on the concept of leadership.

### **Research Method**

The study method for this research was quantitative. Researchers in a study can use quantitative, qualitative, and mixed method approaches (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The uniqueness of each method provides researchers with the right tool for a study in gathering and analyzing research data (Creswell, 2016). However, the choice of the approach must align with the research question (Byrne, 2017).

The choice of the quantitative method enables the quantification of research operationalized constructs into variables of measure (Kumar, 2018). To determine the relationship between variables, the quantitative approach is more suitable than the qualitative or mixed-method approach. The quantitative method involves the analysis of numerical data statistically in examining the relationship between variables to understand the nature and extent of the relationship.

The qualitative method was not appropriate for this study as the aim of the research was not to understand the lived experiences of the participants in their natural settings (Creswell, 2016). Qualitative researchers study a phenomenon in their real settings to understand social issues from the perspective of the individuals' common experiences (Patton, 2015). The approach uses narratives or textual descriptions, which are non-numerical data from the social setting of individuals experiencing the phenomenon; the quantitative method involves statistical data (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Qualitative researchers categorize words and meanings into themes rather than performing statistical analysis of numerical data in quantitative methods.

The mixed method combines quantitative and qualitative approaches (Burkholder et al., 2016). The approach strengthens research by combining the two methods. However, the qualitative approach of the mixed method was not appropriate for this study, as a researcher must interact with participants in sharing their experiences and perspectives on a social issue. The study objective was to examine the relationship between the constructs of leadership styles and moral disengagement. The numerical data required did not demand participant interaction; data were collected using a standard instrument.

### **Research Design and Rationale**

In this study, I used a correlational design to examine the extent of the relationship between the research variables from the sample population. The choice of correlational design aligns with the research question to measure the relationship between the variables to yield the degree of knowledge required to understand the extent of the

nature of an existing relationship between the variables in addressing the identified problem.

Quantitative researchers have the option of using experimental or quasi-experimental design or correlational design. Burkholder et al. (2016) mentioned that an experimental design is used to study a particular phenomenon with a control or treatment group based on actual measurement and manipulation of variables, which was not the intent of this study. The quasi-experimental design is a form of experimental design but with the change of group assignment or randomly assigning group (Burkholder et al., 2016); this design was not possible compared to random experimental design.

Correlational design is a statistical approach to understand the extent of relationship between constructs operationalized into numerical data (Frankfort-Nachmias & Leon-Guerrero, 2018). The central research question for this study was:

RQ: What is the impact of the perceived operational commanders' leadership on subordinates' moral conduct in the Ghana Air Force?

The derived subquestions for the study were:

RSQ1: What relationship exists between subordinates' perceptions of operational commanders' leadership styles and subordinates' moral disengagement?

RSQ2: To what extent do subordinates' perceptions of operational commanders' leadership styles and subordinates' moral disengagement differ according to gender or rank status?

The research question provided the basis for the selection of the design for the study. I used Bass and Avolio (2004) leadership model as the theoretical framework to

answer the research question. Thus, the research operationalized transformational, transactional, and laissez-faires leadership styles as independent variables and moral disengagement was the dependent variable to test the derived hypotheses.

Correlational design helps researchers examine relationships without the manipulation of the variables in a nonexperimental study (Burkholder et al., 2016). The choice of the design influenced by the hypotheses testing makes the approach suitable (Kothari, 2004). Moreover, the use of numerical data makes the approach scientific and findings not just a coincidence.

### **Population and Sampling**

The sample population consisted of personnel in Air Force squadrons operating from a selected base in the country. These personnel operate daily within the Air Force squadrons and are individuals with skill sets from the supply, engineering, administration, and operations squadrons, forming the first line of command position in the Air Force. The targeted population included about 1,200 personnel in the Air Force squadrons. The squadrons represent the command level with officers, warrant officers, senior noncommissioned officers, and noncommissioned officers who form the core of the Air Force operational squadrons.

I used convenience sampling to reach adequate representation of the population and give available personnel the chance to participate in the study. The sampling method was a nonprobability technique in which a researcher gains participants from a group convenient to contact because of their availability and access (Burkholder et al., 2016). Nonprobability sampling restricts the generalizability of results, but the availability of the

target population in meeting the research design makes the sampling method appropriate. The sampling method introduces research bias because a researcher determines the population to sample, but this method was more appropriate due to the population of interest (Wall, 2021). However, researcher bias can be reduced through the use of an online survey for data collection; the researcher does not interact with participants and has an objective interpretation of data (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Sample size was determined using a G\*power calculation. The specifications for the G\*power calculation analysis used to estimate the sample size were a medium effect of 0.15, the two-tailed test of an alpha level of 0.05 with a power setting of 0.80 (Bakker et al., 2020). These values aided in the statistical test of Pearson correlation, which achieved a sample size of 84, multiple regression sample size calculation gave a value of 114, and the calculation of the multivariate analysis of a samples size of 99. The sample sizes for the inferential statistical methods to use in the data analysis indicated a sample size of 114 to achieve the desired minimum of participants for the study.

Accessing personnel due to their work schedules made the sampling method suitable and time saving. The sampling choice was due to the accessibility of participants and suitability for quantitative studies (Burkholder et al., 2016). The use of probability sampling unnecessarily limits the sample size but offers the opportunity to generalize the results (Scholtz, 2021). Convenience sampling ensured all personnel in the squadrons across ranks received the invitation to take part. This method was likely to have a high response rate.

Eligibility to participate in the study was assignment to a specific squadron; potential participants had to work with the squadron for over 6 months and be serving personnel of over 4 years in the Air Force (Ghana Armed Forces, n.d.). The criteria for participation in the study involved only uniform personnel from the rank of squadron leader and below. The only criterion for exclusion was not having access to the social media platform for the squadron. After official approval from the Ghana Armed Forces general headquarters and the base commander of the selected base, the base research point of contact sent notification to the wings to have access to their squadron personnel and their social media platforms for participation.

### **Data Collection and Instrument**

I used the Mind Garden online web-based platform with a copy of the consent form and link to the questionnaire. Participants answered the questionnaire survey from the MLQ-5X rater form, moral disengagement eight-item scale, with demographic information, using squadron's online platforms of the selected base. Participants answered Bass and Avolio's (1995, 2004) standard MLQ-5X rater form as the independent variable in an online questionnaire survey that served as the primary data. Moore et al.'s (2012) eight-item scale for moral disengagement was the dependent variable.

The survey included a section for anonymous secure demographic information to aid in providing meaning to the study. The demographic information asked for participants' gender, rank status, years in service, and trade category of employment. The secondary data for the study include information from the review of literature gathered

for the study on the concept of leadership and moral conduct, which included moral disengagement, and available military document and reports needed to answer the research question.

