

Dependence on authority and exercising leadership in Hungary

by

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B.A., Eötvös Loránd University of Sciences, 1997

M.P.A., Harvard University, 2008

AN ABSTRACT OF A DISSERTATION

submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

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Leadership Communication

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Abstract

Hungary has been known for giving birth to many talents, manifested by a string of Nobel Prize laureates and what some say is the highest ratio of useful inventions per capita in the world—including the biro pen, the Rubik cube, and very distantly, the computer. Most of these talents left Hungary before achieving fame. The country's loss of innovative capacity has been partly attributed to the way authority has been exercised: the strong authority context.

This study explored the relationship between authority, dependence on authority, and leadership within the specific Hungarian context. It aimed to address three scholarly challenges: (a) situating authority in leadership theory, (b) moving away from a leader-centric approach to focus on participants' lived experiences at the micro-level, and (c) transcending the “Western bias” by examining authority, dependence on authority, and leadership in an East-Central European context (Dugan, 2017, p. 135). This doctoral research was guided by the following questions:

1. How do participants describe and make sense of authority, dependence on authority and leadership in the Hungarian context?
2. What factors do participants describe as having an impact on the dependence on authority in the Hungarian context?
3. From participants' experiences, in what ways does authority and dependence on authority affect leadership?

The qualitative research utilized multiple theories, frameworks, and concepts, such as adaptive leadership, toxic leadership, power theories, the cycle of socialization, and followership theories. It employed abductive analysis methodology and involved thirteen participants who shared their lived experiences regarding authority, dependence on authority, and leadership through two rounds of in-depth focus group interviews. The findings revealed a social chain of dependence within Hungary's hierarchical social structure and highlighted multiple barriers to

exercising leadership in Hungary. Based on the findings, a new model, the Hungarian vicious circle, was developed. This model explains how the exercise of authority combined with the social context perpetuates dependence on authority, ultimately leading to a corrupted concept of leadership.

The implications highlight the importance of citizens collaborating within their micro-environment to foster an enabling environment for leadership. It is also essential to provide training on how to exercise authority responsibly. Additionally, at the systems level, the values and mechanisms introduced by globalization along with the presence of international corporations, can positively impact strong authority contexts. Participants recommended fostering a mindset change through leadership development and encouraged efforts to attract Hungarians living abroad to return and share their experiences. Future research could include comparative studies with other similar strong authority contexts and may employ quantitative or mixed methods approaches to facilitate broader generalizations.

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Approved by:

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Dedication

I dedicate this study to my family: my wife, Olena; my children, Ani, Peri, Jaryna, and Juliette, who accompanied and supported me on this new journey and started a new life on another continent; and my parents, my father, József, and my mother, Amalia. They are both role models for standing up against injustice and oppression and for their selflessness in supporting others. Their example of fighting against injustice has created a family legacy that has inspired my actions and will inspire our children to carry on. I completed this research and wrote this dissertation in 2024, the same year I lost my mother. I am profoundly grateful for her sacrifices and support. Additionally, I dedicate this study to all Hungarians who have lived under oppression, those who had to leave their homeland, and the courageous individuals who sacrificed their lives for freedom, justice, democratic values, and basic human rights.

Preface

Sándor Petőfi: The song of the dogs

Loud the storm is howling
under a thundery sky.
The twin sons of winter,
snow and rain, sleet by.
What's that to us? We have
our hearth-side, by the grace
of our good kind Master
who gave us this place.
We shall not die of hunger.
Our Master wills it thus.
When he has fed his fullest
the leavings are for us.
True, his whip sometimes
cracks, and the weals
it leaves are most painful;
but a dog's hurt soon heals.
And then our Master calls us,
his sudden anger over,
and with true gratitude
on his boots we slobber.

(Petőfi, 1847/1956)

Sándor Petőfi: The song of the wolves

Loud the storm is howling
Under a thundery sky.
The twin sons of winter,
Snow and rain, sleet by.
It is a barren plainland
We chose for abiding.
Not a bush grows there
For shelter or hiding.
Hunger gnaws the belly,
Cold gnaws the bone,
Two torturers who will not
Leave us alone.
And there, the third torturer,
Guns loaded with lead:
On the white, white snow
Our blood drips red.
Freezing and starving
And peppered with shot.
Yes, our lot is misery ...
But Freedom is our lot!

(Petőfi, 1847/1957)

Chapter 1 - Introduction

Diagnosing the Adaptive Challenge: Dependence on Authority in an Eastern European Context

Introduction: A Twofold Challenge

In the past decade significant global political upheavals and challenges put a spotlight on East-Central Europe: The Russian aggression in Ukraine and the rise of authoritarianism and illiberal regimes in Hungary and other European countries constitute new challenges to a democratic order. As a result of the lack of “real leadership”¹ (Williams, 2005, p. IX), and weak civic capacity in both social contexts, one can observe silent masses depending on authority and assisting to these events happening without significant protests and domestic critical reflection. Scholars of political science have introduced new concepts such as illiberalism and hybrid regime (Wigell, 2008) to provide description for these new phenomena in the changing macropolitical context. It was more than 30 years ago when East-Central Europe gained significant attention in the late 1980s during the downfall of communism and the transition to democracy. Now, with the political pendulum swinging back (i.e., from democratization to authoritarianism), citizens, scholars, and political decision makers are trying to make sense of what is behind these new-old challenges. In both cases—under communism and new authoritarian/hybrid regimes (Bozóki & Hegedűs, 2018)—strong authority structures replaced rule of law and democratic practices.

¹ Williams (2005) describes real leadership as “the kinds of leadership that helps organizations, communities and nations face their toughest challenges and have their best shot at success” as opposed to “counterfeit leadership,” which provides directions from the leader whom people follow (p. ix).

However, these real-life issues highlight a significant challenge in leadership scholarship: the need to focus more on the barriers to successful leadership and the nature of destructive leadership itself, as well as the relationship between authority, dependency on authority, and leadership. Einarsen et al. (2007) highlighted the traditional emphasis of leadership research, arguing that “traditionally, leadership research focuses on factors associated with *successful leadership* often with an implicit assumption that ineffective leadership simply affects the *absence* of leadership” (p. 207, emphasis in original). Dugan (2017) further identified a critical gap, pointing to an “emergent theme across leadership theories” (p. 314):

When authority is presumed in a leadership theory, there tends to be little attention directed toward specifying its limitations or how to wield it. Why aren’t we more concerned with training people to use power and authority effectively and responsibly? Scholarship is rife with examples of how good and otherwise well-adjusted people end up abusing authority (Kellerman, 2004; Lipman-Blumen, 2005; Zimbardo, 2006). What causes us to default to an assumption that people’s conscious will guide them in their use of power and authority when history, research, and contemporary events provide such profound evidence that this is not always the case? Conversely, a number of theories simply avoid naming power and authority altogether. Consider how many theories covered in this book included not a single tenet, core principle, or component on the topic. I can’t help but wonder whether power and authority dynamics are perceived as an inconvenient complication to theory. Are power and authority presumed to be negative? Does addressing power and authority de-romanticize the reality of leadership? I can’t quite grasp how one engages in leadership, let alone social change, without understanding how power and authority influence systems. (pp. 317–318)

Leadership scholarship can help better define the emerging global challenges in leadership by addressing the gap highlighted by Dugan (2017). It can also explore the impacts of authority and the dependence on authority on exercising leadership, which was the focus of this study.

While Dugan (2017) emphasized the significance of power in the scholarly discussion, this dissertation centered on the concept of dependence on authority in leadership. Therefore, future research could investigate the relationship between power and leadership in greater depth. To identify significant scholarly contributions regarding the research theme—besides keyword searches (e.g., dependence/dependency on authority, authority and leadership, dependence/dependency Hungary, leadership Hungary) on relevant sites such as JSTOR, Google Scholar and K-State Library—cited reference search was also used. The Hungarian resource (Central European University Library, Budapest) for articles regarding leadership in Hungary resulted in one significant article that was cited in this study.

Background: Hungary's Authoritarian Turn

In 1989, just before the wave of democratization that replaced the communist regime with new democratic systems, expectations were high. With the collapse of authoritarian regimes, the future seemed promising. The Western world advocated for the establishment of new democracies based on political pluralism, featuring free elections and democratic institutions. Meanwhile, citizens hoped for an improved quality of life for everyone. Significant financial resources were mobilized to support democratization and stabilize the economies of post-communist countries. As noted by Scheiring (2021), “Parallel to premature de-industrialisation, international economic integration also opened up the opportunity for dependent re-industrialisation through foreign direct investment (FDI)...Hungary spearheaded the competition for foreign capital in the 1990s and 2000s” (p. 1577).

While the primary focus of the West was on macro-political and economic transitions, little attention was given to fostering a change in mindset and culture that would foster civic capacity and provide a strong foundation for stable democratization. Instead, as was common in East-Central Europe, democratization was driven from the top down by the new political elite, with limited citizen involvement. Ágh (2009), in discussing Hungary's democratic deficit, noted, "Thus, after the political and economic systemic change, social change was delayed in the 1990s and failed in the 2000s. It generated a widespread public discontent, and its repercussions undermined the support for democracy to a great extent" (p. 29). Ágh (2009) further added that:

Thus, given the above analysed widespread economic and social exclusion processes with a large demobilization, this first stage may be called in political dimension as participation crisis, since the most shocking feature of the new democracy was that the "move in" and "settle down" in these new democratic institutions. In such a way, the proper socialization process of the large masses for the democratic behaviour was missing, therefore the socio-economic transformation could not create the democratic patterns of behaviour either. (p. 35)

Ágh (2009) emphasized a crucial aspect of the regime change in Hungary; while formal and institutional democratization replaced authoritarian structures, a corresponding shift in mindset that would foster democratic behavior and thinking did not take place.

Social interactions and practices continued as "business as usual," with nepotism contributing to a high level of institutionalized corruption. Citizens often sought back-door solutions and ways to maneuver for survival, while those in positions of authority and power remained the primary gatekeepers. In this historical and social context, Hungary, as part of the

Eastern Bloc, attracted significant attention after its radical shift² from liberal democracy to a hybrid system—self-labelled as “illiberal democracy”—and its reluctance to condemn Russian aggression in Ukraine and to support international sanctions against Russia. As Lengyel and Ilonszky (2012) noted, “Nowadays political developments in Hungary often occupy columns in the European and even in the US press on the grounds that the ideals of representative liberal democracy are being distorted” (p. 108).

Hungary, a cultural hub in East-Central Europe with a population of 9,689,000, has been known for giving birth to many talents, manifested by a string of Nobel Prize laureates and what some say is the highest ratio of useful inventions per head in the world (e.g., the biro pen, the Rubik cube, and very distantly, the computer). Most of these talents left Hungary before achieving fame. The country’s loss of innovative capacity has been partly attributed to the way authority has been exercised: the strong authority context, which Williams (2005) defined as “counterfeit leadership” (p. IX).

Historically, Hungary has experienced strong authority structures and mechanisms, reflecting its ongoing struggles for emancipation from the rule of grand powers, such as the Turks, the Habsburgs, and, after World War II, the Soviet Union. As Bihari (1996) pointed out, the Hungarian political culture has been profoundly shaped by historical events, primarily sharp historical transitions, which have elicited a distinct mentality and collective consciousness regarding politics from society. Over the past 45 years, Hungarian political culture has been

^{2 2} Starting from 2010, democratic practices were replaced by a more decisive, authoritarian direction led by Prime Minister Orbán. As Illés et al. (2018) described it: “Hungary’s political backsliding, which has transformed it from a former frontrunner of liberal democracy in the post-communist region to an illiberal and/or authoritarian state, has puzzled political scientists” (p. 790).

determined by its own imperatives and strategies of adaptation and survival, distinctive modes of behavior, mentality, readiness for dual life and adaptation, and dual role-playing. As part of this historical legacy, the transition from communism to democracy in 1989–1990 did not bring about a systemic change in values, attitudes, or culture. The new political elite has struggled to promote social cohesion and build social capital and civic capacity necessary for a stable democracy. As Nagy (2017) highlights:

The decline, or slippery slope, from democratic to authoritarian governance can be explained by the asymmetric surveillance power between the state and its citizens (Fuchs 2012; Lyon 2010; Dubbeld 2003). Surveillance strategies are the distinctive tools of governance in this process (Lyon 2007:15). The proliferation of surveillance techniques introduces and exacerbates such asymmetries, disempowering individuals while simultaneously strengthening the hand of the state and opening the door to authoritarianism. (p. 450)

The absence of adaptive leadership³ made it difficult for citizens to shift their mindsets to confront their challenging realities, resulting in persistent social patterns marked by state etatism, high levels of politicization, bureaucratic red tape, significant corruption, and nepotism. This has contributed to public disillusionment, pessimism, and a culture of complaints, as highlighted by Lengyel & Ilonszky (2012):

The legacies of state socialism in Hungary included widespread involvement in the gray economy, tax evasion, slow and small-scale enrichment, and the expectation of social

³ In this study (adaptive) leadership is understood as an activity that can be exercised with or without authority as “a practice of mobilizing people to tackle tough challenges and thrive” (Heifetz, Grashow, & Linsky, 2009, p. 31)

security combined with a lack of political interest and civil apathy. People on the street tended to navigate between conflicting norms, and they used one set of norms to neutralize another, seeking personal advantage in all situations. Such an atomized society, which got accustomed to the misuse of public resources with no interest in the public good, was not a sound basis for the formation of an elite consensus. (p.112)

Public disillusionment prompted qualified masses to leave Hungary in search of a new life in Western Europe, the United States, and beyond. Low morale, lack of motivation, and a tendency to preserve the status quo emerged as significant barriers to social and economic development.

As Ágh (2009) pointed out:

In Hungary the crisis of the democracy has taken place most markedly in both aspects of democracy, i.e. in the formal democratic institutions (procedural democracy with rule of law and the checks and balances system) and in their public performance (quality of democracy with the criteria of good governance). Therefore, Hungary may offer itself as a worst-case scenario, even when looking back until 2010, but it is much more so, if the period the incumbent Orbán government has also been taken into account. (p. 26)

Over the years, strong authority structures and significant power imbalances between leaders and citizens, as well as top-down solutions and communication, have become ingrained in the social fabric of Hungary. As a result, citizens have become vulnerable to political manipulation. After 32 years of the regime change in Hungary, democracy devolved into a hybrid system, often described as illiberal democracy. As Lendvai-Bainton & Szelewa (2020) highlighted:

“Illiberal democracy” is a flagship concept, which according to the Prime Minister Orbán entails the “abandonment of liberal methods and principles of organising society, as well as the liberal way to look at the world,” ... The “illiberal” signals a critique of western

style “individualism,” “rights-based approaches,” and “welfare statism.” It has instigated widespread constitutional changes removing checks and balances, strong centralisation of government structures, moving towards a much more presidential style of governing, and restricting freedom of speech (as cited in Kreko & Enyedi, 2018). (p.564)

This new hybrid model signified the end of the welfare state, which Lendvai-Bainton & Szelewa (2020) summarized as follows:

The nationalisation of industries and sectors that have seen widespread privatisation in past decades is very much contrary to neoliberal ideology and its central tenet that society should be shaped by market principles. Neoliberalism in this context is delivered in a nationalist framework in which the “competition state” is selectively delivered by both the market and the state. The strong political grip on this selective neoliberalism ensures that the seemingly contradictory measures of marketisation and nationalisation deliver desirable political outcomes, whether it be higher FDI inflow in one sector, while state monopoly and political rent seeking in others. (p. 564)

In this model, neoliberalism is not challenged from the perspective of equity or social justice but rather through the lens of Christian traditions, national sovereignty, and the concept of a strong government. As Bozóki & Hegedűs (2018) pointed out:

On the other hand, general tendency that while as early as 2013 the Orbán government made significant advances in the dismantling of the constitutional system of checks and balances and the creation the lopsided arena of political competition, the curbing of fundamental rights has been done gradually with more caution and repeated references to European standards. (p. 1181)

Körösényi et al. (2020) summarized the characteristics of the Hungarian hybrid regime as follows:

From 2010 onwards, however, Viktor Orbán's premiership has dramatically changed this perception and the country has become an illustration of populism, illiberalism and a drift towards authoritarian rule. It was not only the U-turn in Hungary that has become a surprising and shocking experience for political commentators and scholars of democratisation but also the robustness of the changes brought about by the Orbán regime. The speed, degree and scope of changes accomplished during Orbán's incumbency have concerned all three dimensions, of politics, policy and polity. In addition to them, the changes affected "the political", through massive (re-)politicisation of previously non-political spheres of life by redrawing the borderline between state and society, the public and the private spheres. (p. 6)

The challenges outlined above, which have led to the erosion of democratic practices in Hungary—and to some extent, in East Central Europe—warrant a closer examination of the relationship between authority and leadership.

Authority, Leadership, and Dependence on Authority

The founders of adaptive leadership differentiated between exercising leadership and exercising authority. They highlighted that, unlike leadership, exercising authority meets constituents' expectations by providing direction, protection, and order (Heifetz et al., 2009). According to Heifetz et al. (2009), leadership is an activity anyone can engage in to mobilize constituents to confront their adaptive challenges and thrive. In this context, the work related to adaptive challenges is done by the problem-holders themselves, whereas exercising authority

involves the authority figure delivering the answers or solutions. Heifetz et al. (2009) also highlighted the risks associated with exercising leadership:

Suppose you take it upon yourself to regularly point out the gap between the company's stated value of transparency and the reality that most people in the organization tightly control the flow of information. You are not likely to be rewarded or greeted with applause for identifying this disconnect, particularly by those who benefit from controlling information. (p. 18)

This example illustrates how the power dynamics involved in exercising leadership can be challenging, not just within organizations but in various contexts.

Additionally, Heifetz et al. (2009) analyzed common barriers to exercising leadership, noting that individuals often try to avoid adaptive work and rely on the authority to perform these functions instead. Work avoidance mechanisms include attacking back, scapegoating, and shifting responsibility. Rather than addressing their adaptive challenges, those who face problems frequently turn to authority figures to take charge. However, since authority often cannot effectively resolve these adaptive challenges, people tend to shift responsibility onto those in power, a practice known as scapegoating. This shifting of responsibility reflects a dependence on authority. Heifetz (1994) characterized this dependence on authority as a hierarchical relationship, where the expectations set by authority figures are imposed on individuals (dependents).

The concepts described by Heifetz (1994) and Heifetz et al. (2009) cited above and research findings reveal a social dynamic present in Hungary and more broadly in Central and Eastern Europe, where citizens are socialized to hold back and avoid confrontation in their hierarchical relationships with authority figures. Even when people disagree, they often learn

early on to conform to what they are told as Hungary is a small country with rather parochial social structures and relations, and, as Participant 1 highlighted, “people in power had so long hands.” This notion was highlighted by Lengyel and Ilonszky (2012) when discussing Hungary’s illiberal turn from a leadership perspective:

The literature on global systemic developments claims that pseudo-transformational leaders may emerge in the process of change. These pseudo-transformational leaders and their conduct trigger concerns about the quality of democracy. They use systematic manipulation for the sake of partisan interests, leaders disregard human rights and the democratic institutional framework. When pseudo-transformational leaders dominate, the use of manipulation widens, leaders override human rights and democratic institutional framework, and unbiased information is hard to obtain (Masciulli 2009, 472). This seems to be the case in Hungary where the current leaders and elites pursue an alleged program of transformation by abusing and misusing democratic institutions. (p. 116)

Because of being silenced, however, citizens tend to become cynical and distrustful of authority. This notion was discussed by Participant 2 and many other participants in the current research.

Establishing the Phenomenon: Factors Contributing to Dependence on Authority in Hungary

Merton (1987) highlighted three critical principles important for rigorous research. The first is establishing the phenomenon, which refers to the necessity of demonstrating that a phenomenon exists. Merton (1987) stated, “The first, ‘establishing the phenomenon’ involves the doctrine (universally accepted in the abstract) that phenomena should of course be shown to exist or to occur before one explains why they exist or how they come to be” (p. 1.) This study was motivated by Merton’s essential question regarding establishing the phenomenon: “Is it really

so?” (p. 4). As discussed in the previous section, dependence on authority has been defined in leadership literature. Hungary’s authoritarian and illiberal turn has also been examined by scholars—primarily in political science—who have described the characteristics and social trends of the new, hybrid regime.