The MLQ measured the perception of subordinates' operational commanders' use of a particular leadership style construct; the Moore et al.'s (2012) eight-item scale measured the construct of subordinates' moral disengagement. The two instruments are standard measurements for the research construct and have been used extensively by researchers because of their assured validity and reliability with an acceptable coefficient of reliability (Hilton et al., 2021; Kacmar et al., 2019; Newman et al., 2020; Özgenel & Karsantik, 2020); they were used without any modification.

The reliability of an instrument is how close it is to what it should measure, specified in the Cronbach's alpha (George & Mallery, 2016; Imam et al., 2017). George and Mallery (2016) stated that an alpha coefficient of reliability value greater or equal to 0.90 is excellent, and between 0.80 and less than 0.89 is considered sufficiently a good value. The MLQ-5X and the Moore et al. eight-items scale instruments reflect a high reliability score, validated in most research studies, making them reliable for research. Both standard instruments of measure have a Cronbach alpha value of over 0.80 with an acceptable consistency in quantitative research studies (Batista-Foguet et al., 2021; Imam et al., 2017; Newman et al., 2020).

I used the Mind Garden website to upload the MLQ-5X short rater form for the study. Bass and Avolio (1995, 2004) developed the MLQ-5X to measure leadership styles relevant to the full range leadership model. The questionnaire can be administered

through an online venue to allow participants to self-administer the survey. The questionnaire comprises the leadership styles of transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire of the full spectrum of the leadership continuum (Northouse, 2019). The MLQ-5X has scores on a 5-point scale ranging from 0 (*not at all*) to 4 (*frequently, if not always*) with 45 items; 36 items are on leadership styles and nine items are on leadership outcomes (Mind Garden, n.d.).

The moral disengagement scale developed by Moore et al. on a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*, for the workplace is a valid and reliable instrument for research (Moore et al., 2012). The scale comprises the eight mechanisms of moral disengagement: (a) moral justification, (b) euphemism labeling, (c) advantageous comparison, (d) displacement of responsibility, (e) diffusion of responsibility, (f) disregard or distortion of consequences, (g) dehumanization, and (h) attribution of blame (Bandura 1986, 1999, Bandura et al., 1996).

Moore et al. (2019) researched how leaders influence subordinates' behavior; the Moore et al. (2012) eight-item scale reports an alpha value of 0.85. Lian et al. (2020) used the scale with a high Cronbach alpha value in studying unethical pro-organizational behavior and individual conduct reporting an alpha of 0.88. Similarly, Kacmar et al. (2019) used the scale to examine the impact of moral disengagement on employees' attitudes at work and reported a coefficient value of 0.89.

In a similar study, He et al. (2017) investigated how employees' silence leads to counterwork behavior and gave an alpha of 0.81, showing satisfactory internal consistency of the scale in measuring moral disengagement. Keem et al. (2018) examined



how dispositional creativity results in unethical behavior and gave an alpha value of 0.87. Le et al. (2017) reported an alpha value of 0.87 when they examined the relationship between individual psychological entitlement and engaging in unethical behavior. Researchers have used the scale extensively in quantitative studies due to the validity of the instrument in measuring the moral disengagement of individuals in the workplace.

### **Data Analysis**

I used the Statistical Package of Social Science (SPSS) software to analyze the research data with descriptive and inferential statistics to make statistical inferences and predictions. The central research question for the study was: What is the impact of the perceived operational commanders' leadership on subordinates' moral conduct in the Ghana Air Force? The derived sub-questions and hypotheses for the study were:

RSQ1: What relationship exists between subordinates' perceptions of operational commanders' leadership styles and subordinates' moral disengagement?

RSQ2: To what extent do subordinates' perceptions of operational commanders' leadership styles and subordinates' moral disengagement differ according to gender or rank status?

$H_01$ : There is no statistically significant correlation between subordinates' perceptions of operational commanders' leadership styles and subordinates' moral disengagement.

$H_a1$ : There is a statistically significant correlation between subordinates' perceptions of operational commanders' leadership styles and subordinates' moral disengagement

*H<sub>0</sub>2*: There is no statistically significant difference between subordinates' perceptions of operational commanders' leadership styles and subordinates' moral disengagement according to gender or rank status.

*H<sub>a</sub>2*: There is statistically significant difference between subordinates' perceptions of operational commanders' leadership styles and subordinates' moral disengagement according to gender or rank status.

Data analysis with the SPSS software included Pearson correlation, multiple regression and multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) statistical tools to examine the extent of any existing relationship and the difference in means between the variables (Frankfort-Nachmias & Leon-Guerrero, 2018; O'Sullivan et al., 2017).

A measure of the association or nature of the predictive variables indicated the statistical relationship to accept or reject the null hypotheses. The analysis involved descriptive statistics using frequency tables, measures of central tendencies, and dispersions (Frankfort-Nachmias & Leon-Guerrero, 2018). The descriptive statistics provided essential characteristic information and interpretation of the data from the sample population.

The inferential statistics of the study included MANOVA, Pearson correlation, and multiple regression analysis. Researchers use multiple regression analysis to examine the strength of the significant relationship between variables (Frankfort-Nachmias & Leon-Guerrero, 2018). The study examined the relationship between leadership styles and moral disengagement in the test of hypotheses. Further evaluation of the variables involved the use of MANOVA to find out the differences in subordinates' perception of

operational commanders' leadership styles and subordinates' moral disengagement based on the sampled data.

### **Research Validity and Reliability**

Reliability and validity are synonymous with social science research. Babbie (2017) affirmed that reliability is to have consistency in a particular measure used by a researcher and the results must reflect precisely the construct of measure. Validity describes the true nature of research findings as researchers ensure the tool of measure produces similar results. The validity of a study is how the findings relate to the phenomenon. Validity allows a researcher to make inferences from the study findings from the population sampled data (Burkholder et al., 2016). This ensures the desired quality of a study to make the meaningful impact in the academic field of study (Frankfort-Nachmias & Leon-Guerrero, 2018). The two measures of validity of the study relate to internal and external validity.

The instruments of measure selected for the research were standard measures with no threat to internal and external validity. Researchers have validated both instruments with an acceptable Cronbach's alpha value (George & Mallery, 2016). External validity affects the generalization of the results to a wider population. Using nonprobability sampling restricts generalization to the larger population. Internal validity relates to the characteristics of experimental research in a causal relationship (Burkholder et al., 2016). In such studies, the internal validity has the instruments measure the required construct in the study.

However, the study design was correlational and non-experimental. The validated instruments for the research make them measure the proposed construct of the research study, which enhances the validity of the research. Validity in research is to have the instrument measure and cover exactly all the constructs in the study it is intended to measure, which reflects the true meaning of the operationalized construct identified in the study (Frankfort-Nachmias & Leon-Guerrero, 2018).