However, the relationship between dependence on authority and leadership, and how dynamics play out in authority relations, has not been thoroughly explored from a leadership perspective in the form of an engaged research within the Hungarian context. Understanding the relationship between dependence on authority and leadership can illuminate social dynamics that are relevant to the rise of authoritarianism. Furthermore, Dugan (2017) pointed out a gap in leadership scholarship:

A remarkable gap exists between the knowledge generated from the formal, academic study of leadership and its translation into everyday practice. This is at least in part attributable to the ways in which the formal, academic literature on leadership reflects a “story most often told” or dominant narrative that is frequently disconnected from and/or incongruent with people’s lived experiences. (p. XV)

By selecting a strategic research site and engaging with members of the affected community (i.e., Hungarian participants) to share their lived experiences regarding dependence on authority and its effects on leadership, this study contributes to filling this gap. To establish the phenomenon and gain a better understanding of the research problem, it was essential to consider key factors that have contributed to the emergence and persistence of dependence on authority in Hungary, while also highlighting the connections related to the role of authority, dependence on authority, leadership, and the Hungarian context.

Social-Historical Context and Its Consequences

The most significant factor influencing political culture, social relations, and interactions—including dependence on authority—is historical and socio-economic development. In Hungary’s complex history, at least three key elements have shaped its social and political development, which contributes to the current Hungarian reality:

- The persistent struggle for sovereignty and emancipation from grand powers, often led by the ruling elite, has included invasions and occupations by the Tatars, Turks, Habsburgs, and, in the 20th century, the Russians (Soviet Union).
- Prolonged feudalism and social hierarchy, dominated by the noble class until the mid-19th century, have preserved existing social inequalities and the socio-economic hierarchic structure of Hungarian feudalism. Ironically, early capitalism and the emergence of a bourgeois middle class were initiated by the Habsburgs.
- “Historical predestination,” stemming from poor decisions made by the ruling elite. These decisions placed Hungary among the losing grand powers during the World Wars, leading to Soviet occupation and the traumas of lost battles, including the loss of two-thirds of Hungary's original territories due to the Trianon Treaty.

While discussing illiberalism in Hungary, Wilkin (2018) posed a crucial question regarding the country’s historical context:

The argument of this paper is that when one considers Hungary’s development in the *longue durée* since the 1848 revolutions that brought republicanism and democracy to the fore across Europe, we see a narrative of quasi-feudalism, reactionary aristocracy, fascist movements, authoritarian state socialism, and finally a neoliberalism that has systemically dismantled Hungary’s welfare system and re-feudalised its economy and society. In the face of such a legacy why should it be expected, that post-Communist Hungary would have a stable liberal political culture? (p. 7)

The historical traumas—from the losses in the First and Second World Wars to the 1956 revolution followed by Russian occupation and the execution of hundreds—have not only silenced the nation, but the Soviet model also further magnified the role of strong authority and hierarchy. As Körösi (1999) pointed out:

The communist regime came into existence in Hungary as a totalitarian dictatorship: not only did it monopolize political power, it also crushed almost every institution of societal autonomy associations, interest groups and religious and youth organizations.

Furthermore, it nationalized the church schools, the institutions of the private economy and of civic association, and the economic organizations built upon private ownership. Every remaining organization, and all aspects of public life, were placed under the strict political and ideological supervision of the Communist Party and the state. Those who did not believe in the ideas of communism, or who did not wish to join the party or its satellite organizations in order to further their careers, retreated behind the ramparts of private life. (p. 12)

Simon (2014) further clarified that:

The expanding Rákosi regime from 1948 broke the structure of civil society with the act of banning the non-governmental organizations: foundations, associations, companies, and circles. It suspended the democratic rights including freedom of assembly, freedom of speech, and freedom of the press, and Rákosi kept the branch of powers under control in the center of the communist state party. (p 170)

The oppression experienced by society compelled its members to remain loyal to the ruling elite and adhere to communist ideology, following the expectations set by Communist Party officials.

Consequently, a survival mode developed within Hungarian society, characterized by the emergence of a dual value system, as described by Körösenyi (1999):

Besides atomization, political passivity and state paternalism, the most important product of the communist decades was the dual value system, which gives an incentive not for adherence to the official rules of the law and the state, but rather for their violation and evasion. The dual value system involves not only the breach of norms (including legal norms) and corruption that leaks into public office, but also political cynicism and alienation from the political community. The legacy of this has remained a part of the political culture in the democratic system of the 1990s. (pp. 13-14)

In response to the post-World War II Soviet occupation, the strict vertical hierarchy, and the aftermath of the failed 1956 revolution, Hungarians adopted a survival mode that involved navigating two contrasting realities: (a) the official behavior and communication (publicly supporting Communist principles and rules) and (b) the informal (true) beliefs and opinions that were shared only with family and close friends, often expressed in a highly cynical manner. As Körösenyi (1999) noted, this legacy has shaped interpersonal relations in the post-transition period, with the dual value system manifesting in citizens' contentious relationships with decision-makers and authority figures. Data presented in Table 1.1 highlights the controversial relationship and attitude of Hungarians about authority, marked by widespread suspicion and distrust towards their leaders.

Table 1.1. Political Cynicism (Percentage of Those Agreeing with the Given Statement)

	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993
One can never trust politicians completely	64	71	79	83	83
Ordinary people are always excluded from politics	77	72	75	83	81
Politicians are glad if the people do not interfere in the management of the affairs of the country	60	61	72	78	72

So long as things go well, it does not interest me who is in power	60	59	62	64	59
Only those who want to make a career enter politics	38	42	60	59	56
It is better for people not to enter politics, because sooner or later they will get their fingers burnt	45	45	50	53	45
In Hungary everyone can have a say in the management of the affairs of the country	34	35	28	24	23
Politicians do all they can to get to know the opinions of the people	34	21	26	22	25

Table Note. Used with permission from Körösenyi (1999, p. 15).

In the context of adaptive leadership, this reality can be described as follows: citizens depend on authority figures seeking direction, protection, and order (Heifetz et al., 2009). They tend to avoid direct criticism or confrontation with authority. However, among themselves, they are often very critical and cynical of decision-makers, as seen in Table 1.1 above. Furthermore, as noted by Körösenyi (1999) communism intensified social individualization rates; during the 40 years of Soviet rule, Hungary became one of the most individualized countries in the region. It is important to emphasize that what Körösenyi refers to as individualized-atomized society differs from what individualism stands for in other cultural contexts (e.g.: United States: rugged individualism). Individualism refers to the lack of collective bounds in the society except of the artificially created communist party gatherings and youth organizations. Data in Table 1.2 shows that under Soviet rule, the family unit became the only space where people could openly express their views without feeling the need to conform to political propaganda.

Table 1.2. Individualization and the Retreat Into the Private Sphere (Percentage of Those Giving the Given Answer to Two Questions)

	1 With family	2 No, there are none
Hungary	83	78
Spain	53	38
Denmark	53	49

West Germany	52	53
Belgium	51	61
The Netherlands	49	54
United Kingdom	48	60
France	47	64
Italy	36	45

Questions:

1. With whom do you most like to spend your free time—your family, friends, alone, or others?
2. Are there any values for you outside your family for which you would be prepared to sacrifice your life?

Source: Bruszt and Simon, 1994: 780–781

Table Note. Used with permission from Körösiényi (1999, p. 13).

The high rate of individualism shown in Table 1.2, especially when compared to other European countries, has significant repercussions.

Individualization emphasized by Körösiényi (1999) tend to isolate citizens, hindering their ability to engage in collective deliberation and problem-solving. The absence of strong civic relationships weakens society's capacity to initiate grassroots efforts to address problems. As a result, individuals become vulnerable and susceptible to the manipulations highlighted by Levine (2013) in relation to the ruling elite:

In general, our politics is manipulative. Experts - politicians, pundits, consultants, marketers, leaders of advocacy groups, and the like - study us, poll us, focus-group us, and assign us to gerrymandered electoral districts; they slice-and-dice us; and then they send us tailored messages designed to encourage us - or to scare us - into acting just how they want. (p. 21, emphasis in original).

The high rate of individualization in Hungary was further magnified by pessimism—a traditional element of the Hungarian social-political culture dating back to the 19th century or even earlier.

As Körösiényi (1999) noted:

The pessimistic picture of the Hungarians has been widespread since the nineteenth century...The high levels of individualism and atomization, the weakness of solidarity, the alienation from the political community, and the political cynicism that are revealed by the sociologists have a familiar ring – the pessimistic mentality is, for example, a feature of the Hungarian character that has been observed and described for more than a century.(p. 16)

Pessimism in Hungary stems from both harsh historical experiences and uncertainties, as well as the traditions of a hierarchical social model characterized by a class divide.

In this model, decisions are made by a ruling elite, leaving citizens with little knowledge about politics and a lack of confidence in their ability to influence political decisions. Hungary emerged as a subject (not a participant) political culture, which Almond and Verba (1963) defined as: “This type of political culture is in general congruent with a traditional political structure. Subject – Where citizens are aware of central government, and are heavily subjected to its decisions with little scope for dissent” (p. 65). People feel excluded and ignored in the political decision-making process, fostering substantial distrust and cynicism toward authority figures. Additionally, due to the traditionally hierarchical social model, citizens lack civic capacity, which contributes to a pessimistic outlook and a tendency to expect authority to resolve their problems.

The data presented in Tables 1.3 and 1.5 further illustrate the lack of civic capacity and a social tendency to depend on authority. This results in low levels of political participation, minimal protest culture, and widespread dissatisfaction with the functioning of democracy, which are all prominent features of the Hungarian reality. Hungary scores low in political participation, especially when compared to other countries behind the Iron Curtain. Moreover,

data on satisfaction with democracy (Table 1.3) highlight a declining enthusiasm for democratic governance among citizens after the post-transition period.

Table 1.3. Political Participation

	Boycott	Demon- stration	Public Gathering	Unofficial Strike	1st Parl. Election	2nd Parl. Election	3rd Parl. Election
Czech Republic	10.6	34.1	52.8	17.1	96	86	76.4
Hungary	1.8	6.6	6.9	1.1	65.8	68.9	56.3
Poland	5.9	8.8	11.6	8.3	68.8	43.9	67
Slovakia	11.8	22.6	48.2	13.8	96	86	75.7
Germany, eastern Länder	4.8	43.4	66.7	2.3	—	—	—
Germany, western Länder	11.5	27.2	48.4	4.0	89.1*	84.3*	77.8*
The Netherlands	15.5	30.5	37.1	4.2	87.0*	81.0*	85.8*
United Kingdom	9.2	13.8	37.1	9.8	72.7*	75.3*	—

* Electoral turnout figured marked with an asterisk refer to elections during the decade 1981–90.

Notes: The first four columns show the percentage of survey respondents saying they had participated in the forms of political participation indicated. The remaining three columns are percentage turnout figures for national parliamentary elections. For the first two elections in the Czech Republic and Slovakia, the Czechoslovak data are used. In all cases, first-round data are used.

Sources: Vecernik, 1996: 36; Angelusz and Tardos, 1996: 13; Gabriel and Brettschneider, 1994: 587; *Magyar Közlöny*, 1998 no. 47: 3889.

Table Note. Used with permission from Körösi (1999, p. 22)

Table 1.4. Satisfaction with the Operation of Democracy (Percentages)

West Germany (1976–92)*	73.2
Luxembourg (1976–92)	69.3
Denmark (1976–92)	68.3
The Netherlands (1976–92)	61.9
Portugal (1985–92)	59.9
United States (1985)	59.0
United Kingdom (1976–92)	55.1
Ireland (1976–92)	55.0
Spain (1985–92)	54.1
Greece (1980–92)	50.8

Belgium (1976–92)	50.0
France (1976–92)	45.5
Italy (1976–92)	22.6
Czech Republic (1992/94)	38/44
Slovakia (1992/94)	28/17
Poland (1992/94)	19/23
Hungary (1991)	30.5
Hungary (1992)	22.0
Hungary (1993)	20.3
Hungary (1994)	23.0
Hungary (1995)	20.0

* After 1990, the western Länder.

Sources: Eurobarometer averages for EU countries for the years 1976–92: Gabriel and Brettschneider, 1994: 549; USA: Tóka, 1994: 248; Hungary, 1991–93: Lengyel, Molnár and Tóth, 1994: 770; Hungary, 1994–95, Czech Republic, Slovakia and Poland, 1994: Lengyel, Molnár and Tóth, 1996, 631; Czech Republic, Slovakia and Poland, 1992: Tóka, 1994: 248.

Table Note. Used with permission from Körösiényi (1999, p. 19)

As a result of state etatism (i.e., state intervention and strict control in a highly politicized society)—including nepotism and high rate of corruption, subject political culture, and the hierarchic social model—the third (civic) sector remained dependent on state resources even after the downfall of communism (Krasztev & Van Til, 2015). Ultimately, these factors resulted in low participation rates and a weak civic and protest culture, and led to social dependence on authority. Consequently, the erosion of Hungarian democracy, which followed the regained freedoms and democratization in 1989, has paved the way for authoritarian rule and illiberal democracy characterized by populism and strong state intervention affecting various aspects of citizen life.

The Role of the Hungarian Education System in Maintaining Dependence on Authority

In the social context described, the Hungarian education system has played a crucial role in reproducing social patterns discussed above including socializing citizens to hold back and depend on authority. Győri and Czakó (2020) summarized the essence of Hungarian education, and the traditions of the authority-centered Prussian education model as follows:

Structured, passive, and frontal teaching symbolises an authoritarian methodological culture. This is the so-called frontal teaching or ‘Prussian pedagogy’ in which the teacher is in a higher position and provides students with knowledge. The student passively receives the knowledge; he/she is a disciplined subject in the education system. It is widely used in generations in Hungary and refers to traditional teaching methods used at all levels of education. (p. 11)

The nature of the Hungarian education system is hierarchical and elitist, with a significant power distance (as well as a knowledge gap) between teachers and students. This structure positions instructors as the primary sources of knowledge while discouraging student participation.

Linguistically, this dynamic is reflected in the term “hallgató” (university student), derived from “hallgat” (to listen), highlighting that students are often assigned the role of listeners who should hold back. In this educational context, the stakes are high: any inappropriate intervention may not only lead to poor grades but also public humiliation. Strict rules and frontal instruction dominate knowledge transfer, where students encounter the authority of instructors. This dominance fosters unrealistic expectations regarding instructors' omnipotence and competence. Such a socialization model produces “disciplined” citizens with low self-confidence who tend to hold back and expect authority figures (e.g., teachers, bosses, mayors, prime

ministers) to solve problems and provide direction, protection, and order. Additionally, those who experience public humiliation in school may later seek to compensate by emerging as perceived omnipotent and competent “leaders.”

Consequences of Socialization Provided by Hungarian Education

Dependence is present in various challenges, including adaptive problems. The overestimation of lexical knowledge in the Hungarian education system shifts social systems and institutions to depend on conventional professionalism and expertise (of the formal authority). Citizens’ lack of competence and self-confidence, and their pessimistic view regarding their capacity to influence decisions eventually lead to passive resistance. The elitist structure of social systems provides limited opportunities for collective problem-solving and democratic decision-making, leading to low self-esteem, diminished confidence, and a sense of cynicism among the populace. Scapegoating emerges as a form of evading responsibility, particularly evident in the relationship between ordinary citizens and political decision-makers. This phenomenon is illustrated by the significant volatility in political party preferences during the post-transition period, as shown in Table 1.5, which reflects the high levels of protest votes and widespread dissatisfaction among citizens. However, the high rate of floating (political science term to refer to voters frequently shifting political preferences) and protest voters also calls attention to the dependence mechanisms; with the lack of a mature civic sector and engagement, citizens expect the government and the political elite to solve their problems.

Table 1.5. Stability of Electoral Preferences (CEU Surveys)

	% of Standpatters Among Former Voters	Number of Months Passed Since Last Election
Slovakia, November 1994	88	2
Slovakia, September 1992	76	3

Czech Republic, September 1992	78	3
Poland, April 1994	76	8
Slovakia, July 1995	79	10
Czech Republic, April 1993	67	10
Slovakia, April 1993	65	10
Poland, October 1992	51	12
Hungary, June 1995	69	13
Poland, January 1993	60	15
Poland, December 1994	73	16
Czech Republic, November 1993	65	17
Slovakia, November 1993	61	17
Poland, June 1995	59	21
Czech Republic, April 1994	61	22
Slovakia, April 1994	60	22
Poland, August 1993	43	23
Poland, December 1995	49	27
Czech Republic, November 1994	60	29
Hungary, September 1992	50	29
Hungary, January 1993	51	33
Czech Republic, June 1995	61	36
Czech Republic, January 1996	66	43
Hungary, December 1993	47	44
Hungary, April 1994	44	49

Note. Figures in the left-hand column show the proportion of respondents who voted in the last parliamentary election who responded that they would vote for the same party again “if there were an election next weekend.” Respondents who preferred not to vote or did not know which party to support were excluded from this analysis as were respondents who did not reveal or did not know which party they voted for in the last election.

The data on participation and vote in the last election are based on the respondents’ “memory, and are thus likely to overstate the percentage of standpatters.”

Respondents who said they would vote for a new party that absorbed the party (e.g., KLD, UD) they had supported in the last election were counted as standpatters.

Similarly, the Czech respondents who recalled voting for the LSU in 1992 and said they would vote for ZS or CSS, or recalled voting for the LB in 1992 and said they would vote for the KSCM, were counted as standpatters.

Table Note. Used with permission from Tóka (1997, p. 18)

In this section, the political science literature was referenced to outline the specifics of the Hungarian context that reinforce dependence on authority. However, this analysis does not address how dependence on authority manifests in the lives of Hungarians and influences leadership. Therefore, this study aimed to deeply explore the relationship between dependence on authority and leadership.

Situating the Doctoral Research: Rationale and Methodology

This chapter introduced two major challenges: (a) current global social-political issues which are associated with authority and dependence on authority, and (b) a gap in leadership scholarship in situating authority in leadership and understanding the impact of dependence on authority on leadership. The historical and contemporary political science scholarship discussed in previous sections provided context for understanding the factors that maintain dependence mechanisms within the Hungarian context. The literature emphasizes the notable macro-political change: Hungary's authoritarian shift (Illés et al., 2018). From a leadership perspective, the way this hybrid or illiberal system is described aligns with trait and charismatic leadership models (e.g., Krekó & Enyedi, 2018), highlighting the Prime Minister and his centralized government's decision-making. However, these approaches do not sufficiently address the social dynamics or the relationship between authority, dependence on authority, and leadership, nor do they provide detailed, micro-level perspectives that focus on the lived experiences of individuals in this socio-political context.

To address this gap and explore the role of authority and dependence on authority in relation to leadership, this research engaged 13 Hungarian citizens who have spent most of their lives in Hungary. They shared their lived experiences and thoughts, enabling an examination of

the relationship between authority, dependence on authority, and leadership. This study was a qualitative deep dive based on an abductive analysis approach, situated at the intersection of authority and leadership, with the intention of making meaningful contributions to leadership scholarship in connection to three scholarly challenges:

1. Exploring authority and dependence on authority in relation to leadership:
“Formal leadership theories often struggle with how best to address individual and collective power along with the ways in which authority plays out in leadership” (Dugan, 2017, p. 21)
2. Providing micro-level exploration and perspectives of the relationship between dependence on authority and leadership:
“Most research on destructive leadership, like leadership more broadly, is ‘leader-centric’ (Hollander, 1992; Kellerman, 2004; Lord & Brown, 2004; Yukl, 2005) and the roles of followers and environmental contexts have not received adequate attention” (Padilla et al., 2007, p. 179).
“It is accepted wisdom that there is no leadership without followers, yet followers are very often left out of the leadership research equation” (Uhl-Bien et al., 2014).
3. Exploring authority and dependence on authority in relation to leadership in a specific cultural and social-political (non-U.S.) context:
“Western bias: there is little to no representation from outside the United States in most syntheses of leadership theory” (Dugan, 2017, p. 315).