Babbie (2017) mentioned that data sources and collection affect validity of a study. Thus, the use of an anonymous method of survey in quantitative research advances a more accurate response from participants to portray the desired behavior in social science. According to Babbie (2017) at all times, the repeated application of a technique to a specified object must yield the same data to ensure reliability. This requires that the instrument of measure used must yield the same outcome when used by researchers on the same subjects of study.

Researchers, to enhance the reliability of the MLQ-5X and Moore et al. (2012), have validated the instruments in similar studies (Moore et al., 2019; Newman et al., 2020). The Cronbach's alpha coefficient of reliability which measures the internal reliability of the study ensured the variables in the research captured distinctly the construct to affirm the validity of the instruments. The value provided the added opportunity to compare with other studies of the reliability score of the alpha coefficient of the instruments to enhance the validity of the study.

### **Ethical Considerations**

I wrote to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for their approval and received the approval number 02-25-22-0732158, before any attempt to collect the research data. The base I selected for the study granted the access after the general headquarters provided the research approval for the commencement of the study. I followed all the ethical procedures by adhering to informed consent, protection from harm, and the right to privacy for ethical compliance.

The research did not pose any harm to respondents, nor affected their professional career or resulted in the disclosure of any confidential information. However, I safeguarded participants' privacy and confidentiality throughout the study processes and data collection by assigning password protection to the data flash drive and secured it under lock. Data for analysis on my computer also had a protected password which prevented any individual from accessing them. The stored data did not have any form of identity of respondents which ensured confidentiality.

Research participants involved serving personnel in the Air Force from a selected base. The administration department of the base coordinated the invitation to participate in the study without any influence. My role as the researcher was stated clearly on the consent form and provided participants the opportunity to continue or not participate with the study to mitigate any bias as an active-duty personnel in the Air Force. I envisaged the process helped reduced any bias from undue influence or coercion on respondents which assured voluntary willingness of their participation or to opt-out at their convenience.

The participants volunteered after agreeing to the consent form. Participants received information on the purpose of the data collection and their privacy rights. My role as the researcher and familiarity with the research environment and participants influenced the choice of quantitative research method with an online survey which reduced any bias that could have compromised the response and research findings (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

I used a base outside my current place of duty to avoid any undue influence on respondents. The study had no hidden motives or deception and with no experiment on human participants. The demographic questions did not have any feature to identify respondents. I have protected all information gathered from the survey for the 5 years and beyond unless specified by the IRB before they would be destroyed in accordance with their regulations.

### **Summary and Transition**

The chapter contained the relevance of the research method and design. It had details of the target population, sampling method, and the instrumentation for the study, including the research instruments and their significance for the study. The chapter further had explanations of the statistical methods and the type of software to aid in the data analysis. Finally, I discussed in the chapter the threat to validity and the ethical consideration of the study. The next chapter will focus on the research data and results of the study.

## Chapter 4: Results

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this quantitative study was to examine the impact of operational commanders' leadership styles on moral conduct among members of the Ghana Air Force. The research was to address the increase in disciplinary cases that affect the discharge of functional duties and the gap in the literature on the extent to which leadership styles affect the unethical conduct of personnel at work. The Ghana Air Force has over 2,500 active-duty personnel and civilian employees stationed at a base. The targeted uniformed personnel account for around 1,200, and the estimated G\*power calculation required a minimum sample size of 114 participants.

Participants responded to an online survey that included demographic information, the MLQ-5X, and Moore et al.'s eight-item scale. The two instruments used are standard instruments with an acceptable coefficient of reliability and had no modifications. The study focused on the relationship between the construct of operational commanders' leadership styles and subordinates' moral disengagement in operational squadrons of personnel serving as commissioned and noncommissioned officers, including warrant officers.

Analysis with SPSS software was performed primarily on Pearson correlation, multiple regression, and MANOVA statistical tools to examine the extent of any existing relationship and the difference in means between the variables. The central research question for the study was:

RQ: What is the impact of the perceived operational commanders' leadership on subordinates' moral conduct in the Ghana Air Force?

The derived subquestions and related hypotheses for the study were:

RSQ1: What relationship exists between subordinates' perceptions of operational commanders' leadership styles and subordinates' moral disengagement?

$H_01$ : There is no statistically significant correlation between subordinates' perceptions of operational commanders' leadership styles and subordinates' moral disengagement.

$H_a1$ : There is a statistically significant correlation between subordinates' perceptions of operational commanders' leadership styles and subordinates' moral disengagement

RSQ2: To what extent do subordinates' perceptions of operational commanders' leadership styles and subordinates' moral disengagement differ according to gender or rank status?

$H_02$ : There is no statistically significant difference between subordinates' perceptions of operational commanders' leadership styles and subordinates' moral disengagement according to gender or rank status.

$H_a2$ : There is a statistically significant difference between subordinates' perceptions of operational commanders' leadership styles and subordinates' moral disengagement according to gender or rank status.



In this chapter, I present the process for the data collection, a descriptive analysis of the data, and the results of the inferential statistical test in answering the research hypotheses of this correlational study.

### **Data Collection**

In this study, I aimed at examining the relationship between the construct of operational commanders' leadership styles and subordinates' moral disengagement. Upon completion of Walden University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) process and receipt of the partner organization's approval letter, I received official approval from Walden University to conduct the study. I liaised with the research point of contact for the selected base and forwarded a copy of the electronic survey link, which was disseminated to squadron social media platforms.

The survey remained open for about 4 weeks with the research point of contact continuously reminding personnel the study was voluntary and anonymous and assuring them of confidentiality. There were no discrepancies from the initial proposed plan for data collection. The G\*power calculated sample size was 114 participants; at the close of the questionnaire on May 6, 2022, 147 participants had completed the online survey.

### **Results**

The questionnaire for the survey had three sections. The first section was anonymous demographic information including participants' gender, rank status, years in service, and trade category of employment. The MLQ-5X was another section and measured the subordinates' perceptions of operational commanders' use of a particular leadership style; responses were solicited on a 5-point Likert scale where 1 = *not at all*

and 5 = *frequently if not always*. The third section was Moore et al.'s (2012) eight-item scale used to measure subordinates' moral disengagement; the construct used a 5-point Likert scale where 1 = *disagree completely* and 5 = *agree completely*.

### **Demographic Description**

Among the 147 respondents, 98 (66.7%) were men and 49 (33.3%) were women. Noncommissioned officers accounted for 106 (72.1%), and officers 41 (27.9%). Among various trade proficiencies, the total of administration personnel was 14 (9.5%), supply was 38 (25.9%), engineering was 37(25.2%), and flying was 58 (39.5%).

In the age group of 20 years or younger, there were two (1.4%) participants, 44 (29.4%) between 21 and 30 years, 79 (53.7%) between 31 and 40 years, and 22 (15%) between 41 and 50 years. For the number of years in the service, 20 (13.6%) respondents had served less than 5 years, 53 (36.1%) had served between 6 and 10 years, 23 (15.6%) between 11 and 15 years, 39 (26.5) between 16 and 20 years, nine (6.1%) between 21 and 25 years, and three (2%) served 26 years or more. Demographic details appear in Table 1.

**Table 1***Demographic Descriptive Statistics, N = 147*

Variable	N	%
Gender		
Male	98	66.7
Female	49	33.3
Rank status		
Noncommissioned officer	106	72.1
Officer	41	27.9
Trade proficiency		
Administration	14	9.5
Supply	38	25.9
Engineering	37	25.2
Flying	58	39.5
Age group		
≤ 20 years	2	1.4
21–30 years	44	29.4
31–40 years	79	53.7
41–50years	22	15.0
≥ 51 years	0	0.0
Time in service		
≤ 5 years	20	13.6
6–10 years	53	36.1
11–15 years	23	15.6
16–20 years	39	26.5
21–25 years	9	6.1
≥ 26 years	3	2.0

The total population of interest was around 1,200, and 147 personnel responded to the questionnaire. The response rate was low likely due to operational exigencies within the base. The number represents about 12.25% of the total population but was significant for the study; the G\*Power calculated a minimum sample size of 114. The percentage ratio of women to men respondents was high, given that women comprise only 25.25% of the population on the base. The flying trade proficiency had the greatest percentage of representation, which was expected because the base has a predominantly high number of personnel assigned to flight operational roles.

The category of supply and engineering was next highest, and administration was the least. A greater number of personnel were within the age range of 31 to 40 years, which reflects the personnel within the operational squadrons; very few participants were 20 or younger, and no participants were age 50 or older. Between 5 and 15 years in the service was the highest percentage of respondents, and a few participants had over 25 years in the service. Statistically, the respondents represent the general characteristics of the population in the operational flight squadrons within the base of interest.

### **Constructs Description**

The two standard instruments of measure for the study were the moral disengagement eight-item scale and the MLQ-5X rater questionnaire. The MLQ-5X was used to determine the perceptions of subordinates on the leadership styles of operational commanders within the squadrons; the eight-item scale measured respondents' moral disengagement. The Cronbach's alpha, which measures the internal consistency reliability of the moral disengagement scale for all the eight items for the study, was

acceptable with a value of 0.76; it was 0.88 for the MLQ-5X using all the 45 items in the leadership questionnaire (Taherdoost, 2016).

For the eight subscales of moral disengagement, *moral justification* had a mean score of 2.41 ( $SD = 1.24$ ), *euphemism labeling* had a mean of 1.72 ( $SD = 1.06$ ), *advantage comparison* had a mean of 2.54 ( $SD = 1.29$ ), *displacement of responsibility* had a mean of 3.03 ( $SD = 1.49$ ), *diffusion of responsibility* had a mean of 2.07 ( $SD = 1.29$ ), *distortion of consequences* had a mean of 2.07 ( $SD = 1.30$ ), *dehumanization* had a mean of 3.32 ( $SD = 1.25$ ), and *attribution of blame* had a mean of 2.80 ( $SD = 1.40$ ). *Dehumanization* recorded the highest mean value, closely followed by *displacement of responsibility*.

The subscales within the leadership constructs of transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire had relatively similar means within particular leadership styles. On the average, which is shown in Table 2, transformational leadership recorded the highest mean of 2.27 ( $SD = 0.75$ ) with the 20 items, transactional leadership had a mean of 2.21 ( $SD = 0.56$ ), and laissez-faire was 1.20 ( $SD = 0.85$ ) with their 8 items. The skewness values for all constructs fell within a fairly symmetrical range of  $-0.5$  and  $0.5$ , and the Kurtosis was within the acceptable normal univariate distribution. The results show the practice of all three leadership styles in the squadrons with operational commanders mostly using transformational leadership followed by transactional and laissez-faire was the least practiced.

**Table 2***Constructs Descriptive Statistics*

Construct variable	N	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
Moral disengagement	147	2.4966	0.79137	0.213	-0.658
Transformational leadership	147	2.2677	0.74748	-0.215	-0.238
Transactional leadership	147	2.2126	0.56043	0.474	0.048
Laissez faire leadership	147	1.1973	0.85445	0.283	-1.039

**Inferential Statistics**

The central research question for the study was:

RQ: What is the impact of the perceived operational commanders' leadership on subordinates' moral conduct in the Ghana Air Force?

The derived research subquestions and hypotheses for the study were:

RSQ1: What relationship exists between subordinates' perceptions of operational commanders' leadership styles and subordinates' moral disengagement?

$H_{01}$ : There is no statistically significant correlation between subordinates' perceptions of operational commanders' leadership styles and subordinates' moral disengagement.

$H_{a1}$ : There is a statistically significant correlation between subordinates' perceptions of operational commanders' leadership styles and subordinates' moral disengagement.

RSQ2: To what extent do subordinates' perceptions of operational commanders' leadership styles and subordinates' moral disengagement differ according to gender or rank status?

$H_02$ : There is no statistically significant difference between subordinates' perceptions of operational commanders' leadership styles and subordinates' moral disengagement according to gender or rank status.

$H_a2$ : There is a statistically significant difference between subordinates' perceptions of operational commanders' leadership styles and subordinates' moral disengagement according to gender or rank status.

### **Research Subquestion 1**

In examining if a relationship exists between subordinates' perceptions of operational commanders' leadership styles and subordinates' moral disengagement, I used the MLQ-5X leadership styles of transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire with the moral disengagement scale. SPSS was used to calculate the Pearson's product-moment correlation, and the confidence interval was set at 95%. The aggregate transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire used gave the following correlation coefficient: transformational leadership was  $r = -0.456$ , transactional leadership was  $r = -0.55$ , and laissez-faire was  $r = 0.411$ .

As shown in Table 3, the Pearson product correlation of transformational leadership and moral disengagement was negative but moderate and statistically significant ( $r = -.456$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Similarly, laissez-faire leadership showed a moderate but positive correlation and was statistically significant ( $r = 0.411$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). However,

transactional leadership showed a markedly low negative insignificant correlation with moral disengagement ( $r = -.055$ ,  $p = 0.506$ ). Transformational and laissez-faire leadership styles showed a significant linear relationship with moral disengagement. However, transactional leadership showed a very negligible negative association with moral disengagement.