Figure 1.1. Situating the Research



As described above, dependence on authority has been a longstanding characteristic of social interactions and authority relations in Hungary. This study examined the relationship between authority, dependence on authority, and leadership, employing an interdisciplinary lens (drawing from leadership and political science literature) and a community-engaged approach. The National Academy of Sciences et al. (2005) defined interdisciplinary research as follows:

a mode of research by teams or individuals that integrates information, data, techniques, tools, perspectives, concepts, and/or theories from two or more disciplines or bodies of specialized knowledge to advance fundamental understanding or to solve problems

whose solutions are beyond the scope of a single discipline or field of research practice.
(p. 26)

To develop a new model for understanding the relationship between leadership, authority, and dependence on authority, this study utilized abductive analysis methodology. Timmermans and Tavory (2012) described abductive analysis as “a qualitative data analysis approach aimed at generating creative and novel theoretical insights through a dialectic of cultivated theoretical sensitivity and methodological heuristics” (p. 180). In line with this approach, I entered the field with a broad theoretical foundation regarding leadership, authority, and dependence on authority, engaging in a back-and-forth process between theories and data while remaining open to conceptualizing unexpected findings. A more detailed description of abductive analysis and its application can be found in Chapter 3.

This study integrated perspectives from political science and leadership to gain a deeper understanding of the “wicked problem” of dependence on authority in the Hungarian context (Carcasson & Sprain, 2015, p. 41). It aligned with the principles of engaged research by providing a platform for the authentic voices and experiences of citizens to be heard. Van De Ven (2007) distinguished various engaged research types:

Engaged scholarship can be practiced in many different forms, including basic social science with advice of stakeholders, collaborative co-production of knowledge with stakeholders, design science to evaluate an applied program, and action research to intervene in the problem of a client. (p. ix)

Based on Van Der Ven’s (2007), the current research falls into the category of “informed basic research” (p. 27), where the purpose is to explore and explain social phenomena based on research participants’ lived experiences and thoughts. I, as the researcher, controlled the research

process and participants played an “advisory role” (p. 27). Research participants were chosen from among highly educated Hungarian individuals who had conversational knowledge of English. Rather than being merely subjects of the study, these participants were active co-creators of new insights and were invited to shape the research through joint decision-making. The findings of this research are rooted in the authentic voices and contributions of the participants.

Bhattacharya (2017) provided valuable guidance for formulating a research purpose and research questions. She underlined that the research purpose should be formulated so that it “invites multiple possibilities as a potential answer to the research purpose as opposed to one possible answer” (Bhattacharya, 2017, p. 75). The author also emphasized the use of verbs, situating the research question in context, and being “sharply focused” (Bhattacharya, 2017, p. 77). Building on these principles, this study offers an in-depth exploration of the relationship between authority, dependence on authority, and leadership, including the nature, causes, and consequences of dependence on authority, as well as its impact on leadership within the Hungarian context.

Research Purpose and Questions

The purpose of this study was to explore the relationship between authority, dependence on authority, and exercising leadership in the Hungarian context. The project focused on how participants construct meaning about their experiences of authority, dependence on authority, and the impact of these on exercising leadership. Bhattacharya (2017) underscored that:

Research questions are generally questions that break apart your research purpose more specifically to your focal points of inquiry. They give you a direction of what it is that

you are going to study and keep you focused during data collection, analysis, and representation stages of your qualitative inquiry. (p. 82)

She also emphasized the importance of the research question being in line with the research purpose (Bhattacharya, 2017). This study addressed the following research questions:

1. How do participants describe and make sense of authority, dependence on authority and leadership in the Hungarian context?
2. What factors do participants describe as having an impact on the dependence on authority in the Hungarian context?
3. From participants' experiences, in what ways does authority and dependence on authority affect leadership?

Operationalization of Terms

The following is a list of key terms used in this dissertation, including the definition or approach that was used to inform this study.

Authority: “conferred power to perform a service” (Heifetz, 1994, p. 57) “Authority involves the rights, prerogatives, obligations, and duties associated with particular positions in an organization or social system” (Yukl, 2013, p. 186).

Dependence on Authority (socially constructed): “A hierarchical relationship where the expectations of others (authority) are placed upon people (dependents)” (Heifetz, 1994, p. 70).

Leadership (socially constructed): “the practice of mobilizing people to tackle tough challenges and thrive” (Heifetz et al., 2009, p. 31).

Power: “Power is the ability to influence others” (Lunenburg, 2012, p. 1).

Approach to Civil/Public Engagement: “Deliberation is most valuable when it is connected to work—when citizens bring their experience of making things into their discussions, and when they take ideas and values from deliberation back into their work” (Levine, 2013, p. 12)

Moreover, my engagement approach was based on Berger’s (2011) description of *engaging*

with—the “activity is being undertaken but undertaken attentively” dealing with a social phenomenon that shapes mindsets and everyday social interactions (p. 36).

Chapter Summary

This study focused on the social reality of Hungary, situated in East-Central Europe, where democracy is increasingly challenged by illiberalism and authoritarianism. Chapter 1 identified the adaptive challenge and highlighted a gap in leadership theory. It provided context and rationale for the analysis, outlining the socio-cultural factors that contribute to dependence on authority, as well as the research purpose and questions guiding this study. The chapter emphasized that moving beyond the macro-political approach typically used in studies on Hungary's shift towards illiberalism and authoritarianism can provide a new perspective on how authority and dependence on authority influence leadership.

By shifting the focus from macro-political issues to individuals' lived experiences and perceptions regarding authority and leadership, this study proposed a community-engaged approach. This participatory method allowed for the co-creation of knowledge, with participants collaboratively involved in addressing a publicly identified adaptive challenge that affects millions. A deeper understanding of authority, dependence on authority, and the exercise of leadership can not only bridge the gap in leadership theory highlighted by Dugan (2017) and other scholars but also aid in designing effective leadership interventions within the Hungarian context. Chapter 1 serves as a foundation for a more detailed literature review in Chapter 2 and methodological considerations in Chapter 3.

Chapter 2 - Literature Review

This study centered on authority, dependence on authority, leadership, and the relationship between these concepts. To establish a robust foundation and fulfill the requirements of abductive analysis—where current research data are considered against a broad theoretical framework—it was essential to review key concepts relevant to this research. These theories and frameworks included (a) leadership, (b) authority, (c) power, (d) susceptible followership, and (e) the cycle of socialization. It is important to emphasize that, in the Hungarian context, these concepts are interconnected. Since this dissertation did not follow a deductive approach with a single overarching theoretical framework in the epicenter of the research, multiple theories and frameworks were examined to highlight their connections. While many of these concepts are complex and could each serve as the primary theme of a dissertation, due to the limitation of this study, they will be discussed here from the perspective of the current study. Consequently, Chapter 2:

- provides an overview of leadership and authority, highlighting the difficulty in situating authority and power in leadership;
- presents adaptive leadership's attempt to distinguish between leadership and authority;
- discusses dependence on authority and various types of followership associated with dependence, along with destructive and toxic leadership; and
- introduces a socialization framework that can help understand factors that sustain dependence on authority and how the perception of leadership and authority are shaped.

Leadership, Authority, Power, and Their Relationship

Leadership and authority are two words that are often assigned the same meaning. As Heifetz (1994) emphasized, “in our everyday language, we often equate leadership with authority. We routinely call leaders those who achieve high positions of authority even though, on reflection, we readily acknowledge the frequent lack of leadership they provide” (p. 49).

People often interpret leadership as holding a position and having formal power. From this viewpoint, leadership can only be exercised with authority. To better understand the relationship between leadership, authority, and power, it was necessary to disentangle these three concepts while also understanding the interplay between them.

Early Conceptualizing of Leadership

As Heifetz et al. (2009) highlighted, the Indo-European root of leading/leadership is *leit(h)*, meaning to go forth, but it also refers to crossing a threshold. By providing a detailed account of the evolution of definitions of leadership, Rost (1991) distinguished the etymological origins of leadership, the dictionary meaning, and the scholarly definitions. The etymological meaning of the expression to lead derives from *leden* or *loedan*, which means to show the way or guide. The Latin and Anglo-Saxon roots of the word determined its usage in most European languages. This etymological meaning converges with the dictionary meaning of leader: “Leader was defined as one that leads: captain, commander; one who goes first, and one at the head of the party or faction” (Rost, 1991, p. 38).

These meanings imply some sort of authority in leadership. It was not until the 19th century that the word leadership was formally defined: Webster’s definition defined leadership as “the state or condition of a leader” (Rost, 1991, p. 40). Within this definition, leadership was assigned the meaning of “the office or position of the leaders; guidance, premiership” (Rost, 1991, p. 40). Early scholarly definitions of leadership (in the 1930s) were associated with traits, interactions, dominance, and the social interaction process by the leader who influences others (followers). In this respect, leadership entails power and authority (formal or informal).

Early Efforts to Differentiate Between Leadership and Authority

The first remarkable step to distinguish leadership and authority was Schmidt's (1933, as cited in Rost, 1991) work:

Strictly speaking, the relation of leadership arises only where a group follows an individual from free choice and not under command or coercion, and secondly, not in response to blind drives but on positive and more or less rational grounds. (p. 48)

Schmidt's (1933, as cited in Rost, 1991) description of leadership was based on the dichotomy of freedom to follow as opposed to coercion. In the same vein, Jacobs's (1970, as cited in Rost, 1991) exchange theory of leadership made a clear distinction between leadership and authority and power:

In the present system, the key distinction in the exercise of influence through leadership is the recognition that the influence recipient has the option of deciding for or against compliance with the leader's wishes, without incurring coercive penalties. In the present system, perhaps the most important distinctions lie between leadership and each of the other two concepts (power and authority, which were defined on pages 230-231). As defined, it is probable that leadership depends on the competence of the leader at the task at hand, on his ability to understand the motives of his followers in order to provide convincing evidence of the desirability of an act that he desires, and on his tolerance for counter-influence attempts. (p. 60)

This distinction highlights a key difference between leadership and authority. Leadership relies on the leader's talent and persuasive communication skills to motivate followers toward a desired goal. In contrast, authority is characterized by the use of power, coercion, and penalties, where commands are enforced without much opportunity for opposition.

Acknowledging the Role of Power in Leadership and Authority

Northouse (2021) described coercion as a type of power available to leaders. However, he distinguished ideal leadership from those who use coercion against the will of the people involved:

It is important to distinguish between coercion and leadership because it allows us to separate out from our examples of leadership the behaviors of individuals such as Hitler, the Taliban, and Jones. In our discussions of leadership, coercive people are not used as models of ideal leadership. Our definition suggests that leadership is reserved for those who influence a group of individuals toward a common goal. Leaders who use coercion are interested in their own goals and seldom are interested in the wants and needs of followers. Using coercion runs counter to working with followers to achieve a common goal. (Northouse, 2021, p. 35)

Kellerman (2004) questioned Northouse's (2021) distinction by arguing: "In this book, I argue that there's something odd about the idea that somehow leadership can be distinguished from coercion, as if leadership and power were unrelated" (p. 4).

The concept of leadership in relation to authority and control underwent significant changes during World War II (Rost, 1991). New emerging approaches to leadership started challenging the leadership concept based on the leader's charisma, traits, or behavior, leading to a clearer separation of leadership from authority. Rost (1991) explained, "while the dominant paradigm remained firmly in control and the overwhelming majority of leadership scholars adhered to that framework, several scholars in various academic disciplines developed conceptual frameworks of leadership that challenged the organization behaviorist and the

psychologists” (p. 65). However, as Dugan (2017) noted, leadership theory has faced the difficulty/avoidance of describing power and authority in relation to leadership:

Formal leadership theories often struggle with how best to address individual and collective power along with the ways in which authority plays out in leadership. Some theorists argue for the complete decoupling of authority from leadership, whereas others suggest this is impossible. (p. 21)

Northouse (2021) echoed the same challenge:

Although there are no explicit theories in the research literature about power and leadership, power is a concept that people often associate with leadership. It is common for people to view leaders (both good and bad) and people in positions of leadership as individuals who wield power over others, and as a result, power is often thought of as synonymous with leadership. (p. 32)

While scholars differ on how to situate power in leadership (e.g., whether or not it is considered part of leadership), power remains a significant and complex concept at the intersection of authority and leadership.

Conceptualizing Power to Understand its Role in Leadership

Power is complex because it has various forms, and the definition of power depends on at least three factors: “the basis of power, the amount and direction of power, the means and the costs of exercising it” (Jacobs, 1970, p. 216). Its complex nature was echoed by French and Raven (1959), who explained that “the processes of power are pervasive, complex and often disguised in our society” (p. 150). Jacobs (1970) underlined that most approaches to power emphasize two interrelated elements: “One, that power is an aspect of a relationship between

people, not an attribute of a given person; two, that power consists of one person's ability to get another to do something that he otherwise would not do" (p. 216).

Power as an interpersonal relationship, is defined as "the capacity to deprive another of needed satisfactions or benefits or to inflict 'costs' on him for noncompliance with an influence attempt" (Jacobs, 1970, p. 230). According to Jacobs (1970), the relational element helps distinguish authority from power since authority is tied to positions. The second element elevates the notion of power as influence. From this lens, leadership is separated from power and authority as "an interaction between persons in which one presents information of a sort and in such a manner that the other becomes convinced that his outcomes (benefits/costs ratio) will be improved if he behaves in the manner suggested or desired" (p. 232). Lunenburg (2012) similarly described power as an influence relationship: "Power is the ability to influence others" (p. 7). According to Lunenburg (2012), "leadership as an influence process is a function of the elements of the leader's sources of power and the degree of acceptance with the interests and needs of the subordinates" (p. 5). In this conceptualization, leadership and power are intertwined.

Based on the dyadic relationship of behaviors between those exercising power and the recipients of that exercise, French and Raven (1959) described five *bases* of power: (a) legitimate, (b) reward, (c) coercive, (d) expert, and (e) referent power. In examining the relationship between authority and leadership within strong authority contexts, these bases of power provide a helpful framing for understanding factors underlying power dynamics.

Lunenburg (2012) emphasized that legitimate power is associated with the position of authority and one's role to influence others, adding that recipients or subordinates comply until they consider the use of power legitimate. In this respect, Lunenburg (2012) called attention to an important barrier in exerting legitimate power in that "legitimate power covers a relatively

narrow range of influence and, therefore, it may be inappropriate to overstep these bounds” (p.

2). The author provided a hypothetical scenario to illustrate how this overstep might look:

A boss may require his secretary to type a company document. However, it would be an abuse of power to ask that secretary to type his doctoral dissertation. The secretary may decide to complete the task, but doing so would not be within the scope of the boss’s formal authority. (Lunenburg, 2012, p. 2)

As discussed in Chapter 1, this scope is often ignored in the Hungarian reality.

French and Raven’s (1959) taxonomy identified cultural values as an important element of legitimate power: “Cultural values constitute one common basis for the legitimate power of one individual over another” (p. 160). The authors described how certain factors considered legitimate in a given cultural context led to one citizen exercising legitimate power over another within that particular context. The fourth base of power in French and Raven’s (1959) taxonomy is referent power. In this source of power, the influence relationship is based on charisma, admiration, respect, and the desire to identify with the influencer. Lastly, expert power is associated with the perception of exceptional knowledge or ability of the power holder (Lunenburg, 2012).

As opposed to reward power where the influence is based on various forms of rewards, “coercive power is a person’s ability to influence others’ behavior by punishing them or by creating a perceived threat to do so” (Lunenburg, 2012, p. 3). As Lunenburg (2012) highlighted, recipients and subordinates comply because of fear, and this form of power may lead to “negative feelings toward those who use it” (p. 3). The author added that “one need not be in a position of authority, however, to possess coercive power. Employees also have coercive power,

including the use of sarcasm and fear of rejection, to ensure that team members conform to group norms” (Lunenburg, 2012, p. 3).

The Challenge of Disentangling Leadership, Authority, and Power

With the growing diversity of leadership definitions, frameworks, and theories, situating authority and power in the act and practice of leadership has become difficult. Shamir and Shamir (2017) considered this challenge, which dates back several decades in leadership scholarship literature, with the recent trends of separating leadership from authority in organizational settings. However, these trends still do not solve the problem of describing power dynamics in leadership:

For several decades, the literature on leadership in organizations has either ignored or dismissed the issue of formal authority. Handbooks and prominent textbooks give only scant attention to formal authority. Prominent theories such as LMX, transformational, charismatic, and authentic do not refer at all to this topic. Several authors clearly emphasize the distinction between leadership and formal authority when they introduce the topic in order to dismiss the latter and move on to discuss the former. Leadership has been conceptualized as influence beyond the influence that stems from having formal authority (Katz & Kahn, 1978). This divide between leadership and formal authority has intensified in recent years with the introduction of approaches that promote various ways of shared and distributed leadership. A growing number of writers emphasize that leadership is not tied to a formal position in the organizational hierarchy, advancing the message that leadership can come (and should come) from anyone, anywhere in the organization, with some even claiming that the distinction between leaders and followers is obsolete and should be abandoned. (Shamir & Shamir, 2017, p. 580)

As part of the challenge of situating authority and power in the practice of leadership, Dugan (2017) also challenged two binary approaches in leadership—(a) leaders are born versus leaders are made and (b) the leaders versus followers dichotomy:

The reification of heroic leaders may also reflect psychological responses to issues of power and authority inherently embedded in leadership that reinforce our need for infallible leaders. They calm our anxieties in the face of threat increasing a sense of security while simultaneously displacing responsibility (Heifetz, 2010; Kellerman, 2004; Lipman-Blumen, 2005). In other words, if leaders are born rather than made, we get let off the hook. We get to turn the gaze outward rather than inward, as the quote from the start of the chapter so beautifully challenged us to do. (pp. 17–18)

If leaders are born, authority and power are inherently part of leadership, and there is no need to dedicate any specific attention to these concepts. If, on the other hand, leaders are made, that still does not provide a self-explanatory understanding of power dynamics and authority's role in leadership. While reflecting on the leaders versus followers binary approach, Dugan (2017) underlined: “Most often, *leader* is interpreted as a person with some form of positional authority and followers as those subject to that authority” (p. 19, emphasis in original). The author added:

Frustration with the “follower” label has led to the use of all sorts of alternative words in formal leadership theories such as *subordinate* (gosh, doesn't that feel better?) and *associate* (what does that even mean?). The problem here is that these words are typically just as triggering for people while missing the point entirely of needing to better name the power and authority dynamics that underlie leader/ follower relationships. (Dugan, 2017, p. 19, emphasis in original)

Dugan's (2017) statement above raised multiple questions: Are followers merely subjects in leadership depending on authority? Do leaders possess authority, which followers totally lack? Are the environment and social context at play at all in the practice of leadership and in determining the outcome? These questions required examining alternative concepts of leadership, dependence on authority, and followership approaches.

Adaptive Leadership

Adaptive leadership emerged in the 1990s through the work of Heifetz (1994) and colleagues (e.g., Heifetz et al., 2009) as a new approach challenging the conventional wisdom of leadership scholarship and the above-mentioned frameworks and definitions (Northouse, 2021). By providing an extensive distinction of leadership from positional authority and power, as well as describing how authority can curtail exercising leadership, the adaptive leadership framework offered a new perspective on leadership, authority, and power. While there are many approaches to understanding and enacting adaptive leadership, at its core, it involves “assisting people who need to confront tough problems” (Northouse, 2021, p. 253). In this approach, leadership is viewed as an activity that anyone can exercise (with or without authority) when facing an adaptive challenge. Instead of an emphasis on any particular *leader* (even usage of the word *leader* is avoided), the focus is instead given to (a) the activity of leadership, (b) the process of mobilizing people, and (c) the adaptive nature of problems that require leadership.

Heifetz et al. (2009) described adaptive leadership as “the practice of mobilizing people to tackle tough challenges and thrive” (p. 14). The work of adaptive leadership consists of three cyclical steps: making observations, interpreting these, and intervening in the system based on these interpretations. Adaptive leadership—as the name implies—also emphasizes adaptation as the result of exercising leadership. For example, Yukl (1998) discussed the need for leader's

adaptation and flexibility: “In order to be effective, leaders need to adapt their behavior to changing situations” (p. 177). Leadership is viewed as a dangerous activity because exercising leadership often disappoints expectations: as Heifetz et al. (2009) noted, “leadership on adaptive challenges generates loss. Learning is often painful,” and those who exercise leadership should be skillful at generating and regulating the heat for this learning to happen (p. 16).

As Heifetz et al. (2009) highlighted:

To orchestrate conflict effectively, think of yourself as having your hand on the thermostat and always watching for signals that you need to raise or lower the temperature in the room. Your goal is to keep the temperature – that is, the intensity of the disequilibrium created by discussion of the conflict – high enough to motivate people to arrive at creative next steps and potentially useful solutions, but not so high that it drives them away or makes it impossible for them to function. (p. 160)

As this study revealed experiencing heat may lead to two extremes; individuals with a high threshold for tolerating disequilibrium may either hold back or, when the heat becomes unbearable, rebel, which results in a system explosion. In both cases, the leadership intervention remains unproductive as it does not contribute to adaptive learning and change.

For leadership success, Heifetz et al. (2009) emphasized another important aspect in this work: to “act politically,” “forge alliances with people who will support your efforts,” and build coalitions (p. 133). A key principle in the enactment of adaptive leadership that is often referred to is: “Don’t do it alone” (Heifetz et al., 2009, p. 41). In contexts, such as the Hungarian, however, building coalitions and mobilizing others to exercise leadership have significant limitations.

Adaptive leadership rejects the common view about leaders using power, influence, and authority to solve problems for others or provide direction. In this respect, what many scholars

define as *leadership*, in Heifetz's (1994) framework, falls into the category of exercising authority.

Distinguishing Exercising Leadership from Authority

In differentiating exercising leadership from authority, Heifetz (1994) called attention to the barriers authority constitutes to leadership: "Because we so commonly equate leadership with authority, we fail to see the obstacles to leadership that come with authority itself. Having authority brings not only resources to bear but also serious constraints on the exercise of leadership" (p. 49). Heifetz et al. (2009) posited that leadership is not the same as using "authoritative expertise," "holding a high position," or "having enormous informal power" (p.23). It is not even about satisfying constituents' expectations. On the contrary, "adaptive leadership...is about challenging some of those expectations, finding a way to disappoint people without pushing them completely over the edge" (Heifetz et al., 2009, p. 26). Williams (2005) used *real* leadership as a substitute for adaptive leadership, emphasizing the same idea: "Real leadership is not about having strong conviction and imposing them on the group. Nor is it about amassing followers and showing the way forward" (p. ix).

Distinct from leadership, the concept of authority was defined by Heifetz (1994) as "conferred power to perform a service" (p. 57). In the adaptive leadership framework, authority is viewed as "given and can be taken away" (Heifetz, 1994, p. 57), and "authority is conferred as part of an exchange" (Heifetz, 1994, p. 57). This conceptualization differed largely from early discussions of leadership versus authority wherein authority was associated with command and coercion as opposed to leadership. In adaptive leadership, authority is relational or is a relationship. Heifetz (1994) used the term dominance for coercive power, adding a further

distinction: “Dominance relationships are based on coercion or habitual deference; authority relationships are voluntary and conscious” (p.58).

Heifetz et al. (2009) clearly separated the functions of authority and leadership: as the authors summarized, those who exercise authority provide three elementary functions: direction, protection, and order. Exercising leadership, however, requires doing the opposite: learning more about the nature of the challenge, allowing external threats, and letting hidden issues, agendas, and conflicts/tensions emerge. As Heifetz et al. (2009) underlined, “addressing adaptive challenges requires stepping into unknown space and disturbing the equilibrium, it is an activity that is inherently uncertain, risky for the organization as well as for the individual, and, for these reasons, often disruptive and disorienting” (p. 28).

Contextualizing Dependence on Authority

Adaptive leadership focuses on addressing adaptive work, which is essential for effective leadership. However, there is an unexplored area of leadership independent of the types of problems one encounters (i.e., whether they are technical or adaptive). This area pertains to the relationship between dependence on authority and leadership. Specifically, what is the scope of action for any leadership intervention when individuals rely on or adhere to the functions of authority—such as providing direction, protection, and order—or when they are compelled to depend on authority? What does leadership look like in a social context where dependence on authority is the norm?

As Padilla et al. (2007) emphasized, “Most research on destructive leadership, like leadership more broadly, is ‘leader-centric’ (Hollander, 1992; Kellerman, 2004; Lord & Brown, 2004; Yukl, 2005) and the roles of followers and environmental contexts have not received adequate attention” (p. 179). In line with Padilla et al.’s (2007) argument, the current dissertation

study offered a bottom-up approach by providing a space for research participants to share their lived experiences and make sense of authority and dependence on authority in relation to leadership in a specific environmental context.

Adaptive Leadership in a Context of Toxic Leadership

Chapter 1 of this study presented the case of Hungary, highlighting how citizens' behaviors have been built upon social distrust toward authority after their bitter experiences with Communism. While the promise of adaptive leadership appears to hold potential universally, literature on toxic leadership provides insights into the challenge of putting this leadership theory into practice within the Hungarian context. This dissertation drew from Padilla et al.'s (2007) toxic triangle model.

Toxic Triangle Model

To better understand destructive leadership in practice, Padilla et al. (2007) developed the toxic triangle model. This model consists of three cornerstones: destructive leader characteristics, susceptible follower types, and conducive environments. The interplay of these three domains gives way to destructive leadership activity. Padilla et al. (2007) identified several key characteristics of destructive leaders, including charisma, personalized power, narcissism, negative life themes, and an ideology of hate. Within the domain of susceptible followers in the model, Padilla et al. (2007) introduced two categories of individuals who follow destructive leaders: colluders and conformers. The third element of Padilla et al.'s (2007) toxic triangle is the conducive environment, which incorporates several environmental factors that allow destructive leadership to arise, including “instability, perceived threat, cultural values, and absence of checks and balances and institutionalization” (p. 185).

Destructive Leaders and the Dark Side of Leadership

Padilla et al. (2007) expanded on previous scholarly work to define destructive or toxic leadership. This type of leadership, which fails to serve the interests of its followers or is poorly exercised, has been labeled in various ways. For instance, Williams (2005) referred to it as “counterfeit leadership,” contrasting it with genuine leadership. Northouse (2021) termed it “pseudotransformational leadership” (p. 181), while Padilla et al. (2007) classified it as destructive or toxic leadership. As Padilla et al. (2007) emphasized, there is no consensus on the definition of the dark side of leadership, as “scholars have not explicitly defined destructive leadership, per se. Rather, they tend to treat it as a ‘know it when you see it phenomenon’” (p. 177).

Padilla et al. (2007) noted that there is not even a consensus on whether individuals who embody the dark side of leadership, such as Adolf Hitler, can be considered leaders. Some scholars argue against calling them leaders because they did not serve a positive purpose (e.g., Burns, 2003; Howell & Avolio, 1992; Kellerman, 2004). Conversely, others believe that because they influenced millions, they should be recognized as leaders. This is how the concept of pseudotransformational leadership emerged, which contrasts with transformational leadership.

Closely related to this scholarly debate, Kellerman (2004) called attention to the importance of studying bad leadership:

But the leadership industry has a problem that years ago I named Hitler’s ghost. Here is my concern. If we pretend that there is no elephant and that bad leadership is unrelated to good leadership, if we pretend to know the one without knowing the other, we will in the end distort the enterprise. We cannot distance ourselves from even the most extreme example—Hitler—by bestowing on him another name, such as “power wielder.” Not

only was his impact on twentieth-century history arguably greater than anyone else's, but also, he was brilliantly skilled at inspiring, mobilizing, and directing followers. His use of coercion notwithstanding, if this is not leadership, what is? (p. 11)

Northouse (2021) summarized pseudotransformational leadership as follows:

This term refers to leaders who are self-consumed, exploitive, and power oriented, with warped moral values (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Pseudotransformational leadership is considered personalized leadership, which focuses on the leader's own interests rather than on the interests of others. (p. 182)

Similarly, Williams (2005) distinguished between real leadership and counterfeit leadership, arguing that: "Counterfeit leadership is a set of actions and strategies used by an authority figure that thwarts progress, whereas real leadership is a set of actions and strategies that facilitates progress" (p. XV). Although there is no consensus among scholars of adaptive leadership on the specific definition of progress, Williams' (2005) perspective aligns with leadership theories that differentiate between leadership that serves common goals and the concept of destructive leadership.

Padilla et al. (2007) highlighted two main directions in the literature on destructive leadership: (a) process-centered and (b) outcome-centered approaches. They explained:

Destructive leadership, on the other hand, involves imposing goals on constituents without their agreement or regard for their long-term welfare (Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999; Conger, 1990; Howell & Avolio, 1992; Sankowsky, 1995). Such a process is ultimately alienating (even if followers concur with the leader's goals) because, over the longer term, the process fails to make goals personally meaningful to followers (House &

Aditya, 1997; Klein & House, 1995; Shamir et al., 1993). (Padilla et al., 2007, pp. 177-178)

As Padilla et al. (2007) emphasized, “destructive leadership involves control and coercion rather than persuasion and commitment (Howell & Avolio, 1992; Sankowsky, 1995)” (p. 179). This perspective aligns with the distinctions many leadership scholars make between leadership and authority.

From the lens of the toxic triangle model, destructive leader characteristics include charisma, which is highlighted by many leadership scholars:

Research indicates that destructive leadership and charisma are empirically linked (Beyer, 1999; Conger, 1990; Conger & Kanungo, 1988; Gessner, O'Connor, Mumford, Clifton, & Smith, 1995; Hogan et al., 1990; House, 1977; Howell & Avolio, 1992; Hunt, Boal, & Dodge, 1999; Maccoby, 2000; O'Connor et al., 1995; Trice & Beyer, 1986). The literature suggests that even when charismatic leaders are not destructive, they can still be dangerous. Yukl (1999) notes that researchers have romanticized charismatic leadership; he observes that some charismatic leaders abuse their power for self-serving ends while “exaggerating positive achievements and taking unwarranted credit...covering up mistakes and failures...blaming others for mistakes...and limiting communication of criticism and dissent. (Padilla et al., 2007, p. 180)

Kellerman (2004) referenced political philosophers who argue that humans, in their natural state, are inherently flawed, and provided an account for the motives of bad leadership:

Sometimes the context fosters bad behavior. A city in which corruption has long been tolerated is more likely to be defrauded by its elected officials than is one that has a long and strong tradition of good government. Sometimes followers entice leaders to go

astray. People in positions of authority are not immune to the influence of others, especially close advisers who, although perhaps misguided, are nevertheless determined and single-tracked. But, in the main, leaders behave badly because of who they are and what they want. (pp. 18-19)

Kellerman's (2004) reference to the context explains how social reproduction processes influence the type of leadership that emerges and is developed. This also supports how dependence on authority has been reproduced in Hungarian social reality, sustaining a conducive environment for toxic leadership. As highlighted in Chapter 1, the social context, including the pessimistic character of Hungarians and social apathy, plays a significant role in creating a dependency on authority, which in turn makes it easier for charismatic "leaders" to emerge. However, it is also crucial to explore how dependence on authority is sustained within the social context.

Susceptible Followers and Follower Motivations

By calling attention to the importance of followership, Uhl-Bien et al. (2014) noted: "It is now widely accepted that leadership cannot be fully understood without considering the role of followers in the leadership process" (p. 89). While this study primarily focused on (a) authority, (b) dependence on authority, and (c) the relationship between these with leadership, a greater understanding of inappropriate dependencies in Hungary can be achieved by examining different types of followers—particularly vulnerable followership—and follower motivations.

As Uhl-Bien et al. (2014) highlighted, follower-centered theories emerged "in response to leader-centric views" (p. 86). Followership has been approached from different angles and has been embedded in various leadership theories. In the case of the current dissertation study, followership discussed in relation to destructive leadership incorporated key take-aways. A

relevant distinction in followership was illuminated by Howell and Shamir (2005). By distinguishing leader-follower relationships in non-charismatic and charismatic contexts, the authors conceptualized two types of charismatic relations: (a) personalized and (b) socialized. They explained, “Our basic argument is that, depending on their self-concepts, followers may develop two different types of charismatic relationships with the leader – personalized or socialized – and these relationships are likely to result in different consequences” (Hower & Shamir, 2005, p. 99).

As the authors unpacked these two concepts, they argued that in *personalized* relationships between charismatic leaders and their followers, the followers often feel a lack of clear orientation before entering into these charismatic relationships. However, these relationships ultimately provide followers “with a clearer sense of self and greater self-confidence” (Howell & Shamir, 2005, p. 100). In personalized relationships, followers identify with the charismatic leader (i.e., personal identification). Hower & Shamir (2005) also highlighted the consequences of this type of leader-follower relationship: “Lacking a strong internal reference point from which to judge the leader’s messages and influence attempts, followers in this type of relationship are dependent on and vulnerable to the leader” (p. 100).

In contrast, *socialized* followership is based on the leader’s message, values, and agenda instead of personal identification because “followers have a clear sense of self and a clear set of values” (Hower & Shamir, 2005, p. 100). Consequently, socialized followership is less exposed to manipulation and dependence on the charismatic leader.

Kellerman (2004) expanded on the understanding of destructive leadership by including bad followers, who directly contribute to the emergence of bad leadership. It is essential to

define what constitutes bad leadership based on current research. Padilla et al. (2007)

emphasized the outcomes of destructive leadership:

The test of toxic leadership, from this perspective, is a matter of outcomes: the essence of destructive leadership concerns negative organizational outcomes, and certain processes are more likely than others to lead to such outcomes. We therefore agree with Burns (2003) that Hitler was destructive because he led the German people into external domination and poverty, not because he was a racist who ignored staff feedback while pursuing a personal agenda. (pp. 178–179)

In examining bad (e.g., destructive or toxic) leadership, however, the distinction made by Padilla et al. (2007) failed to reconcile the moral and ethical domains of leadership. According to Kellerman (2004), bad leadership includes the notion of “unethical leadership” (p. 32). From this lens, even if the outcomes of leadership are positive, if those results are achieved through unethical behavior or means, it still constitutes destructive leadership.

Using Nazi Germany as an example, Kellerman (2004) distinguished between three types of followers: (a) bystanders (whose motivation may vary), (b) evildoers (who were deeply integrated in the system), and (c) acolytes (who identify with the leader and their agenda). In contrast with the latter two categories, “bystanders motivation ranged from self-interest (on matters relating to stability and security) to being part of the national group” (p. 26). While discussing bystanders’ motivation, Kellerman (2004) highlighted an important point: “bystanders behaved badly either because they had no issue with the Nazi agenda or because, if they did, they calculated that the cost of resisting was greater than the cost of doing nothing” (p. 27).

Kellerman (2004) listed several factors as to why people follow destructive leaders. On the individual level, she referred to “safety, simplicity, and certainty” (p. 22). At the group level,

“order, cohesion, identity” emerged as the most important motivators (p. 24). The author also explained hierarchy was an important factor contributing to these group needs: “Hierarchy, it turns out, is the natural order of things” (Kellerman, 2004, p. 24).

Padilla et al. (2007) in describing susceptible followers distinguished two types: conformers and colluders. In their discussion of susceptible followers, Padilla et al. (2007) posed an important question regarding the mechanisms of dependence:

But why are certain followers unable or unwilling to resist domineering and abusive leaders? Kellerman (2004) and Lipman-Blumen (2005) suggest that they need safety, security, group membership, and predictability in an uncertain world. Some followers actually benefit from destructive activities and thus contribute to the toxic vision of the leader. At the group level are needs for social order, cohesion, identity, and the coordination of collective activity. There is also a natural tendency for people to obey authority figures (Milgram, 1974), imitate higher-status individuals (Baharody & Stoneman, 1985), and conform to group norms (Asch, 1951). (p. 183)

Unlike colluders, who benefit directly from supporting destructive leaders, conformers have different motives, as emphasized by Padilla et al. (2007):

Conformers comply with destructive leaders out of fear whereas colluders actively participate in a destructive leader's agenda. Both types are motivated by self-interest, but their concerns are different (Higgins, 1997): conformers try to minimize the consequences of *not* going along while colluders seek personal gain through association with a destructive leader (cf. prevention and promotion motivation, Higgins, 1997). The vulnerability of conformers is based on unmet basic needs, negative self-evaluations, and

psychological immaturity. In contrast, colluders are ambitious, selfish and share the destructive leader's world views. (Padilla et al., 2007, p. 183, emphasis in original)

As outlined in Chapter 1, the conformer attitude arises from the socialization model and social context, where individuals often act out of fear of the consequences of not obeying authority. Many citizens' attitudes align with the conformer motivation described by Padilla et al. (2007).

Furthermore, Padilla et al. (2007) highlighted that "negative core self-evaluations [contribute to a] vulnerability to destructive leadership" (p. 183). This is particularly relevant to the Hungarian context as "persons with low self-esteem, low self-efficacy, and an external locus of control are susceptible to destructive leaders. Totalitarian regimes, through propaganda, control of the media, societal controls, and persecution of dissidents reinforce this sense of powerlessness and passivity" (Padilla et al., 2007, p. 184). Low self-esteem has a specific importance in dependence on charismatic leaders:

Low self-esteem distinguishes followers from leaders (Judge, Bono, Ilies, & Gerhardt, 2002). Individuals with low self-esteem often wish to be someone more desirable, which prompts them to identify with charismatic leaders (Hoffer, 1951; Shamir, Arthur, & House, 1994). Weierner (1997) argued that persons with low self-esteem are more likely to identify with a charismatic person because such leaders want to control and manipulate others, and these followers feel they deserve such treatment. (Padilla et al., 2007, p. 183)

Building upon the toxic triangle model, Thoroughgood et al. (2012) presented a detailed taxonomy of vulnerable followers known as the "susceptible circle" (p. 901). The susceptible circle introduced new types of susceptible followers: (a) lost souls, (b) authoritarians, and (c) bystanders were added to the existing category of conformers, as well as (a) acolytes and (b) opportunists were added to the colluder category (Thoroughgood et al., 2012, p. 902). This study

suggests that among these followership types, lost souls, authoritarians and bystanders play a critical role in prolonging and reproducing social expectations toward authority and dependence on authority in Hungary.

Lost souls are described as followers “attracted to charismatic leaders who they believe can provide them clarity, direction and increased self-esteem; offer them a sense of community and belonging; and instill in them a clear sense of self” (Thoroughgood et al., 2012, p. 903). The authors emphasized that this follower attitude easily leads to dependence, vulnerability, and openness to manipulation, particularly when influenced by a charismatic leader.

In contrast, authoritarians “possess rigid hierarchical attitudes that prescribe leader’s legitimate right to exert power over them...authoritarians do not obey because they seek approval or fear retribution, but simply because the leader holds a higher rank” (Thoroughgood et al., 2012, p. 905). Thoroughgood et al. (2012) listed three relevant elements of authoritarianism: “authoritarian submission, conventionalism, and authoritarian aggression” (p. 905). They also called attention to the perils of authoritarian follower-leader relationship: “Authoritarian followers who support unethical leaders bent on maximizing their power can create a toxic union, which has the potential to ‘carry a dictator into power in a democracy’ (Altemeyer, 1999, p. 158)” (Thoroughgood et al., 2012, p. 905).

Bystanders are passive observers who obey charismatic leaders based on fear. As Thoroughgood et al. (2012) highlighted: “In contrast to the other conformers, bystanders are often more independent, with their feelings toward destructive leaders ranging from anger and disapproval to indifference and apathy” (p. 907).

Thoroughgood et al.’s (2012) framework also included two types of colluders: opportunists are motivated by the perceived personal benefits, whereas acolytes are “true

believers” (p. 910) who have strong beliefs and values and align because “they share congruent values and goals with the leader” (p. 910).

Based on followership theories, it is evident that followers have varied motives for following charismatic and destructive leaders. However, these can be categorized into two distinct groups: bystanders and those who actively support leaders. The latter group may align with leaders due to shared interests or a connection to the leader's values and agenda.