**Table 3**

*Correlation of Leadership Style and Moral Disengagement, N = 147*

	Pearson's correlation	Sig. (2-tailed)
Transformational leadership	-.456**	<0.001
Transactional leadership	-.055	0.506
Laissez-faire leadership	0.411**	<0.001

*Note.* \*\* = Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

I examined the variables using multiple regression analysis to further understand the strength of the relationship and the relative contribution of each construct to the dependent variable. The regression analysis helped me to understand the strength of the relationship and the effect of the transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership model on moral disengagement. The predictors were the three leadership styles and moral disengagement as the dependent variable. A test of assumptions for normality, homoscedasticity, absence of multicollinearity, and outliers was checked before the regression and the multivariate analysis; all tests were normal.

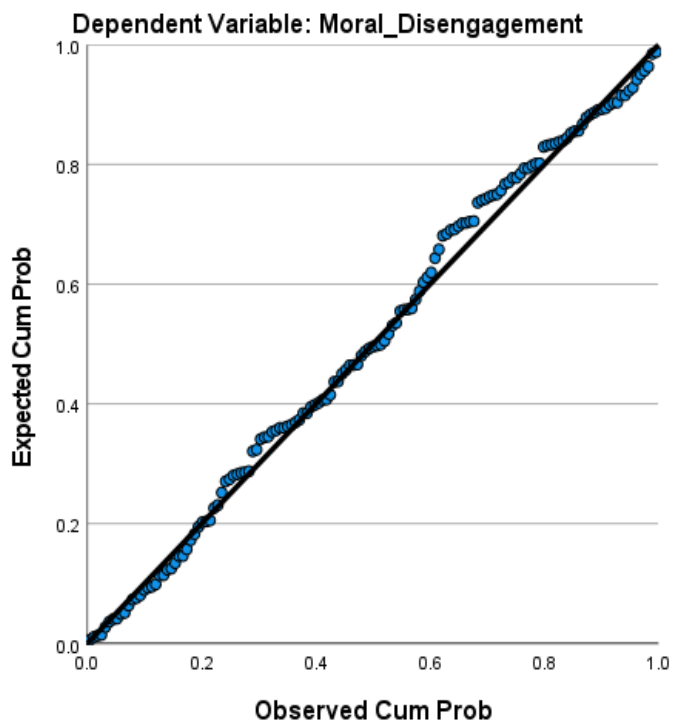


### *Test of Assumptions*

The Normality test using the P-P scatterplot, had the points form a relatively straight line (Figure 1). A test of the assumption of homoscedasticity had all points equally distributed across values and no clear pattern (Đalić & Terzić, 2020; Hair et al., 2015). A scatter plot for the correlated data had no outliers and the residual plot of the standardized residuals and standardized predicted values showed a linear relationship with all the values within the expected range of -3 to 3 (Figure 2).

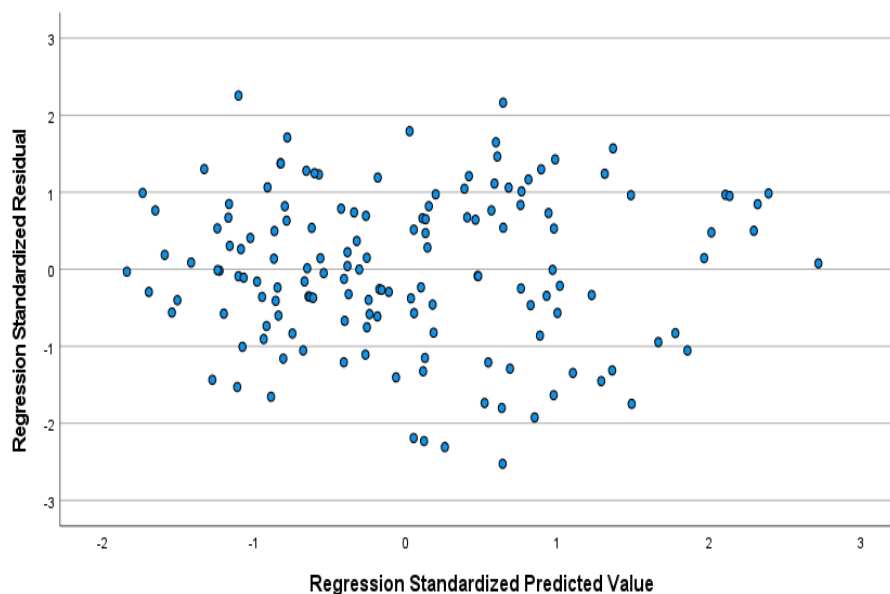
### **Figure 1**

*Normal P-P Plot of Regression Standardized Residual*



**Figure 2**

*Scatterplot of Dependent Variable: Moral Disengagement*



The condition of multicollinearity test with the correlation matrix table had no correlation value over 0.70. A check on the coefficient table Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values had all not highly correlated as values were below 10 with the tolerance scores all above 0.2 (Daoud, 2017; Gokmen et al., 2022). There were no significant outliers with the Cook Distance statistic. All values were less than 1 with a minimum of 0.00 and a maximum value of 0.12 (Cook & Weisber, 1982). The study evaluated all the assumptions associated with multiple regression analysis and the data met the requirement for the statistical test with no violations.

The multiple linear regression analysis conducted had a t-test significance of  $p < 0.05$ . The leadership styles showed statistical significance showing a moderate correlation between moral disengagement and leadership styles provided by the model with  $f(3,143) = 15.792$ ,  $p < 0.001$ . The  $R^2$  (0.249) with ANOVA ( $p < 0.001$ ) had the standardized Beta

co-efficient of transformational leadership ( $B = 38.1, t = -3.775, p < 0.05$ ), transactional leadership ( $B = 8.5, t = 0.752, p = 0.453$ ), laissez-faire leadership ( $B = 19.8, t = 2.382, p = 0.019$ ). The scores showed that transformational and laissez-faire leadership significantly predicts moral disengagement. However, transformational leadership better predicts the dependent variable than laissez-faire leadership (Table 4).

The results presume that for every unit practice of transformational leadership within the squadrons, moral disengagement reduces by 0.38. Comparatively, for every unit practice of laissez-faire leadership at the squadrons, moral disengagement increases by 0.198. Similarly, for every unit practice of transactional leadership, moral disengagement increases by 0.085 but is not significant.

Thus, the regression model statistically predicts the dependent variable with total leadership styles accounting for 24.9% of the variance in moral disengagement. The results suggest that there is sufficient statistical evidence to reject  $H_0$ , and that there is a statistically significant correlation between subordinates' perception of operational commanders' leadership styles and subordinates' moral disengagement in the Air Force.

**Table 4***Multiple Regression for Leadership Styles and Moral Disengagement (N=147)*

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients B	Std. Error	<i>t</i>	Sig.
Constant	2.936	.304	9.650	<.001
Transformational	-.381	.101	-3.775	<.001
Transactional	.085	.113	.752	.453
Laissez faire	.198	.083	2.382	.019

*Note.* Dependent variable = moral disengagement.

### **Research Subquestion 2**

A multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was used to determine if a significant difference existed based on gender or rank status between the combined leadership styles and moral disengagement. The percentage of men and women from the data was 66.7% to 33.3% and that of noncommissioned officers to officers 72.1% to 27.9%. The two-way MANOVA showed the effect of the differences in the demographics on the constructs of leadership styles and moral disengagement.

The test box of equality of covariance matrices  $p = 0.187$  was not less than 0.05 which meant no violations of assumptions. The test assessed whether there is a significant difference based on gender or rank status between the combined leadership styles and moral disengagement within the Air Force squadrons. The interaction from the multivariate analysis conducted indicated that the interaction between gender and rank status was not statistically significant. Wilks'  $\Lambda = 0.99$ ,  $f(2,142) = 0.722$ ,  $p = 0.488$ , multivariate  $\eta^2 = 0.10$ . The result shows that neither gender nor rank status was

statistically significant. Thus, the null hypotheses that there is no statistically significant difference between subordinates' perceptions of operational commanders' leadership styles and subordinates' moral disengagement according to gender or rank status was accepted.

### **Summary and Transition**

In this chapter, I discussed the data collection process of the data collected from 147 respondents and the statistical analysis with a detailed description of the demographic and research constructs. The central research question for the study was what is the impact of the perceived operational commanders' leadership on subordinates' moral conduct in the Ghana Air Force? The two hypotheses derived answered the research subquestions using Pearson correlation, multiple regression, and multivariate analysis of variance.

The statistical results suggested that there is sufficient statistical evidence to reject the null hypotheses for research subquestion 1,  $H_01$  and that there is a statistically significant correlation between subordinates' perceptions of operational commanders' leadership styles and subordinates' moral disengagement in the Air Force. For research subquestion 2, the multivariate analysis conducted showed that the interaction between gender and rank status was not statistically significant.

Thus, the null hypotheses  $H_02$ , that there is no statistically significant difference between subordinates' perceptions of operational commanders' leadership styles and subordinates' moral disengagement according to gender or rank status was accepted. The

next chapter provides the interpretation of the findings, limitations of the study, recommendations, and implications for future research.

## Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

### **Introduction**

The Ghana Air Force personnel are administratively required to show excellence, good conduct, and leadership. However, the unpredictable nature of the complex environment and the diversity of cultures in the military create a continuous conflict on personnel character and leadership of commanders. The pattern of behavior revealed by an individual shows the style of leadership they experience as it shapes their conduct (Bass, 1978). The purpose of this quantitative study was to examine the impact of operational commanders' leadership styles on moral conduct among members of the Ghana Air Force. I focused on the relationship between the constructs of leadership styles and moral disengagement in the Ghana Air Force, using personnel serving as commissioned and noncommissioned officers, including warrant officers.

The theory of the full range leadership model developed by Bass and Avolio (1994, 2004) with its unique leadership continuum was the theoretical framework that guided this study. The model categorizes leadership styles into transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire approaches; these show the array of leadership styles and characteristics leaders use in an organization. The full range leadership model as the theoretical framework accurately accounted for squadron commanders' leadership, providing the necessary explanation for their leadership styles.

Participants answered a questionnaire survey that included the MLQ-5X rater form, the moral disengagement eight-item scale, and demographic information that helped in answering the research question and subquestions. The statistical results

suggested a significant correlation between subordinates' perceptions of operational commanders' leadership styles and subordinates' moral disengagement. Analysis of the mean differences showed no significant difference among the combined effect of leadership styles and moral disengagement when examined by gender and rank status. Thus, the interaction between gender and rank status was not statistically significant in personnel of the Ghana Air Force.

### **Inferential Statistics**

There were two hypotheses evaluated for each research subquestion that were answered using the statistical tools of Pearson correlation, multiple regression analysis, and multivariate analysis of variance. The MLQ-5X measured subordinates' perceptions of squadron commanders' leadership styles, and the moral disengagement eight-item scale measured subordinates' conduct to examine the relationship between the research constructs of leadership style and moral conduct. The study was a correlational design, and SPSS was used to statistically analyze the data collected from 147 respondents. Data analysis was conducted to test the research hypotheses derived from the central research question. According to Frankfort-Nachmias and Leon-Guerrero (2018), researchers use statistical methods to describe and analyze data to help make inferential decisions about a population. The correlational design was appropriate in this study which sought conduct analysis to enhance leadership practices and conduct in the military.



### Interpretation of the Findings

The central research question for the study was:

RQ: What is the impact of the perceived operational commanders' leadership on subordinates' moral conduct in the Ghana Air Force?

$H_{01}$  and  $H_{a1}$  were potential answers to the research subquestion to examine the relationship between subordinates' perceptions of operational commanders' leadership styles and subordinates' moral disengagement. The Pearson product correlation between transformational leadership and moral disengagement was significant ( $r = -.456$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Laissez-faire leadership showed a moderate but positive correlation ( $r = 0.411$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). However, transactional leadership showed a markedly low negative insignificant correlation ( $r = -.055$ ,  $p = 0.506$ ). Transformational and laissez-faire leadership styles showed a significant linear relationship with moral disengagement. However, transactional leadership showed a very negligible negative association with moral disengagement.

Similarly, the multiple linear regression analysis conducted had a t-test significance model with  $f(3,143) = 15.792$ ,  $p < 0.001$ . The leadership styles showed statistical significance with a moderate correlation between moral disengagement and leadership styles. The  $R^2$  (0.249) with ANOVA ( $p < 0.001$ ) had transformational leadership ( $B = 38.1$ ,  $t = -3.775$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), transactional leadership ( $B = 8.5$ ,  $t = 0.752$ ,  $p = 0.453$ ), laissez-faire leadership ( $B = 19.8$ ,  $t = 2.382$ ,  $p = 0.019$ ). The scores showed that transformational and laissez-faire leadership significantly predict moral disengagement.

However, transformational leadership better predicts the dependent variable moral disengagement than laissez-faire leadership.

$H_{02}$  and  $H_{a2}$  were potential answers for the second research subquestion to examine the extent to which subordinates' perceptions of operational commanders' leadership styles and subordinates' moral disengagement differ according to gender or rank status. The inferential statistics indicated neither gender nor rank status demonstrated any significant difference in the combined variables of leadership styles and moral disengagement. The result may indicate the equality or neutrality in the capacity development of officers and noncommissioned officers in the Ghana Air Force.