Conducive Environments: Appropriate vs. Inappropriate Dependencies

Speaking to the conducive environment that enables toxic leadership to thrive, Padilla et al. (2007) explained that “four environmental factors are important for destructive leadership: instability, perceived threat, cultural values, and absence of checks and balances and institutionalization” (p. 185). The influence of the environment also shapes the cultural and social dynamics that affect followers' attitudes and their capacity for action. In a centralized, hierarchical cultural setting, such as the Hungarian context, where there is a strong dependence on authority, opportunities for exercising real or adaptive leadership are limited. As Padilla et al. (2007) point out:

once decision-making becomes centralized, it is often difficult to take back (Kipnis, 1972). The structural stability of the social system (Cell, 1974; Conger & Kanungo, 1998; Simonton, 1988)—the extent to which rules of governance are clearly defined and consistently applied over time—is also important. For example, in modern post-communist countries, major policy decisions are frequently based on ad hoc negotiations among elites (Kornai, 1995). Shrewd leaders can exploit fluid and transient structures closed to external scrutiny. (p. 185)

Padilla et al. (2007) also highlighted that perceived threat makes dependence on authority more likely: “When people feel threatened, they are more willing to accept assertive leadership” (p. 185). The authors also stated that:

Culture concerns preferences for certain social conditions and therefore shapes emergent leadership (Hofstede, 1991). Luthans et al. (1998) propose that “dark leaders” are likely to emerge in cultures that endorse the avoidance of uncertainty, collectivism (as opposed to individualism), and high-power distance. Uncertainty avoidance involves the extent to which a society feels threatened by ambiguous situations; in such societies, people look to strong leaders to provide hope. Dictators exploit followers' needs for security by providing structure, rituals, and rules that offer easy solutions to complex problems (Heifetz, 1994; Luthans et al., 1998). (Padilla et al., 2007, p. 186.)

This point emphasizes the significance of cultural context, particularly in relation to the Eastern European (i.e., post-Communist) reality discussed in Chapter 1 of this study.

Padilla et al. (2007) noted that “in high power-distance cultures, especially those with low educational levels and significant disparities in wealth distribution, followers are more tolerant of the power asymmetries that typify tyranny and despotism” (p. 186). Additionally, they highlighted the connection between a culture of dependence and destructive leadership:

A culture of dependency and apathy among followers can also contribute to the centralization of power. Such an ethos, particularly when combined with instability and ineffective institutions, concentrates power in a leader, leading to greater follower dependence and weakening of opposition and dissidence. The political science literature discusses centralization under the concept of “presidentialism” (Linz, 1994; Mainwaring & Scully, 1995; Shugart & Mainwaring, 1997; Zakaria, 1997). While there is no directly

analogous notion in the management literature, the work on empowerment and decentralization of authority (e.g., Argyris, 1998; Conger & Kanungo, 1988) is similar. Centralized governance systems that rely on the top of the organization for decisions stand in sharp contrast to structures based on autonomous political units with effective and professional institutions that share responsibility and authority for governance. (Padilla et al., 2007, p. 186)

To further understand the conducive environment of toxic leadership, Heifetz's (1994) description of dependence on authority and its perils to leadership was crucial to this study. As highlighted in Chapter 1, Heifetz (1994) described dependence on authority as a hierarchical relationship where the expectations of others (authority) are placed upon people (dependents). Heifetz (1994) acknowledged that some sort of dependencies are present in everyday life:

Appropriate dependencies, however, arise every day. Whenever we develop an organization or a political community, we establish a system of authorizations by which various persons or groups coordinate their efforts and take on specialized roles and functions. We construct a network of appropriate dependencies based on a realistic appraisal of what we and others can provide. (p. 70)

Heifetz (1994) used an emergency room to exemplify the difference between appropriate and inappropriate dependencies:

Without an explicit hierarchy of authority by which to orchestrate the actions of a medical staff needing to provide a swift and coordinated response, chaos would ensue...In theory, however, if the members of the staff had worked together over a long period of time, and had seen most of the kinds of situations that would come their way, each would know what role to take without much need for on-the-spot coordination or

central decision making. The functions generally served by authority would have been incorporated into the norms of the group. The likelihood of dysfunction in the absence of authority would diminish. (p. 71)

In discussing transformational leadership, Kark et al. (2003) described dependence as follows:

Dependence on the leader has several manifestations. It implies that the subordinate is limited in his or her ability to proceed with work and make decisions without the leader's guidance. Psychologically it means that the subordinate's motivation and self-esteem depend on receiving recognition and approval from the leader. (p. 246)

Both approaches to dependence involve a degree of hierarchy and power delegation, emphasizing that power dynamics are at play while people depend on authority. In discussing this endorsement of power, Heifetz (1994) highlighted the dangers associated with such dependence:

Yet many of us have mixed feelings about authority. Perhaps because we know from experience that authority relationships consist essentially of dependencies, some of us are ambivalent about giving power, and others are ambivalent about taking it. Having been disappointed or abused in these relationships, some of which may strongly resemble dominance, many of us do not like to be dependent, or depended upon. Dependency makes us feel vulnerable, controlled, or overwhelmed by the expectations other people place upon us. (pp. 69–70)

People endorse power and authority in exchange for services based on that authority. However, as Heifetz (1994) argued, this endorsed power can be misused, resulting in a lack of trust and heightened skepticism.

In discussing martyrdom and the sources of informal power and authority, Heifetz (1994) stressed that, oftentimes, charismatic authority does not derive from some extraordinary ability or personality, but from the audience or “community’s investment” (p. 247). This is in line with Kellerman’s (2004) conceptualization of *bad* leadership, which incorporates “bad followers” and the enabling context (p. 25). Heifetz (1994) called attention to the perils of charismatic authority:

The pitfall of charisma, however, is unresolved dependency. People can fail to move on, to discover their own “magic,” their own capacity for responsibility. They may not grow to realize their capacity for self-governance. Rather than establish new norms, understandings, and authorizing structures, they may focus their sights and energies on the single charismatic individual. The charismatic and his constituents develop a relationship in which promises insulate against the distress of facing problems. For the charismatic, it feels good to be idealized. For his constituents, it feels good to have someone who assures deliverance in the long-run, and in the short-run provides direction, protection, orientation, the control of conflict, and clear norms. (p. 247)

In the same vein, Yukl (1998) referred to some negative consequences of personalized power:

Personalized power leaders seek to dominate subordinates by keeping them weak and dependent. Authority for making important decisions is centralized in the leader, information is restricted, and rewards and punishments are used to manipulate and control subordinates. Assistance and advice to a subordinate is done in a way that demonstrates personal superiority and the inferiority and dependence of the subordinate. (p. 142)

Yukl’s (1998) argument emphasizes the need to examine followership associated with destructive leadership and the toxic leadership concept itself.

Because of the social and historical factors outlined in Chapter 1, “inappropriate dependencies” (Heifetz, 1994, p. 71) have significantly influenced social interactions in both macro and micro social-political contexts, as well as various aspects of hierarchical relations in Hungary. The descriptions provided by Heifetz (1994) and Yukl (1998) highlight an important perspective on power and leadership, bringing attention back to the dark side of leadership.

Dependence on Authority Maintained by Social Reproduction Processes

To understand how dependence on authority is perpetuated in Hungary, it was essential to examine not only the socio-political and cultural context but also the processes of social reproduction. Harro (2000) offers a comprehensive framework for the cycle of socialization, detailing various phases and aspects of this process.

According to this model, individuals are born into a world with established “mechanisms, assumptions, rule, roles, and structures of oppression” that they did not choose and had no part in creating (Harro, 2000, p. 47). The author explained that “our socialization begins even before we are born” (Harro, 2000, p. 47). This early socialization is largely shaped by an individual’s families and parents leading them to “unconsciously conform to their views” (Harro, 2000, p. 47). Harro (2000) underlined that in most cases, the socialization patterns (i.e., assumptions, rules, and roles that shape identity and one’s relation to the external environment) are not filtered through a critical lens, especially in the initial processes of the model. From an early age, individuals find themselves in hierarchical relationships in which they depend on their loved ones.

This initial phase is followed by cultural and institutional socialization, where “our socialization sources are rapidly multiplied” (Harro, 2000, p. 48). This is a critical phase of socialization characterized by various agents conveying messages about “how to be, whom to

look up to and look down on, what rules to follow, what roles to play, what assumptions to make, and what to believe” (p. 48). Stereotypes and biases are integral to this learning process. Harro (2000) introduced the concepts of enforcements (e.g., power and coercion) as explanations for why individuals do not simply ignore or reject the structures, rules, assumptions, and roles imposed upon them. The author highlighted that “people who try to contradict the norm, pay a price for their independent thinking” (Harro, 2000, p. 49). In contrast, those who conform can enjoy the benefits of rewards. Harro (2000) further explored the consequences of nonconformity by arguing that:

People who go against the grain of conventional societal messages are accused of being troublemakers, of making waves, or of being the cause of the problem. If they are members of target groups, they are held up as examples of why this group is inferior to the agent group. (p. 49)

As highlighted by Harro (2000), when individuals face this reality, they must make a decision: whether to “simply allow the perpetuation of the status quo [or] interrupt it” (p. 50). The author emphasized these decisive moments as a crucial aspect of this socialization model:

We may say, “Oh well it’s been that way for hundreds of years. What can I do to change it? It is a huge phenomenon, and my small efforts won’t count for much.” Many of us choose to do nothing because it is (for a while) easier to stay with what is familiar. Besides, it is frightening to try to interrupt something so large. “What does it have to do with me anyway?” (p. 50)

Harro (2000) identified several key reasons for conforming behavior, such as “fear, ignorance, confusion, insecurity, and a sense of powerlessness” (p. 51). Harro also noted that “people

without power may think they can't make a difference" (p. 51). Alternatively, Harro concluded by highlighting the motivations and characteristics of change-makers:

Change movements are filled with people who made decisions to interrupt the cycle of socialization and the system of oppression. Once you know something, you can't not know it anymore, and knowing it eventually translates into action. These people often share qualities that have developed as a result of uniting for change. They share a sense of hope and optimism that we can dismantle oppression. They share a sense of hope and optimism that we can dismantle oppression. They share a sense of their own efficacy – that they can make a difference in the world. They empower themselves and they support each other. They share an authentic human connection across their differences rather than fear because of their differences. They are humanized through action; not dehumanized by oppression. They listen to one another. They take one another's perspectives. They learn to love and trust each other. This is how the world changes. (p. 52).

Chapter Summary

The scholarly descriptions and debates regarding the interrelated concepts of authority, power, dependence on authority, and leadership provided an opportunity for this study to consider these academic contributions in relation to the collected data, allowing for a meaningful contribution to the field. Chapter 3 presents the methodological design of this study.

Chapter 3 - Methodology

The research methodology for this dissertation was guided by Becker (2001), who emphasized that the similarities between qualitative and quantitative research are just as significant as the differences. He argued that “both kinds of research try to see how society works, describe social reality, and answer specific questions about instances of social realities” (Becker, 2001, p. 53). Therefore, both qualitative and quantitative research methods are relevant, each with unique strengths and limitations. The purpose of this research was an in-depth exploration of the relationship between dependence on authority and leadership within the specific Hungarian context. Spillman (2014) highlights the distinct nature of quantitative and qualitative research calling attention to the difference between empirical-statistical generalization and theoretical generalization. Given the approach to addressing the purpose of this study through a deep dive into research participants’ lived experiences—without seeking empirical generalizations—qualitative research methodology emerged as the most appropriate approach.

As discussed in Chapter 1, dependence on authority has been present in Hungary for decades, shaping social interactions and dynamics and influencing perceptions of leadership and the extent to which leadership can be exercised. This long-standing social challenge has hindered the development of civic capacities necessary for citizen engagement and safeguarding the achievements of democratization during the post-transition period. The lack of socio-cultural change, including replacing dependence on authority, has ultimately led to the erosion of democracy and the rise of illiberal democracy, characterized by strong authority structures and mechanisms. This Chapter outlines this study’s methodological approach and research design.

Methodological Framework

Bhattacharya (2017) emphasized that there are various ways to understand reality and truth, with the qualitative perspective being one possible approach. Qualitative research “aims to work within the context of human experiences and the ways in which meaning is derived from those experiences” (Bhattacharya, 2017, p. 26). Carter and Little (2007) summarized qualitative research as follows:

Social research in which the researcher relies on text data rather than numerical data analyzes those data in their textual forms rather than converting them to numbers for analysis. It aims to understand the meaning of human action and asks open questions about phenomena as they occur in context, rather than testing predetermined hypotheses. (p. 1316)

This study focused on exploring social phenomena and their relationship and making sense of human actions within their contextual environments by inviting participants to share their lived experiences and engage in joint meaning-making.

The research questions for this study reflect the open-ended inquiries emphasized by Carter and Little (2007) and sought to deepen scholarly understanding of the relationship between dependence on authority and leadership in the Hungarian context. Therefore, the purpose of this study aligned with the perspectives of both Bhattacharya (2017) and Carter and Little (2007). Bhattacharya (2017) also pointed out that, unlike quantitative inquiry, “qualitative research conducts in-depth inquiries within a small sample of the population” (p. 43). She further added that the purpose of qualitative research is to “simply understand and explore in an in-depth manner and not to generalize” (Bhattacharya, 2017, p. 44). Using qualitative research methods,

this doctoral research examined the relationship between dependence on authority and leadership through the lived experiences and ideas of participants.

As emphasized in this study, the aim was not to generalize or test a hypothesis but to explore social phenomena and their relationship in a specific social-cultural context. Though Hungary, as one of the post-Communist countries, shares some common features with neighboring states that have also experienced authoritarianism, it is a distinct environment and requires examination of the specific nuances of the Hungarian context. Its social and historical development, along with its organic social reproduction processes—including the patterns of interaction among citizens—has been shaped by complex social, historical, and cultural specificities that have evolved over the centuries.⁴

When developing a research proposal, Crotty (1998) suggested four key questions must be addressed: “What methods do we propose to use? What methodology governs our choice and use of methods? What theoretical perspective underlies the methodology in question? What epistemology informs this theoretical perspective?” (p. 2). Crotty (1998) also provided definitions for each of these concepts:

Methods: the techniques or procedures used to gather and analyse data related to some research question or hypothesis. Methodology: the strategy, plan of action, process or design lying behind the choice and use of particular methods and linking the choice and use of methods to the desired outcomes. Theoretical perspective: the philosophical stance informing the methodology and thus providing a context for the process and grounding its logic and criteria. Epistemology: the theory of knowledge embedded in the theoretical perspective and thereby in the methodology. (p 3)

⁴ Historians often refer to the thousand-year evolution of the Hungarian state and governance.

Throughout this chapter, details are provided about each element of this doctoral study.

Philosophical Considerations

Crotty (1998) discussed three major epistemologies: objectivism, constructionism, and subjectivism. Objectivism claims that “meaning, therefore meaningful reality, exists” (Crotty, 1998, p. 8). In contrast, constructionism argues that “truth or meaning comes into existence through our engagement with the realities of our world. Meaning is not discovered but constructed” (Crotty, 1998, pp. 8–9). Finally, subjectivism emphasizes that “meaning is imposed on the subject by the object” (Crotty, 1998, p. 9). This study was informed by a constructionist epistemology, recognizing that meaning and knowledge are constructed, and, as Crotty (1998) highlights, “different people may construct meaning in different ways, even in relation to the same phenomenon” (p. 9). The relationship between dependence on authority and leadership—as well as the concept of leadership itself—was not perceived and described uniformly by research participants. The way individuals assign meaning to these phenomena is influenced by their culture, socialization, and social context.

Epistemological and ontological perspectives are linked to the metatheories and paradigms that have evolved over time. Numerous approaches and classifications account for various theoretical and methodological perspectives; however, our assumptions and choices as researchers are tied to these major paradigms. Van de Ven (2007) stated that “whether explicit or implicit, we rely on a philosophy of science to interpret the meanings, logical relations, and consequences of our observational and theoretical statements” (p. 2). With this understanding, he proposed a broad classification that centers around four key philosophies of science: positivism, relativism, pragmatism, and realism. Larger theoretical frameworks are connected to these philosophies. As Van de Ven (2007) explained, positivism is based on an objective ontology and

epistemology—in other words, empirical reality. In contrast, relativism maintains a subjective ontology and epistemology, linking itself to a socially constructed reality and expressing skepticism about the “objective and impartial representation of social reality” (Van de Ven, 2007, p. 4). Pragmatism integrates more complex perspectives, wherein scholars may embrace objective or subjective ontology while adopting a subjective epistemology. Alternatively, realism is linked to an objective ontology and allows for both objective and subjective ways of knowing.

This doctoral research centered on how research participants assigned meaning to authority, dependence on authority, leadership, and the relationship between these constructs. Additionally, the study emphasized co-constructed knowledge and meaning making; participants reflected on and assigned meaning to the role of authority, dependence on authority, and leadership in Hungary based on their lived experiences. Consequently, this study aligned with the tradition of pragmatism and social constructionism.

In discussing the history of constructionism, Crotty (1998) noted that “the term ‘constructionism’, particularly ‘social constructionism’, derives largely from the work of Karl Mannheim (1893–1947) and from Berger and Luckmann’s *The Social Construction of Reality* (1967)” (p. 60). Crotty (1998) emphasized that the concept itself has roots in the works of Hegel and Marx. The author also referenced Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty to highlight that the world and objects are inherently meaningless; it is human beings who construct meaning.

Crotty (1998) argued that both objectivity and subjectivity are present in constructionism, asserting that “there is no true or valid interpretation” (p. 47). Social constructionism recognizes that the meanings people construct have a social origin, referring to Geertz’s concept of a “system of significant symbols” (Crotty, 1998, p. 53). As such, Crotty (1998) viewed culture as an “indispensable guide to human behavior” (p. 53). Additionally, Giddens’ idea of humans

making sense of the natural world without creating it is a fundamental principle of social constructionism (Crotty, 1998).

Crotty (1998) also distinguished between social constructionism, which focuses on “the social dimension of meaning,” and social constructivism, which centers on the “instrumental and practical function of theory construction and knowing” (p. 58). In this respect, constructivism has an individual orientation, while constructionism is a collective endeavor. The difference between individual meaning-making (constructivism) and the collective effort to generate meaning (constructionism) influences the research approach. As Crotty (1998) pointed out, social constructionism emphasizes the “hold our culture has on us: it shapes the way in which we see things” (p. 58).

This study—both in its approach and selected methods—was based on collective meaning-making and acknowledged the cultural and contextual factors that determine human behaviors and interpretations. Consequently, it was informed by social constructionist epistemology. Furthermore, the research approach aligned with social constructionism’s commitment to integrating the natural and social worlds. It acknowledged that authority relations and dependencies on authority are real (existing) phenomena while also asserting that social phenomena are rooted in social reality, context, culture, and the collective construction of meaning.

Additionally, this doctoral research was a community-engaged effort, emphasizing that knowledge is co-constructed rather than discovered (Crotty, 1998). The approach to community engagement was guided by Berger’s (2011) engagement types, with the goal of actively engaging with participants while examining social phenomena that influence mindsets and everyday social interactions. Throughout the study, participants shared their stories and

perspectives, both agreeing and disagreeing with one another. This process revealed multiple viewpoints on dependence on authority, reasons behind its prolonged presence, and consequences of these dependence mechanisms in the Hungarian context. Moreover, participants did not play the role of passive subjects of the research, but they were invited to engage in decision-making and determining the direction of the study.