The insignificant difference in the means suggests no bias toward gender or rank in the leadership development program for personnel in the Ghana Air Force. Hence, the relationship between leadership style and conduct from the inferential statistics is due to individual perspectives or experiences with their operational commanders. Subsequently, this finding may assert that individuals have fragmented character traits due to social upbringing and orientation. This affirms Stothard and Drobnjak's (2021) notion that learning within the military enforces psychological equality and the rank disparity has no effect. Frempong (2019) investigated gender and conduct and suggested there are differences in the perceptions of conduct among men and women, with women more likely to behave ethically.

The overall test affirmed the relationship between operational commanders' leadership styles and moral disengagement. The significant relationship supports Avolio and Bass's (2002, 2004) assertion of the prevalence of transformational leadership in an

organization as inherently ethical (Lin et al., 2017; Musa et al., 2018). Analysis of individual leadership styles revealed that commanders practice mostly transformational leadership within the squadrons, and commanders who practice this leadership style can positively impact the moral conduct of subordinates. Although squadron commanders also practice transactional leadership, the effect is not significant. The laissez-faire approach to leadership was the least observed and was found to negatively impact the conduct of personnel.

Despite the depth of literature on leadership, research had not previously been conducted to examine the relationship between leadership style and conduct in personnel of the Ghana Air Force. Nonetheless, the findings in this research are consistent with available academic work on leadership. Prior researchers have suggested that leaders who practice transformational and laissez-faire styles of leadership are likely to influence the moral conduct of subordinates in an institution and that transactional leadership is less effective when the leader does not have complete oversight of the reward processes (Avolio & Bass, 2002).

In this study, I found that the laissez-faire style of leadership negatively impacts subordinates' moral conduct. Fosse et al. (2019) affirmed laissez-faire leadership is a destructive form of leadership in the military with disastrous consequences. Ivey and Kline (2010) supported the argument that transformational leadership is most evident and effective in the traditional hierarchical military institutions because it positively impacts subordinates' attitudes. Similarly, Rindipati and Hinduan (2021) emphasized that transformational leadership affects the attitude of subordinates in the military and is the

desirable type of leadership style that has positive impacts on personnel in the military environment.

### **Limitations of the Study**

The study was a quantitative correlational design with an online questionnaire that squadron personnel completed. This limited the study findings and does not suggest causation between the constructs. Participants who were conveniently sampled from the selected base involved only those serving at the squadrons. The method excluded personnel from other Air Force bases, headquarters, and those assigned to other agencies or commands. Thus, the sampled population was not representative of the entire Ghana Air Force which limited the generalization of the findings.

Furthermore, a limitation of the study was the use of an online questionnaire which excluded those without access to the internet thus reducing the response rate and increasing the data collection time. My role as a researcher and a member of the Air Force compelled me to choose the quantitative method and online survey which prevented any undue influence on the personnel in the data collection. Consequently, the survey method did not offer the opportunity for respondents to clarify the questions which could have affected the response.

However, the use of the Mind Garden platform for the survey allowed participants to respond at their convenience without restrictions on the time needed to complete the survey. The instruments used were credible for the data collection, with an assured validity and reliability score in prior studies. Hence, the study achieved internal consistency with the Cronbach's Alpha calculation and Cohen's standard serving as the

means of evaluating the strength of the relationship between the study constructs. Participants' responses exceeded the G\*power sample size, but a larger representation of participants could have yielded different results or re-reinforced the perception of commanders' leadership.

### **Recommendations for Research**

The study is the first to examine the impact of leadership style on subordinates' moral conduct in the Air Force and contributes to the body of knowledge on military leadership which addresses a research gap. However, based on available literature and the limitations of the study, the following are some recommendations for further studies.

Future researchers interested in the topic can widen the sample population to include all bases and headquarters personnel to include civilian staff. The process would increase the population size though with associated cost implications and time. Nonetheless, it would assure the generalization of the results and provide a comprehensive perspective of the leadership styles in the Air Force to enhance leadership capacity development programs.

Similarly, with the limited literature on military leadership in the sub-region, other Air Forces can replicate the study to advance the knowledge on leadership. Moreover, future researchers can use a different population other than the Air Force such as the army, navy, or other military institutions to further broaden the academic discussion of leadership style on subordinates' conduct.

The study was quantitative with a correlational design that focused on the relationship between the research's constructs. In the future, a causal effect study would

provide a better understanding of the research construct to appreciate the causal effect of a leadership style on moral conduct. Likewise, future researchers can adopt a qualitative approach to understand the impact of leadership on moral conduct from the perspective of individual experiences as the method allows the probing of respondents to have a depth of understanding of the studied phenomenon.

### **Implications for Positive Social Change**

The purpose of this quantitative study was to examine the impact of operational commanders' leadership styles on moral conduct in the Ghana Air Force. The study focused on the relationship between the construct of leadership styles and moral disengagement with the full range leadership model as the theoretical framework. Thus, the study addressed the research gap of the lack of understanding of the leadership styles of operational commanders to prevent any unethical conduct of personnel in the Air Force.

The findings suggested a significant relationship between leadership styles and moral disengagement but indicated a positive impact of commanders' transformational leadership on moral conduct of subordinates compared to laissez-faire leadership that negatively impacts the moral conduct of subordinates. The result provides evidence that transformational leadership practices are prevalent and expected while transactional leadership has no significant effect on conduct. Thus, the Air Force should encourage transformational leadership practices while educating on the negative impact of the laissez-faire approach on conduct.

The study may promote positive social change as the empirical evidence is valuable to the military command to create the leadership practices awareness and effect the desired change in the military as a state organization. Moreover, the Air Force leadership command can use the results to enhance existing leadership training modules in effecting social change.

Similarly, squadron commanders could use the findings to improve the understanding of the impact of their leadership styles to support and develop transformational leadership practices. Commanders in a similar operational environment have added knowledge to use the outcome of the study to effect change by developing transformational leadership practices to foster positive conduct.

The research adds to the literature on leadership importantly in military organizations. The study explains the significance of transformational leadership and its positive impact on subordinates' conduct with laissez-faire having a negative effect. Commanders' positive impact on personnel conduct is relevant in maintaining personnel with fewer administrative releases, which reduces the cost of recruitment and budgetary allocations. These ultimately increase job security, family well-being of personnel, and the management of the talented human resource of the Air Force.

### **Recommendations for Practice**

The study results indicate the leadership styles practiced at the squadrons and affirm the significant value of the current training programs. Nonetheless, the institution can use the findings to maximize the potential of personnel by enhancing its leadership

training; emphasizing on transformational leadership styles to ensure the capacity development of personnel.

The research fills a gap considering the dearth of literature on military leadership and behavior of personnel particularly in Ghana and the West African sub-region (Nazri & Rudi, 2019). Understanding the impact of operational commanders' leadership styles on the moral conduct of personnel in the military as a state and purposeful organization is valuable to the military command. This will help to support the desired leadership practices and the practical application for policy improvement and development.

Furthermore, for positive social change, the study provides commanders an added knowledge to develop the leadership styles needed to mitigate moral disengagement within a similar environment. The extent of the relationship between commanders' leadership style and moral disengagement of personnel can advance change in leadership practices to reduce misconduct (Buehler et al., 2019).

The nature of the relationship between the research construct in the correlational study is relevant for the Air Force command hierarchy to develop the capacity of personnel through leadership programs. The individual development of personnel leadership capacity is necessary for troop morale and for personnel to serve as agents of change in their respective areas of responsibility. A healthy working relationship and environment provide job security, which will affect the quality of life of personnel and their families (Albrecht et al., 2018).

Besides, talented human resources are vital for the sustainability of operations in ensuring peace and security (McCormick et al., 2019). The leadership capacity building



will encourage personnel to focus on their work with secured employment and career advancement essential for a healthy working environment. The study is to empower individuals to effect the needed change within their position to advance policies that will equip future commanders with the skill and knowledge to influence any unethical conduct of personnel.

### **Conclusion**

The chapter contained the inferential statistics of the research with the type of statistical analysis used for the study. I further discussed the limitations, recommendations for future research, implications for positive social change, and practical recommendations for the military. The findings revealed transformational leadership practiced by squadron commanders positively impacts subordinates' conduct. Additionally, there was no difference between gender and rank on the combined variables of leadership style and moral conduct.

The study examined the impact of operational commanders' leadership styles on subordinates' moral conduct in the Ghana Air Force. The targeted personnel were from squadrons on an operational base. The underlying theory was the full range leadership model with the leadership continuum of transformational, transactional and laissez-faire.

Researchers affirm transformational leadership as the most positive in maintaining subordinates' behavior across cultures and applicable in many institutions. Likewise, the findings of the study provided evidence of how transformational leadership is significant in maintaining positive moral conduct of subordinates with laissez-faire leadership undesirable because of the negative impact. Transactional leadership had no

significant impact. Moreover, there were no differences in the perception of leadership style and moral conduct when analyzed with the demographic data of gender and rank status.

The research findings have practical implications and fill the literature gap in the lack of knowledge on the type of leadership style which impacts moral conduct. The findings affirmed the parity of leadership programs within the Air Force and the need to build on capacity training and development at all levels of command to enhance the existing leadership programs. This assures that commanders can make a difference in their subordinates' conduct when they practice transformational leadership within their squadrons.

The research which identified a literature gap expands the knowledge on leadership, as it is the first known to examine the construct of leadership styles and subordinates' conduct in the military. Thus, I achieved the research purpose by identifying the type of leadership that impacts moral conduct and this is relevant in the academic discourse on leadership, specifically in the sub-Saharan region military environment.

Leadership is about experiences and the perception of those led, as the relationship between leaders and subordinates is essentially about how the latter perceives the role that the leader plays. Transformational leadership is grounded on a moral foundation aimed at recognizing subordinates' motives to fulfill their needs. The military and other agencies, to maintain subordinates' conduct should focus on leadership practices as a guide to understand their situation and make a positive change.

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## Appendix A: Research Approval Letter



General Headquarters  
Personnel Administration  
Ghana Armed Forces  
BURMA CAMP

Accra 776474

GHQ/6363/PS1

4 April 2022

Group Captain Kwabena Krampa Antwi  
Public Policy and Administration  
Walden University, Minnesota  
USA

**REQUEST TO CONDUCT ACADEMIC RESEARCH**  
**GROUP CAPTAIN KWABENA KRAMPA ANTWI (GH/2966)**

I am to convey the approval of your request to conduct a research on the thesis entitled: ***"The impact of leadership style on moral conduct in the Ghana Air Force"***. You are to contact the relevant units for your required information.

Additionally, you should be guided by military regulations which spell out information or materials whose unauthorized disclosure could be detrimental to the interest of the nation. Furthermore, I am to request that a copy of your completed research work should be forwarded to this Department for retention.

Respectfully submitted, please.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'E. Awaribey'.

**E AWARIBEY**

Colonel  
for Deputy Chief of Staff (Admin)

## Appendix B: Recruitment Letter

RESTRICTED

Air Force Base  
BURMA CAMP

Mobile +233 [REDACTED]

KK/PPPA/D22

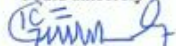
05 April 2022

See Distribution

**RECRUITMENT OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS**

1. Reference GHQ/6363/PSI approval letter dated 4 April 2022 to conduct research with participants from the Base, I am by this letter requesting for volunteers from the various squadrons to serve as research participants. Below is the web link for the study which contains the informed consent and the questionnaire with details of the study.  
<https://transform.mindgarden.com/login/key/a20d-622f855d055e1>
2. Participation in the study involves completing the web link questionnaire survey of about 20minutes. Interested participants are to access the web link on their squadron social media platforms. You are free to contact me for any clarification through my e-mail  
[REDACTED]
3. The study has no associated risk or disclosure of sensitive information. The research study is to contribute to academic discourse on leadership in public administration with societal benefit of enhancing and providing awareness on leadership practices.
4. Submitted for your consideration.

Yours sincerely



KK ANTWI  
Group Captain  
Researcher Walden University

Distribution:

External:

Action:

Officer Commanding Administration Wing  
Air Force Base [REDACTED]

Information:

The Base Commander  
Air Force Base [REDACTED]

RESTRICTED

## Appendix C: Mind Garden License Purchase

For use by Kwabena Antwi only. Received from Mind Garden, Inc. on February 7, 2022



[www.mindgarden.com](http://www.mindgarden.com)

To Whom It May Concern,

The above-named person has made a license purchase from Mind Garden, Inc. and has permission to administer the following copyrighted instrument up to that quantity purchased:

### **Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire**

The three sample items only from this instrument as specified below may be included in your thesis or dissertation. Any other use must receive prior written permission from Mind Garden. The entire instrument may not be included or reproduced at any time in any other published material. Please understand that disclosing more than we have authorized will compromise the integrity and value of the test.

**Citation of the instrument must include the applicable copyright statement listed below.**

#### **Sample Items:**

As a leader ....

- I talk optimistically about the future.
- I spend time teaching and coaching.
- I avoid making decisions.

The person I am rating....

- Talks optimistically about the future.
- Spends time teaching and coaching.
- Avoids making decisions

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Sincerely,

Robert Most  
Mind Garden, Inc.  
[www.mindgarden.com](http://www.mindgarden.com)