Abductive Analysis as a Tool to Conceptualize the Unexplored

Tavory and Timmermans (2014) highlighted the challenges that traditional inductive and deductive approaches face:

Qualitative researchers navigate treacherous waters. On the starboard side lurks an overly descriptive account. The researcher gathers detailed narratives of people doing things, orders them according to broad themes, and lets the data speak for itself. Manuscripts by authors who succumb to this temptation are easily recognizable by long data excerpts interspersed with a few summary sentences that capture the gist of what the reader should pay attention to. Often the rudimentary taxonomy is preceded by a quick, almost embarrassed, venture into contemporary theory that has little relevance to the data presented...Equally problematic is the danger on the port side. The researcher aims to fit ideas into a predetermined theoretical account, usually developed by some en vogue theorist. Here the research serves either as a contemporary illustration of or, at best, a minimal twist on the account the great theorist has set out. When it is done well, there is an art to such writing, which integrates data snippets with dense theoretical exegesis. (pp. 7–8)

To navigate between the Scylla of conducting research without a guiding theoretical lens and the Charybdis of relying too heavily on a single theory, Tavory and Timmermans (2014) proposed

abductive analysis as an alternative. This method offers a more promising perspective for theory development and conceptualization. As Tavory and Timmermans (2014) explained:

Abductive analysis emphasizes that rather than setting all preconceived theoretical ideas aside during the research project, researchers should enter the field with the deepest and broadest theoretical base possible and develop their theoretical repertoires throughout the research process. Theoretical relevancy is not limited to analogy but flourishes with theory-close and -far writings that inspire novel insights. Instead of theories emerging from data, new concepts are developed to account for puzzling empirical materials. The methodological precepts of grounded theory can stimulate abductive reasoning through a process of revisiting, defamiliarizing, and alternative casing in light of theoretical knowledge. The surprise, puzzle, or anomaly that may trigger a novel theory then emerges methodologically through careful data analysis against a background of cultivated theoretical expertise. (p. 180)

In line with abduction, this study embraced multiple theories and frameworks rather than relying on one specific theory.

As a researcher, I immersed myself in various perspectives, giving particular attention to those focusing on authority and leadership. As detailed in Chapter 2, these included the adaptive leadership framework—which discusses authority, leadership, and dependence on authority—approaches to followership, the concepts of toxic leadership, and the cycle of socialization. Additionally, the study considered the notion of hybrid and illiberal regimes as defined in political science literature. Tavory and Timmermans (2014) explained:

Theory generation requires us to move away from our preconceived notions and to create new narratives about the phenomenon we are trying to explain. Abduction occurs when

we encounter observations that do not neatly fit existing theories and we find ourselves speculating about what the data plausibly could be a case of. (p. 12)

By moving back and forth between data and these theories and frameworks, while remaining open to surprising data, I was able to enhance conceptualization and theory development in line with the process described by Tavory and Timmermans (2014).

Tavory and Timmermans (2014) emphasized that abductive analysis serves as a complement to both induction and grounded theory:

Recently some researchers have argued that because of the purported emphasis on generating new theory, grounded theory is epistemologically much closer to what pragmatist scientist-philosopher Charles S. Pierce called abduction: a central concept in his theory of logic and inference that denotes the creative production of hypotheses based on surprising evidence (Coffey and Atkinson 1996; Haig 1995; Kelle 2007; Locke 2007; Reihertz 2007; Strubing 2007. These authors, however, are mostly concerned with elaborating the place that abduction plays within the grounded theory project. (p. 168)

Tavory and Timmermans (2014) highlighted how these authors prioritized induction over abduction, which was considered secondary in the development of theory. For example, Charmaz (2009) noted that:

Grounded theory begins with inductive analyses of data but moves beyond induction to create imaginative interpretations of the studied life. We adopt abductive logic when we engage in imaginative thinking about intriguing findings and then return to the field to verify our conjectures. (pp. 137–138).

Alternatively, Tavory and Timmermans (2014) described the process through which new concepts and theories are developed using abductive analysis:

An abductive inference involves making a preliminary guess based on the interplay between existing theories and data when anomalies or unexpected findings occur. If the existing theories fully account for the empirical phenomena, the researcher has simply verified an existing theory. As the examples of Vaughan and Timmermans show, however, pushing the data against existing theories will likely identify changed circumstances, additional dimensions, or misguided preconceptions. Anomalies, which are inevitably both empirical and theoretical, then require the development of tentative new theories built on inductive conceptualization of this data through intensive coding and other methodological steps. (p. 179)

Timmermans and Tavory (2012) also provided guidance regarding the research methods in abductive analysis, stating that “meticulous field note writing, interview transcription, and systematic archival work help the researcher bring anomalous findings into sharper relief and thus open the grounds for theorization. So do systematically coding observations and writing memos on emerging insights” (p. 57). The authors added, “Thus a third function of qualitative methods in the context of theory construction stems from the researcher’s revisiting of recorded phenomena in light of existing theoretical accounts” (p. 65).

The research methods used in this study aligned with Timmermans and Tavory’s (2012) perspective, including two cycles of coding methods, analytic memo writing, returning to recorded video sessions, and reading through the focus group interview transcripts multiple times. When considering data against the multiple theories and frameworks, I applied the guiding question of: “What is this data a case of?” (Timmermans & Tavory, 2012, p. 11). Entering the research with a comprehensive understanding of relevant theories and comparing observations

and collected data against these frameworks helped uncover new insights and led to meaningful conceptualization.

Research Design

Participant Selection

The selection of participants for the two focus group interviews was guided by Charmaz's (2014) principles for intensive interviewing: "In short, researchers use intensive interviewing to study specific topics about which the research participant has had substantial experience. During the interview, the participant talks; the interviewer encourages, listens, and learns" (p. 135). She emphasized that participant selection should be based on individuals' firsthand experiences relevant to the research theme or problem, with the aim of conducting an "in-depth exploration of participants' experiences" (p. 135). As emphasized earlier, this research was community-engaged, and research participant selection criteria included (a) well-qualified intellectuals (b) with conversational English language skills (c) who spent at least 10 years of their lives studying or working in Hungary. These criteria ensured that participants had been exposed to various authority contexts and possessed the essential firsthand experience, as noted by Charmaz (2014). Good command of English was critical as the research was conducted in English. Conducting the research in English brought both advantages and disadvantages. One significant advantage was the availability of technological tools, such as Zoom transcription, which made the research process more efficient. This eliminated the need to spend long hours translating Hungarian transcripts into English while ensuring that the authentic voices of the research participants were preserved. Additionally, the use of English allowed for a clear distinction between leadership and authority, which can be complicated in Hungarian due to the lack of separate terms for these concepts. However, it is important to note that while participants

were required to have a conversational or good command of English, proficiency in a foreign language could still pose challenges for precise expression and proactivity during discussions.

Charmaz (2014) referenced other scholars, such as Bowen, who argue that a small sample size can yield rich data, especially given the length of the interviews:

In this sampling strategy, the researcher does not seek ‘generalizability’ or ‘representativeness’ and therefore focuses less on sample size and more on sampling adequacy. Sample size is important only as it relates to judging the extent to which issues of saturation have been carefully considered. (p. 140)

Taking into account the criteria highlighted above, 13 participants were selected.

Spillman (2014) highlights the distinction between empirical and theoretical generalizability and representativeness, noting that a small sample size can never achieve statistical representativeness. However, this study aimed to enhance the diversity of the sample by including participants with varied backgrounds, demographics, and experiences. This diversity encompassed geographical location, different levels of experience and career trajectories, the various sectors represented by participants, and demographic differences including: age, gender, social status, and ethnicity, were also taken into consideration in participants’ selection (Table 3.1).

Table 3.1. Participant Demographics

Demographic Characteristic	n
Age	
20–39 years	5
40–60 years	8
Gender	
Female	5
Male	8
Ethnicity	

Hungarian (living in Hungary)	10
Hungarian (living outside of Hungary)	2
Ethnic Minority (living in Hungary)	1
Sexuality	
Lesbian, Gay, or Bisexual	1
Straight	12

Alongside snowball sampling (i.e., referrals from focus group interview participants), the social media platform Facebook was utilized to identify potential participants, and their email contact details were used to invite them to participate in the research. Charmaz (2014) highlighted that the goal of qualitative inquiry is not to generalize findings but to conduct an in-depth exploration that allows for a smaller sample size. According to Charmaz (2014), even ten interviews can generate meaningful content. Following Charmaz's guidelines, this research involved two cohorts of participants, each partaking in two rounds of two-hour focus group interviews, which provided substantial data for analysis.

Research Site

Because of the geographical distance between participants and me and the practical need to record and transcribe the focus group interviews, Zoom Workplace was chosen as the platform for the focus group interviews. Most participants were physically located in Hungary and joined the session via Zoom. All four focus group interviews were video and audio recorded using the Zoom platform provided by Kansas State University IT Services. I played the role of facilitator of the discussion, joining the Zoom call from Manhattan, Kansas (except for the first two interviews, when I was in Hungary). Despite the distance, Zoom enabled participants to connect, share, and build upon one another's ideas and experiences. This collective meaning-making

process and the effort to collaboratively shape the research were central to the engaged research approach.

Membership Role

As outlined in the subjectivity statement below, I played the role of an active facilitator throughout the doctoral research, maintaining communication with participants and sharing preliminary findings after the interviews. In the second round of the focus group interviews, conceptual directions were proposed but with enough flexibility to allow participants to influence the direction of the research. I facilitated semi-structured focus group interviews with considerable flexibility, guiding discussions toward the themes of authority, dependence on authority, and leadership, while remaining mindful of the research questions.

My first-hand experience in strong authority contexts made me an insider, allowing me to ask the right follow-up questions after a participant shared an important insight. Participants were reminded of the research purpose to ensure the interview remained on track. Additionally, due to the community-engaged approach, participants had ample opportunity for joint meaning-making, where each participant was an authentic insider. As a researcher, I was part of the focus group discussion. There were no right or wrong answers, nor did we seek desired responses. This approach and the holding environment helped surface new insights. The focus group interviews served as a platform for community-engaged research, where participants were committed to exploring social phenomena and examining them in relation to the research purpose and questions.

Data Collection Methods

Data collection methods of this study was informed by Charmaz's (2014) "intensive interviewing" (p. 132) method. The author defined intensive interviewing as "a gently guided,

one-sided conversation that explores research participants' perspective on their personal experience with the research topic" (Charmaz, 2014, p. 135). Charmaz (2014) further explained that "intensive interviews focus on research participants' statements about their experience, how they portray this experience, and what it means to them, as they indicate during the interview" (p. 138). In discussing intensive interviewing, Charmaz (2014) highlighted the advantages of this method, as well as its broad applicability:

Open-ended yet directed, shaped yet emergent, and paced yet unrestricted. Researchers choose intensive interviewing because it allows for an open-ended, in-depth exploration of an area in which the interviewee has substantial experience. Intensive interviewing narrows the focus while providing the interactive space and time for the research participants' views and insights to emerge. (pp. 186–187).

These intensive interviews were designed based on the single/remote focus group interview data collection method using the Zoom Workplace video conferencing software. In total, there were 13 participants in this study, and they were divided into two cohorts for the two rounds of two-hour focus group interviews. The first cohort included five participants while the second interview had eight participants. The interviews followed a semi-structured format and were loosely facilitated. Prior to the second round, participants received a briefing and a brief presentation highlighting initial analysis. Based on initial codes and categories, they were invited to shape the direction of the upcoming focus group interview and, thus, the research. Both Zoom sessions were video and audio recorded and transcribed for analysis. With the limitations of the virtual sessions, data collection included observations of participant dynamics and reactions during the interviews.

During the focus group interview sessions, participants engaged in collaborative meaning-making by (a) building upon each other's points; (b) sharing their lived experiences and ideas; and (c) actively listening, asking questions, and making follow-up comments. The primary interview questions (Appendix B) explored participants' understanding of and feelings towards authority and leadership, as well as their perceptions of the role of authority within the Hungarian context compared to the Western world. After providing a brief explanation of what dependence on authority means, participants were asked to share their personal experiences with this dependence and to reflect on its reasons and consequences. In the second phase of the focus group interviews, participants elaborated and reflected in depth on the themes that emerged during the first round. They also shared their lived experiences regarding leadership and how exercising authority, along with dependence on authority, influences the practice of leadership in the Hungarian context.

Data Management and Analysis

In discussing the research process, Bhattacharya (2017) emphasized the significance of data management and analysis: "Data management is the process through which the researcher manages a large volume of data. Often this process could include chunking small analytic units from the larger body of raw data for closer analysis" (p. 231). Bhattacharya (2017) described data analysis as "a messy process, so the outcomes of these processes are often messy and unstable" (p. 36). The author noted that "data analysis involves creating processes that allow for deep insights that reflect how the researcher integrated theoretical and analytical frameworks, previous understanding of literature and the focus of the research purpose and questions" (Bhattacharya, 2017, p. 231). Guided by the research purpose and questions and community engagement, research participants and I focused on the participants' experiences and ideas

related to the role of authority and dependence on authority in the context of leadership in Hungary. Research methods incorporated analytic memo writing, transcribing, and two cycle coding.

This study also benefited from Timmermans and Tavory's (2012) recommendations to defamiliarize and revisit observations.

Abduction emerges from the relationship between multiple theoretically cultivated ways of seeing the world and the resistance of the object. Whereas theories allow us to initially see a phenomenon in interesting ways, methods are designed to first defamiliarize the field and then allow us to revisit the same observation again and again in light of new theorizations. (p. 64)

Timmermans and Tavory (2012) defined qualitative data analysis as the "process of meaning-making" (p. 29). As Bhattacharya (2017) highlighted, "there should be adequate depth and justification to detail how one was able to identify findings in one's study" (p. 231). In other words, although there are various approaches researchers can take in qualitative inquiry, the pathway to findings should be transparent and well-established.

Saldana (2021) foregrounded the wide range of approaches to qualitative data analysis, noting that coding is just one of these approaches. Saldana (2021) defined a code as a "word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data" (p. 5). Researchers should consider their research questions, frameworks, and designs, which are often context specific. He further explained that the decision to use coding or not is influenced by individual beliefs and value systems (Saldana, 2021). Depending on the research design, the data analysis process can include

not only coding but also categorizing and thematizing. In abduction, conceptualization advances the data analysis towards theory generation.

Coding was identified as an initial step in qualitative data analysis, and this research employed both first- and second-cycle coding. First-cycle coding in qualitative research is typically more detailed, ranging from coding a single word to coding entire paragraphs. Second-cycle coding supports conceptualization by fine-tuning initial codes and developing categories. The process of first-cycle coding was followed by categorization. As Saldana (2021) emphasized, “coding enables you to organize and group similarly coded data into categories” (p. 13). From this coding process, themes and concepts emerged, allowing for more abstract levels of data analysis and advancing the research towards theory development. This study utilized the NVivo qualitative data analysis software for first-cycle coding. Second-cycle coding, categorization, and theme development was based on manual coding.

During the first and second cycles of coding, the study developed an analytical lens that facilitated the transition from codes to categories and conceptualization. Charmaz (2014) further explained, “Coding full transcriptions can bring you to a deeper level of understanding” (p. 176). The purpose of this doctoral research was to explore the Hungarian context and participants’ lived experiences, specifically examining the role of authority and dependence on authority in relation to leadership in Hungary. Before coding the collected data, considerable time was spent comparing video recordings with transcriptions to ensure that the text accurately reflected the participants’ speech. The qualitative data analysis included moving between codes, categories, and themes and the theories and frameworks outlined in Chapter 2.

The current study utilized in vivo coding as the first-cycle method and focused coding as the second-cycle method. Saldana (2021) categorized in vivo coding as one of the “generic

coding methods” (p. 96) and described it as drawing “from the participant’s own language for codes” (p. 129). This feature makes in vivo coding particularly suitable for “action, participatory and practitioner research” (Saldana, 2021, p. 138). Charmaz (2014) summarized the benefits of in vivo coding as “help[ing] us to preserve participants’ meanings of their views and actions in the coding itself. *Pay attention to language while you are coding. In vivo* codes serve as symbolic markers of participants’ speech and meanings” (p. 173, emphasis in original).

Additionally, Charmaz (2014) noted that “*in vivo* codes can provide a crucial check on whether you have grasped what is significant” (p. 276, emphasis in original). Since this research was community-engaged, it was essential to highlight the language used by participants. In vivo coding allowed for the preservation of how participants genuinely discussed authority, leadership, and dependence on authority. Another deliberate methodological choice that helped maintain the authenticity of participants’ voices was the use of transcripts for the two-cycle coding process: the transcripts included the exact language participants used, capturing their word choices, repetitions, and grammatical errors without any corrections.

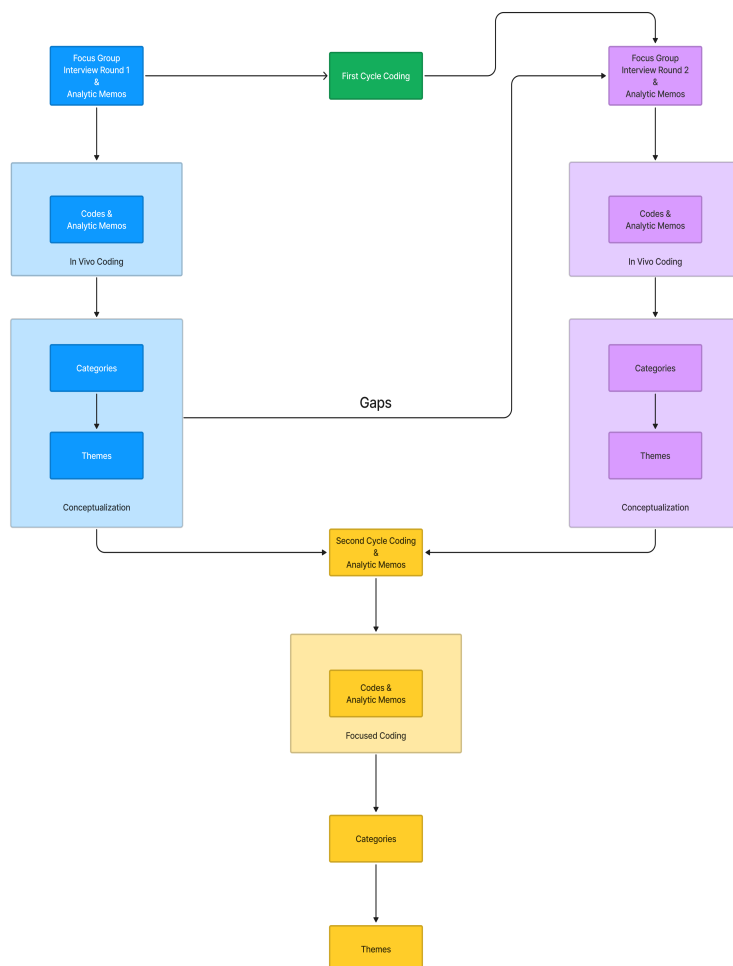
Saldana (2021) highlighted the significance of transitioning from first-cycle to second-cycle coding, outlining data management techniques such as code mapping and landscaping. Both techniques facilitate the organization of codes generated during the first cycle of coding. After the first cycle of coding, code mapping was employed to transition the data (codes) into categories. Code mapping helped cluster codes that converged in meaning or shared attributes.

Saldana (2021) underlined the importance of focused coding as a second-cycle coding method in grounded theory as it “searches for the most frequent or significant codes to develop the most salient categories in the data corpus” (p. 303). Charmaz (2014) elaborated that focused coding mobilizes the researcher to identify codes with analytical relevance by emphasizing:

Focused coding means using the most significant and/or frequent earlier codes to sift through and analyze large amounts of data. Focused coding requires decisions about which initial codes make the most analytic sense to categorize your data incisively and completely. (p. 283)

Conceptualization during the second cycle (focused coding) involved selecting codes that had analytical significance and forming the framework, while the codes and their relationships represented participants' ideas fitting into this analytical structure. Figure 3.1 summarizes the coding process followed in this study.

Figure 3.1. Data Analysis Process



This study adhered to Charmaz's (2014) advice to: “remain open to seeing what you can learn while coding and where it can take you. Make efforts to learn and examine how your past influences the way you see the world and your data” (p. 246).

Saldana (2021) noted that “coding and analytic memo writing are concurrent qualitative data analytic activities” (p. 58). The author described analytic memos as “somewhat comparable to researcher journal entries or blogs—a place to ‘dump your brain’ about the participants, phenomenon, or process under investigation by thinking and thus writing, and thus thinking even more about them” (p. 58). Saldana (2021) considered all memos to be analytic, regardless of their content, as they support the data analysis process and contribute to conceptualization. For clarity, Saldana distinguished analytic memos from field notes, stating that analytic memos are an integral part of data analysis.

The memo, reflections, and journaling process began early in the research, even while considering the focus group interview process. Memos incorporated notes taken during the two rounds of focus group interviews, as well as the coding process and conceptualization. The memo-writing process included focused reflections while coding and making sense of the relations of the codes. Other times (e.g., while driving), reflections emerged spontaneously, prompting me to jot down ideas in the quickest way possible. Analytic memos and reflections played a critical role in conceptualization and in understanding the relationships and analytical relevance of codes and categories. Occasionally, they also included questions regarding the coding or the context behind specific codes and categories. Furthermore, memos helped identify gaps during data collection, leading to better preparation for the second round of focus group interviews.

Data Re-Presentation

Bhattacharya (2017) outlined essential steps in the research process following data analysis, emphasizing that:

Interpretation of qualitative research involves developing narratives about the ways in which the researcher is co-constructing meaning with her participants. Often this involves analyzing data, looking within various chunks of data, identifying analytical insights and reflecting on the insights gained through some narrative format. These narrative formats are often rich, thick with contextual details, and help illuminate ideas about the topic the researcher is investigating. Then when the researcher represents these insights, an alignment with various parts of the study (epistemology, ontology, theoretical framework, methodology, literature review, etc.) becomes necessary to maintain rigor in a study. (p. 244)

Bhattacharya (2017) introduced the term “re-presentation” to emphasize that researchers present the perspectives shared by participants (p. 245). She explained:

I say re-presentations because the participants’ stories are re-presentations of what they told you during the interviews. You are not really able to represent anyone in his/her truest form. The best you can do is re-present the information shared with you while collaborating with the participant to co-construct the findings of the study. (p. 245)

The author discussed both traditional and non-traditional methods for re-presenting data, listing various forms of re-presentation, including “thematic descriptions” (p. 245). Bhattacharya also offered guidance on data re-presentation, recommending that researchers keep their choices simple and focus on showing rather than merely telling participants’ narratives.

This study employed thematic descriptions to explore the phenomena of authority, dependence on authority, leadership and their relationship by integrating information collected from the data (p. 246). The first cycle of coding employed the in vivo coding method, which proved valuable in preserving participants' authentic voices and language (Saldana, 2021). By utilizing participants' terminology and ideas while highlighting conceptual connections, key themes were presented as research findings and discussed within the Hungarian context. This approach effectively re-presented how the role of authority and dependence on authority manifested in the lived experiences of the research participants in Hungary. Additionally, Bhattacharya (2017) highlighted the advantages of using visual representation in research:

Use as many visual forms of re-presentations of your data analysis and findings as would be appropriate and necessary. Even though qualitative researchers like stories and narratives, visual display of data in the form of tables, diagrams, maps, and models offer tremendous clarity to the reader. (p. 250, emphasis in original)

This study incorporated visual re-presentations to make the data self-explanatory. Such visual re-presentation of findings helped illuminate conceptual relationships among themes, making sense of social phenomena.

Ethical Considerations

In qualitative research, McKinnon et al. (2016) emphasized the importance of reflecting “on the relationship between ourselves as researchers, the people we study, and broader communities implicated or impacted by those we study” (p. 9). In addition to complying with the Institutional Review Board (IRB) guidelines and the European General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR), I considered this perspective when addressing ethics in this research project. To adhere to international, institutional, and ethical standards, including both U.S. and

European data protection rules, the doctoral research proposal was reviewed by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Kansas State University. As data was collected in Hungary, with Hungarian citizens participating in the research, this study was classified as international research. Therefore, compliance with both IRB regulations and GDPR was required.

Additionally, this study employed a community-engaged approach, fostering a non-hierarchical relationship between the me and participants. I had no intention of imposing any interpretations of themes discussed in the study (e.g., during the focus group interviews, multiple interpretations were encouraged). Following Charmaz's (2014) guidance, all rounds of interviews were gently facilitated, allowing participants to shape the direction and content of the focus group discussions.

To address potential concerns related to data collection in Hungary, I took measures to ensure anonymity and confidentiality throughout the study. Before the initial focus group interview, participants were informed about the ground rules of participation and interactions. This included the establishment of a safe space (holding environment), where participants were asked to commit to keeping the stories, and lived experiences shared confidential. These ground rules were presented in all interview rounds. To further ensure and maintain confidentiality, I assigned random numbers to participants and referred to as Participant 1, Participant 2, and so on, throughout the study. Since participants were recruited via social media, using pseudonyms could have revealed their genders, which I intended to avoid. Additionally, in this study, I used XY to de-identify data that could jeopardize confidentiality. Furthermore, to ensure data security, all data were de-identified and stored in a password-protected folder and laptop. Data will be permanently deleted three years after the completion of the research.

Researcher Subjectivity

Bhattacharya (2017) highlighted the importance of understanding various “subject positions” (p. 65) in defining subjectivity, stating that “each of these positions is connected to specific discourses of what it means for you to be connected to those labels or subject positions” (p. 65). Bhattacharya (2017) emphasized the need for researchers to acknowledge their assumptions while conducting qualitative research. In the same vein, Peshkin (1988) noted that “researchers should systematically seek out their subjectivity, not retrospectively when the data have been collected and the analysis is complete, but while their research is actively in progress” (p. 17). By following this approach, researchers can effectively manage their subjectivities.

Following Peshkin’s (1988) advice, I acknowledge my assumptions and subjectivity in the self-reflection statement below. The selection of my doctoral research theme is influenced by my, sometimes bitter, lived experiences in Hungary, which are closely tied to strong authority relations and structures. Growing up in Hungary, behind the Berlin Wall, I experienced strong authority structures and interactions, including power dynamics, psychological pressure, public humiliation, judgment, scapegoating, demanding expectations, and the need to express loyalty to authority. These elements were present in my life, either directly or through the stories shared by those around me. People lived under both political and mental oppression.

This began in schools, where oral assignments—memorizing and recalling information in front of the class—created extraordinary psychological pressure and often led to public humiliation. Without consciously developing a strategy or repertoire of behaviors, I tried to navigate these social interactions and structures. In most situations, I felt intimidated and uncomfortable. Depending on the context—especially when experiencing injustice, which was often the case—I also felt fear and anger. My internalization of these situations was paradoxical;

I witnessed my parents' actions, the way they raised taboos (as well as the consequences they faced) and confronted people in power or position, while I was a conflict avoider and understood early on that confronting authority could come at a high cost. For instance, my father had his passport revoked after he criticized the Communist Party, and my mother spent a few days in prison for stating that "people in the United States lived a better life than those in the Soviet Union."

The lesson I learned early on was that, when dealing with someone in a hierarchical relationship, it was safer to comply with what I was told or expected to do. Otherwise, I faced severe consequences. I was not alone in this socialization; I grew up in a context where people were taught to remain silent, hold back, and follow the instructions of authority figures, often sharing their criticisms only behind their backs. I am still uncertain whether the situations I faced, the suppressed anger I experienced, or my parents' examples (or a combination of these) motivated me to move beyond a defensive role (which was a mainstream social pattern), step up, and challenge expectations. Nonetheless, I occasionally confronted these authority structures and dynamics, which often resulted in intense conflicts and led to my marginalization.

I came to a harsh realization about the meaning of dependence on authority during my leadership journey, which began seventeen years ago. While studying at Harvard Kennedy School, I encountered concepts that helped me understand my own mechanisms of dependence and make sense of my past experiences in the Hungarian context. The experiences described above, along with my observations, motivated me to engage Hungarian citizens in an in-depth exploration of the relationship between the role of authority, the dependence on authority, and exercising leadership in Hungary. When I use the term "strong authority," I do not intend to undermine the importance of authority in providing protection, direction, and order, as discussed

by Heifetz et al. (2009). Having served in various authoritative positions myself, I recognize this critical social function. Instead, I am referring to a hierarchical relationship or interaction where authority exerts power to impose their will on others or compel others to comply with their wishes. As described in Chapter 2, this form of toxic relationship can be viewed as “counterfeit leadership” (Williams, 2005, p. IX) or “pseudotransformational leadership” (Northouse, 2021, p. 181).

In addition to my first-hand experience in a strong-authority context, I also find it important to highlight my background as a researcher. I am a white male, Hungarian citizen with a dual identity (Greek and Hungarian), and Catholic, and the cultural-academic context I am coming from values positivist research. My choice of research topic stemmed not only from my curiosity to learn about the similar and different experiences of others, which can help us better understand the reasons behind dependence and its potential consequences for all of us in Hungary. As a leadership scholar and practitioner, I was also motivated to contribute to leadership capacity building that results in mindset change in my homeland, Hungary. I aimed to assist my fellow Hungarian citizens in confronting their adaptive challenges rather than waiting for authorities to address these on their behalf.

Chapter Summary

This chapter outlined the research approach, methodological considerations, and research design. It emphasizes that qualitative inquiry provides an opportunity for an in-depth exploration of the relationship between authority, dependence on authority and leadership in an East-Central European context. The research approach was informed by social constructionism, which allowed the meaning of studied phenomena to be co-constructed. Furthermore, a community-engaged approach was employed, with participants having an opportunity to shape the direction

of the research and sharing their lived experiences and perspectives related to authority and dependence on authority in relation to leadership. Abductive analysis as a methodological approach was also utilized to facilitate data-driven conceptualization by moving back and forth between data and theories while asking the question: “What is this data a case of?” (Timmermans & Tavory, 2012, p. 11). This process included writing analytic memos, transcribing interviews, and completing two cycles of coding transcribed focus group interviews.

This chapter also discussed the research design. Participant selection was based on the participants’ competence and lived experiences in a strong authority context (i.e., Hungary) and their good command of English. Thirteen participants attended the semi-structured focus group interviews conducted using the Zoom Workplace video conferencing platform. As the researcher, I played an active facilitator role. Data collection was based on single remote focus group interviews, with two rounds of two-hour focus group interviews. Chapter 3 also detailed data management and analysis, highlighting that first-cycle coding employed the *in vivo* coding method, followed by focused coding in the second cycle of coding. Finally, ethical considerations were addressed, including a detailed positionality statement. The next chapter presents the findings of the study.

Chapter 4 - Findings

This study examined the relationship between authority, dependence on authority, and leadership within the specific context of Hungary, with the aspiration to address three scholarly challenges: (a) situating authority within leadership theory, (b) moving beyond a leader-centric perspective by focusing on participants' lived experiences at the micro-level as well as the specific context, and (c) overcoming “Western bias” by investigating the relationship of authority, dependence on authority, and leadership in an East-Central European context (Dugan, 2017, p. 135). The doctoral research was guided by the following research questions:

1. How do participants describe and make sense of authority, dependence on authority, and leadership in the Hungarian context?
2. What factors do participants describe as having an impact on the dependence on authority in the Hungarian context?
3. From participants' experiences, in what ways do authority and dependence on authority affect leadership?

This chapter will employ analytical aspects—based on the research questions and emerging themes—to summarize key findings. It is essential to note that the analytic aspects employed here, as well as the concepts, are interconnected and can be examined from various perspectives. Most frequent codes and categories broken down by cohort and focus group interview round are presented in Figure 4.1.

Figure 4.1. Frequency of Codes and Categories by Cohort and Focus Group Interview Round

Most Frequently Occurring Codes			Most Frequently Occurring Categories		
Group	Code	Occurrences	Group	Category	Occurrences
CH1FG1	Good leaders work for common good not personal gains	6	CH1FG1	Authority lived experience: negative	35
	Authority described: negative	5		The way authority is exercised: negative	29
	Authority: Fear	4		Dependence on authority	23
	Good leaders use authority	4			
Group	Code	Occurrences	Group	Category	Occurrences
CH1FG2	Working in public sector negative	6	CH1FG2	Hungarian education: negative	18
	Leaders/Authority must show dominance/authority	5		The way authority is exercised: negative	12
	Distrust in authority	3		Authority lived experience: negative	8
	Hungary needs people with international experience	3			
Group	Code	Occurrences	Group	Category	Occurrences
CH2FG1	Authority: negative connotation	6	CH2FG1	The way authority is exercised: negative	29
	Authority at the local level more humane	6		The way authority is described: negative	25
	Leadership and authority hard to differentiate	5		Challenging authority risky with negative consequences	15
Group	Code	Occurrences	Group	Category	Occurrences
CH2FG2	People are scared to speak up	7	CH2FG2	The way authority is exercised: negative	25
	Hungary: we tend to blame the victim	7		Dependence on authority	19
	Current situation in Hungary: more stressful, tensions, frustration	6		Hungary compared to International environment	13

Describing Authority and Leadership

Authority: “Don’t Ask Questions. Just Follow.”

When reflecting on the question, “What comes to mind when you hear the word ‘authority’?” most participants associated authority with a negative connotation based on their lived experiences. Even when a participant stated they had no issues with authority, others responded with cynical smiles. They used terms such as “hierarchical,” “rigid,” “commands,” “strict,” “rules,” “cruel,” “forced,” “control,” and “cold” to describe their perceptions. Participant 1 explained their view as follows: “My experience shows or or my feeling and my story shows that authority, if you use the word like that, there’s usually a negative thing a pejorative, so a negative word, at least in Eastern Europe.” Participant 3 similarly described authority as:

So, I believe also it has a negative connotation. But I think it is because of, my experience, with authority before...and I would add that, in my experience and belief,

there's when there is a formal authority, there's little or no space for challengers or for rebels or, for feedback. So. And again, it's all based on my own experience.

Reflecting on the Hungarian reality, Participant 6 reiterated the same idea: "I mean, this mindset of this is how things are done around here, and don't ask questions. Just follow." Participant 7 elaborated further, stating:

Very, very, very, bad, very, very negative. It's a kind of, not not like sexual abuse, if it would be an existing notion of power abuse. I feel permanently. 20/24 a day. The abuse with power. Oversized and over exercised power. By this central power.

Participant 7's perspective on central power aligned with others, suggesting that authority in Hungary is deeply intertwined with hierarchy, control over lower levels, and the state and police. As Participant 1 emphasized:

And this means that there is a hierarchical system in which the people who are standing on on higher grounds so to say in the hierarchy or hierarchical he or you bring the hierarchy levels have the authority to to force their will upon the whole system below them and obviously it also means that the higher up someone is in the hierarchy the larger control the certain person has over the whole hierarchical structure, or the whole system.

Upon reflecting on the term "authority," two participants connected it to state and the police.

Participant 12 provided further elaboration, stating:

So when I hear the word authorities, I think of, okay. On the one hand, State. But also, for example, law enforcement. And I think most of us in Hungary, when we hear the word authorities, we think of Police, for example. And of something like control.

Power was also mentioned by some participants as they discussed their experiences with authority figures, including teachers, police officers, and supervisors at work. Participant 4

provided a brief response to the first interview question: “I’ll be short. Power. That’s it.”

Participant 2 reiterated: “Power. Yeah. Actually, when I was thinking about your question like, yes, I think this means power over somebody”. Examples of participants’ lived experiences shown below illustrate what the labels assigned by participants to the concept of authority mean in practice.

Leadership: “Leading with Example”

In contrast to authority, leadership was described as a positive phenomenon. Participants envisioned it as a more supportive role, incorporating phrases such as “leading with example,” “good attitude,” “good examples,” “respect,” “righteousness,” and the role of “facilitation.”

Participant 10 stated, “For me Generally speaking, it’s a positive it has a positive vibe. I’m trying to improve myself. Because. To become a good leader as possible. And I think I’m on the right track.” Participant 11 shared a similar perspective, emphasizing the connection between leadership and management: “So by leadership, I would mean management. And what I think about it, is kind of a good thing.” Several participants highlighted the importance of competence, knowledge, and being a positive role model when describing leadership. As Participant 13 noted:

For me, leadership means competence. And knowledge. Previously you mentioned authority, that would mean lack of knowledge and primarily lack of competence. And if I see from a political viewpoint Kossuth Lajos or Nagy Imre were leaders. So, they represent leadership, and, for example, Kadar Janos or Orban Viktor are more authoritarian, so they represent authority. That’s it.

Participant 3 emphasized, “And so I would say leading with example. Sort of what you know what comes to my mind when I hear leadership”. Participant 4 added, “Leadership is necessary in any organization. It’s a part of any hierarchy, and in a hierarchy the leadership also has some

authority.” Participant 5 distinguished between good and bad leadership, saying, “Hmm. So, The good leaders directs the country. But, not a, a dictator. I, And, there was for example , King Matthias. He, he was famous about the the righteousness.” The quotes above illustrate the qualities and characteristics of a leader, aligning with a leader-centric perspective on leadership. Participant 2 emphasized semantics when they stated:

If I go back to the two terms, and I try to translate them into Hungarian, in my mind, if I say the word “vezetőség”, it also has a negative connotation. And this comes from my childhood or from my parents’ experience. While in English leadership for me if I say authority and leadership, leadership definitely has a more positive connotation it has definitely a better meaning and that’s why you know within a company we talked about, leadership or management, actually they prefer now leadership.

Authority and Leadership: “Cannot Exist Without Each Other”

Participants assigned different labels and feelings to the concept of leadership, but they all emphasized the interconnectedness and inseparability of authority and leadership. They highlighted the challenge of distinguishing between the two concepts. As Participant 1 stated, “These two things so authority and leadership cannot exist without each other.” Participant 2 added that “it has to have a kind of authority because otherwise there is chaos.” Participant 10 observed, “I think they the two, come hand in hand, and there can be good and bad examples with...But they are definitely totally connected for me.”

Leadership as Positional Authority: “Good Leaders Use Authority”

This connectedness between authority and leadership did not only appear in the code frequency, wherein the highest frequency of codes included “good leaders use authority,” “leaders/authority must show dominance/authority,” or “leadership and authority hard to

differentiate.” The intertwined nature of the two also emerged in the references identifying the functions of authority as leadership. This resulted in a total of 16 identifiable references. Furthermore, participant observations revealed that individuals often referred to leadership using attributes of positional authority, even after the concepts of leadership and authority had been clearly distinguished during the preliminary debriefing and the second focus group interviews. For example, Participant 1 described his mid-level authority role by saying, “A small department was put under my leadership.”

Dependence on Authority and Factors Impacting Dependence on Authority in the Hungarian Context

Three-Dimensional Perspective of Dependence and the Key Role of Authority on Dependence

Participants drew from their lived experiences to make sense of dependence on authority, describing various forms of dependence mechanisms within the Hungarian context. Dependence on authority was discussed extensively in three dimensions: (a) as individual characteristics; (b) as a consequence of the way authority is exercised, which includes an inability to challenge it; and (c) as a collective social attitude/heritage. It is important to emphasize that the second dimension—which describes authority’s role in dependence—was found to be a direct contributing factor to dependence on authority. Table 4.2 summarizes the number of codes classified within each category.

Table 4.1. Three-Dimensional Dependence on Authority

	Dependence Context		
	Dependence as Individual Characteristics	Dependence as Result of the Way Authority is Exercised	Dependence as Collective Social Attitude
Number of Codes	16	29	19

Description of the forms of dependence mechanisms included (a) holding back, (b) bystandership, (c) not speaking up, and (d) shifting/avoiding responsibility that often entails blaming others/scapegoating. In the first dimension, which focused on individual characteristics, participants noted the need for individuals to be told what to do. Participant 9 recounted an experience while working on a project in Hungary that highlighted the tendency to shift or avoid responsibility:

I wanted to discuss with them. So, I came from I don't know university. and and I thought we should discuss certain ways of development even and and then we can decide together which is the best to choose and how to do it. And then there was one person who kept on thinking with me, and and was supportive in this case in this term. and had very good ideas. He was very active, and and also he could he could generate many new ideas as well. And there was another guy an older person, elderly student person close to retirement. And he told me that he cannot think about it. You are the leader. You need to decide. Why are you asking me? This was his attitude.

Participant 9 added: "Some people expect orders. And they want to have have clear orders and clear tasks. and that's simple for them. And they are satisfied with that."

Participant 8 also highlighted that avoiding and shifting responsibility is always easier: "If a person could choose a responsibility, if theirs or mine the responsibility or I can give to someone else. That's the easiest way to give to someone else." Participant 3 reiterated:

And the dependence on authority comes when they proposed this idea to the the boss, who was like the both of the Hungarian. Group and he said, I really don't want to deal with this And he passed on the message to the the bigger boss, so kind of like, you know, reflecting responsibility, and and just pass it to to the next level.

As discussed in Chapter 3, data collection involved making observations, and a key pattern that occurred throughout the focus group interviews involved several instances of participant silence. In these moments, I addressed the silence by reiterating or reframing questions and encouraging more active participation. However, the reasons for the silence remained unclear. One participant was mostly silent, even after prompting and encouragement. Another participant, who did not speak during the first part of the initial interview, remarked, “Yes, sure I, I have a lot of mind. Lot of thoughts in my mind. Just I’m a bit shy.” In my attempts to engage participants in joint decision-making, some limitations were encountered. During the second round of focus group interviews, participants listened as I shared findings from the first round and proposed directions for further discussion. However, all except for one participant remained silent when asked if there were additional ideas, themes, or directions to explore in the second focus group interview. In this context, the reliance on me as the researcher, whom the participants regarded as the expert or authority, made the community-engaged research more challenging.

Dependence on authority was pronounced at a systemic level, with participants connecting mechanisms of dependence to the way authority is exercised and the social dynamics, highlighting collective attitudes. A primary aspect of the participants’ lived experiences regarding dependence on authority was related to the existential and social fears instilled by that authority. Their descriptions emphasized the way in which authority is exercised (discussed further later in this chapter) as a key factor contributing to this dependence in the Hungarian context. A total of 29 codes were identified within this dimension. Among the various accounts, Participant 1’s experience of dependence rooted in fear within the Hungarian context stood out as particularly compelling:

But I have seen it I would say partly even on myself, many of my former schoolmates who still work at the private sector, sorry, public sector. They sort of try to blend in? Let's call it that. Sort of try to dig their hands in the sand. Try to be evasive. Try not to step on anyone's toes. What else could I say? So basically, many people who are not brave enough don't have the possibilities. Whatever who are, who are more stuck on let's say the wide area of Hungarian public sector, they usually bow their heads, so to say. And don't challenge authority because many of us I would say I have even seen it but those who are still in the public sector, many of them have probably seen it more often or more times than I have, that challenging the authority in the, in public sector is never a good idea. This can cause you cost you long term, your job, your life. I mean life in such a sense that if you step on someone's toes that you shouldn't have and that certain someone has enough power they basically can stop you from being able to fulfill any kind of meaningful jobs. I've seen it on one of my very good friends.

Similarly, Participant 9 referred to a colleague's experience regarding collective dependence:

But they they wanted to make the rules for for their schools. and there is a primary school as well included in these 4 schools. And then they wanted to regulate what color students can dye their their hair. And it is actually against our constitution. So we have basic rights, and students also have basic rights. And this is one of them. So you cannot control, restrict their appearance. There it is. Their personality can be revealed via this. So it is actually not lawful to to regulate appearance in in such a set of rules. And yet some points were included in this in this set of rules. and my friend opposed to sign this sheet, where she would give her consent to making these set of rules. And she she started a campaign in the, in her workmates. in the in the group, and the her colleagues understood. Some of

them actually, 4 of them understood that. Yes, it is against the law. It is breaking their basic rights and and it cannot be regulated. But finally all her colleagues signed the sheet except for her.

In the same vein, Participant 3 referred to the social dynamics behind dependence: “And so yes, I also believe, that when people facing authority, they either you know accept the hide the flight move.” Participant 3 added in a different context: “Probably what we talked about, how people face authorities or fear, acceptance just.” Participant 11 reiterated:

So this is a really Hungarian way. But I don’t know the reason. People are scared. I always I’ve always told them, because I have. I had some practice years in the UK. And in an international environment not to be scared, but for some reason they they scared to to to find the solution. They are scared to speak up.

Participant 6 summarized the reasons for citizens’ dependence on authority in their authority relations as follows: “People depend on authority because of the human need for security.”

Dependence mechanisms were also associated with emerging patterns in the broader social-national context. Participant 7 highlighted:

In Hungary the authority and the authoritarian practicing of power that we needed to get used to in the last couple of decades had such room for strengthening and and to become immobile, so rigid and so strict because of the collective lack of responsibility of the electors.

Participant 7 also described citizens’ attitude toward authority in terms of dependence: “As far as the authority is concerned, respect and authority, he’s is they how to say? I would say, maybe the collective under consciousness and the transgenerational cultural heritage of a society.”

Participant 9 noted that “Hungarian people tend to elect strongman in order to take the

responsibility, and so that they should not have this burden of responsibility.” At the same time, Participant 9 approached dependence on authority at the social-collective level from a different angle, emphasizing scapegoating and lack of solidarity: “So, in Hungary I feel that we tend to blame the victims. We tend to blame people who speak up for themselves.”

The Role of Hungarian Education: “It Starts in the School”

Throughout the focus group interviews, there were a substantial number of references—totaling 31 codes—related to Hungarian education and its contribution to dependence on authority. Participants frequently compared the Hungarian education to Western-style training. Most participants emphasized that the Hungarian education system does not adequately prepare students for leadership roles, particularly lacking in the development of soft skills. Additionally, some participants noted the authoritarian style and structure of Hungarian education. Participant 1 critically reflected on the Hungarian education system, identifying it as the root cause of dependence mechanisms:

And the most shocking is the introduction of this thing called new National Basic or Ground Rules for Education, Nemzeti Alaptanterv, I don't know how to exactly to translate it into English. And this is so I have read many articles written by or based on interviews with educational professionals, psychologists, teachers and similar people and they without exception, they have said that this new basic rules, basic set of educational rules is a huge, huge, huge setback. So we are back to the 19th century. There is, you know, at the end of high school in Hungary there is the so-called General Certificate of Secondary Education (Érettségi), and the rules for that and the knowledge requested to pass this GCSE as basically back to the 1950s. So as if as if the as if the 20th century didn't happen at all so as if we were not living in the 21st century. So again, back to

memorializing and memorizing, memorizing the Prussian way. So, so this, this is where the problem probably originates or will originate very soon.

Participant 10 also expressed their discouragement regarding engagement in school, identifying the Hungarian education system as a key factor contributing to a dependence on authority. They stated, “I think we are fundamentally handicapped by this general way of thinking about authority and leadership, and it starts in the school.”

Participant 2 compared the U.S. student engagement with the Hungarian approach to socializing students highlighting the differences:

I think in the US the way they try to train children for leadership is probably not present in the high school setting [in Hungary]. And that’s basically through extracurricular activities. So, in the U.S., and you are welcome to tell whether I’m right or wrong, in the U.S. the students can start a club in a high school, not the teachers. So like a child is interested in the environment the child can say that, okay, guys, let’s have an environmental club. And yes, they need the supervision of a teacher, because they, you know, they cannot let the kids just run around, but that teacher is only there to sit quietly in the classroom to observe. And really, when I say supervise, it means to make sure that that is order. But the initiation of the club comes for the kids. And we as the teachers, we try to encourage the kids to form the club. So, in this way, and this is the way to get into a good college. So the extracurricular activities for the kids is not only to prepare for an exam or prepare for a competition, but to solve a problem, probably within the school or within the community. We try to teach the kids about self-governance and the so-called bottom-up organization of the society that within the school whether we see that that is a problem that we need to solve. And we try to encourage the kids to form groups

to do that. So that's something again. I don't know like, from what I hear from my nephews and nieces [enrolled in Hungarian] schools, this is not present in Hungary. So like, if this is not present, then, basically what we have left, or what we have in the traditional Hungarian school is the teacher and the the curriculum. That's as you know, it is more set. And there is nothing wrong with it. But the the question is whether we actually, whether in Hungarian schools we actively try to engage the kids and train them to participate in civic duties and participate in solving the problems of their community. And I think this is something, this I think this is missing that which that could be added.

Participant 3 reflected on their difficulty in adapting to the Hungarian education context after studying in the United States:

So yeah, I had the the chance to study in the United States for like, 6 months before I started my university in Hungary. And so University was. The 1st experience was the the American side where we were encouraged to challenge concepts, and of course we were, propose the concept, but we could actively participate and challenge it and argue for or against And we had open booking exams the where we couldn't just Google, the responses, because we actually had to use our brains and logic and based on the concept that that we learned. But also you know, from from our own ideas. And then, I started university the XY university (hereinafter XY serves to de-identify data and maintain confidentiality), and it was really different. So in the 1st semester I was quite like I had the culture shock and it was I remember it was not easy to to adapt to the to the the education system that was surrounding me.

Many participants shared their personal experiences with the authoritarian behavior of certain teachers. Participant 2 described their professor as “cruel,” while Participant 5 referred to one teacher as a “monster,” another as “hysterical,” and a third as “evil.” These descriptions reflect both their own experiences and those of their daughter, highlighting the teachers’ negative attitudes in class.

The Impact of Hungarian Fatalism on Dependence: “Let’s Just Drink Palinka”

In the research, participants made sense of phenomena such as authority, dependence, and leadership by using some generalizations. Participant 2 shared her perspective and experiences by arguing:

I think that the Hungarian people might have this kind of out of. As a result of history. A kind of. fatalism That, okay, the leaders, our leaders will be bad anyway. That’s something that I heard a lot. So that’s something that they don’t or people around me. They don’t necessarily believe in even the opportunity to have a good leader. And that’s why. They don’t even try...Hungary with this mentality all that life sucks whatever we do, life will be just bad, our leaders will be bad, get over it and let’s just drink palinka [Hungarian fruit spirit].

By incorporating education into fatalism, fostering dependency, Participant 1 agreed and stated:

I think also again Participant 2 mentioned is this this kind of fatalism that we are socialized to believe that—using Trump's words—we live in a shithole country. And this will always be like that, and this will always suck and as Participant 2 said let’s drink palinka.

Fatalism discussed in these findings aligned with my prior pilot study, where focus group participants shared a distinct Hungarian sentiment rooted in a victimhood narrative. In that research, one participant stated:

It literally goes beyond that whether it is a societal thing that we have in, and how we relate to victims within this region, just in the Hungarian context we are victims of Trianon, we are victims of the communist system for victims now as the Hungarian government says victims of the West. So whether this victimhood has something to do with how we are being active or passive or not challenging [the authority] things, it's just so comfortable to be a victim. And also there is many socio sociopsychological studies being done, how is being easy and convenient to be the victim.

Fatalism and victimhood narratives along with pessimism discussed in Chapter 1 had a significant impact on dependence on authority in the Hungarian context.

Social Chain of Dependence: “Fall in Line”

In discussing the specifics of exercising authority within the Hungarian context, Participant 12's comment emerged as a surprising finding from the research, explaining how mechanisms of dependence are linked, resulting in a social chain of dependence:

I think the the ones who exercise power or authorities, they most of the cases, I think, try to. meet their bosses' intentions. So it's not, so it's not fully an honest behavior in Hungary. So it's most of the time, I think. it's more like they want to do the right thing for their bosses or their leaders. And the so it's not not so personal to be honest, I think. It's their decisions, yeah are most of the times, not their owns or not, their own feelings. It's more like they try to stick to the rules. At least what I can see. Because as I mentioned, I have a lot of friends from the police and colleagues, I mean former

colleagues, and that's what I experienced that they don't really, so a lot of times they don't agree what they say is like they have to do it. And if they try to change the things, well, it's not really possible. Because of the further levels.

Participant 10 agreed providing some further details:

I have experience about like actually going to an office to make, for example, new identity card or something like that. So those in office and I feel that many people working there are actually really burnt out for some reason. Probably not, so. it's quite boring job, and probably the pay, the salaries are not so great. But they they don't change and then it turns them into these grumpy people who actually have a lot of like self-importance feelings. So that's that. it's so, they can use their very little power during that 5, 10 minutes to to make your life a bit miserable. Not all the time, but I think we all met similar similar people. So for me and it's, of course, connect. I totally agree. Or maybe that it's connected to their team leaders and their team leaders and managers, and so on. So it's probably the same. So if if the actual people who are, I agree that they have usually more empathy than higher above, but if they have that miserable is it about their bosses and their bosses boss is are or they just, they are just not nice people. So, I I have this feeling when so on the on the everyday basis.

Participant 1 noted:

So people in, let's say, people in power, so who are higher up in the hierarchy develop this kind of as far as I've seen, develop this kind of themselves dependence on their own authority, and they also expect you to sort of fall in line.

While sharing their experiences, Participants 2 and 8 emphasized the importance of being strategic in authority relationships highlighting that this chain of dependence can be beneficial. Participant 2 stated, “If you cannot achieve something from the small boss go to the big boss”

These insights extend beyond a simple leader-follower dynamic and highlight a broader social chain of dependence on authority. Even those in positions of authority rely on the expectations of their superiors, and everyone in this chain strives to meet their superior’s approval. This dependence, then, shaped through socialization, creates a cultural context that stresses dependence on authority and significantly influences social expectations regarding leadership and authority.

Factors Determining the Scope of Leadership

The Way Authority is Exercised: “He Used Fear Over Us”

As highlighted above, the way authority is exercised in Hungary is a key factor impacting and contributing to dependence. However, through dependence along with the social context including socialization authority has also an impact on the scope for leadership. As Participant 6 reflected on participants’ lived experiences stating:

It was very interesting to to listen to all of these stories. The thought that came to mind is that like listening to them was that authority is really just a tool in a system of abuse to keep the abusers in the abuser role and the abused in the abused role. And it’s really the antithesis of leadership where leadership is about initiating change, mobilizing people to drive change and authority is is a tool to keep things exactly the way they are. And people exactly where they are in that system of hierarchy.

In the coding process ,“The way authority is exercised: negative” emerged as a top category totaling 95 references. The negative lived experiences related to authority (53 references) also

highlighted the significant effects of authority in the Hungarian context. Participants' feelings, ideas, stories, and lived experiences shed light on how authority is exercised. Participant 10 described the feeling they had in facing authority: "[I] have this feeling whenever see a police car that I'm oh shit, I'm in trouble." In the same vein, Participant 8's lived experience highlighted the communication style used in authority relations:

Every car exceed so significantly the speed limit. Because just just the way people driving there. And when I was photoed by the police, I went back, and I asked the policeman: What would you do? So what is the right way? Everyone going in 70 kilometers/h, and you should only with 50? So that's a big exceed of speed limit, but each and every car did the same - I asked. Before the car before me and the car behind me. What they done. And he said: Yeah, the same as you. So, what should I do? And he told me: Get in your car immediately!

This type of communication was emphasized by Participant 9 when they stated: "We were not fined but police officer talked us like to children." Participant 1's lived experience highlighting the social dynamics in authority relations in the Hungarian context reveals how the way authority is exercised leads to dependence:

That when 2012 XY university was formed. And the new rector was appointed, Mr. XY, I think we both remember him quite well. So we, had the joke amongst each other that if Mr. XY was a was in the army, he would be a very good General. But he for sure wasn't a very good rector of the university. I remember one concrete story which now after, I don't know, almost 10 years as more like a joke or a fun thing to talk about but obviously when we were there, it was quite hard to live through that his I don't know his sticking to titles was so extreme that in every every official email exchange or any kind of

communication he also he always had to be called professor doctor rector or whatnot.

And if it was any time it was missing at any time he, he literally he literally got extremely upset and sent back documents: important and urgent documents to be revised. Solely on the basis that his titles were not complete. And some of the in some of the documents and I remember that once another university from some CIS country, I think Kazakhstan wanted to start talks on some on some international cooperation and we received the letter I mean the International Office of the Faculty of XY, received the letter title, Mr. XY if you remember, the ZW was our colleague, and he was laughing hysterically that I'm not I'm not translating this I'm not sending this to Mr. XY, no way! So the translation already consisted with all his titles because otherwise we would have we wouldn't have gone anywhere with that specific letter if if they're learned his titles involved.

In participants' discussions, authority in Hungary was linked to corruption and abuse of power.

Participant 7 described the power abuse that is often present in authority in Hungary stating:

And all of the people representing any kind of central power, should it be a county or a region power institution, should it be not the local municipal police institution, but should it be the county or the regional level of police. A captain, anyone who is further from the final human being. At the regional or central level is practicing, abusing much easier and much stronger the power. And and over exercising the power.

Participant 2's lived experience illuminated what this abuse of power looked like in the Hungarian education context:

A story came to my mind from my own college. We had a professor, his name is, XY, he used to be a literature professor at XY university and he used fear over us. That was the

time then to get into the English, the Department of English Literature was a big thing because after the political changes there were not enough people would speak English. So, and I so he had the power and probably even the purpose to select us or save us, you know, like they made sure that only like one quarter of their kids would finish the university from those who started. So, he had this psychological power that he knew he could make us fail and we would not be able to finish, and from my little group, 10 people started and only 3 of us finished at university with these 2 majors. And so he was just basically cruel and he made the test so difficult that nobody could get an A or a B. Only God could get an A, he could get a B so the best student could get a C.

Some of participants stated that authority exercised at lower positional or local level are more humane (yet more corrupt) than authority exercised at higher levels. Participant 7 stated:

When people. Who are having power having authority. Who are exercising some power. If they are at the local level, at the lowest level of power, exercising system. Should it be a local government, or a local government's company, or anything local. They're much more of a human kind, much more of a human mentality. With much more empathy. A much more openness and flexibility towards you...The human aptitude, and the flexibility is much stronger at the end of the power packing and the corruptibility and the ability for corruption is much higher. At the end of this chain. In accordance with my experiences As emphasized by several participants (Participants 2, 8, & 12), authority behavior in Hungary leads to social distrust towards authority. Participant 10 highlighted: "I think the most dangerous people on power are the ones who really want to be on power. and especially if they are there long enough, because at one point everybody gets corrupted."

Participant 2 added that the older generation tend to have distrust towards authority and used their father's example. Participants also highlighted that the way authority is exercised and the significant amount of power authority holds in the Hungarian context are also in line with how they are recruited and promoted in professional settings. Instead of the merit-based career advancement, authority is selected based on loyalty. As Participant 2 emphasized: "If he is a boss he for sure did not get through an honest way. This was, I think, a mantra in my family that it's like, if you are a boss that definitely you did not get to that position legally."

How Authority and Dependence on Authority Affect Leadership: "There are Consequences When You Do It"

Research participants were also invited to explore how dependence on authority and exercising authority influence leadership in Hungary. Participant 10's lived experience highlighted how authority can prevent leadership by silencing citizens leading to dependence:

It's better not to speak. I mean, they probably didn't say that. But this was the the atmosphere, at least for me. And it took a long time until I started to talk. And they are talking and I had to leave the country for that and I and I had to put myself in a situation where I had no other choice but to speak otherwise I wouldn't have been able to to do anything. And this translates, I think, to the general way of exercising leadership. unless you have a good example in front of you. It can be from your family can be for work. most importantly. And I I was lucky because I had 2 leaders in my life so far, instead of 2 bosses who I consider role models and very good examples to follow. But not every people is lucky like I am, and and in that, and since we are genuinely like this, I mean many of many of the Hungarian people, I think that's that's why we cannot even expect many people to to step up.

In reflecting on the relationship between authority, dependence on authority, and leadership, participants discussed the risks and consequences of exercising leadership and challenging authority.

They were also asked whether they would be willing to exercise leadership in the Hungarian context. Except for one participant who expressed a willingness, all others either avoided the question or clearly said no. However, even the participant who was willing to take a stand concluded, “Probably I would end up being fired.” The participants emphasized that exercising leadership and challenging authority carry significant risks. Participant 3 remarked: “So people who tried to to exercise leadership and challenge concept, they either give up on their own or were forced to to to give up.” Participant 10 echoed: “All, all across the all across the country. So that’s how I feel. It. It makes no sense many times.” Participant 1 emphasized: “not challenge authority because of fear of of these types of things happening.”

Participant 2 made a general comment about the existential fear that holds people back from exercising leadership: “if you have a fear of losing your job that fear they’ll hold you back. And this kind of fear can hold you back from exercising any kind of leadership.” Both Participant 2 and Participant 4 emphasized that, due to the way authority is exercised, they refuse to engage in any leadership roles in the Hungarian context. Participant 2 remarked, “exercising authority changed my view and willingness on accepting any kind of leadership position.” Participant 4 shared a personal story about their decision to leave Hungary:

I had some authority, and also some leadership positions earlier. And when I face the the situation, the local, I mean Hungarian rules regulations which put me in a situation when I could not, was not able to protect my organization and my people, and was even targeted the by higher government officials, and couldn’t protect against those illegal

things. Let's say corruption. It was the so after a point made me not to take any more leadership positions. and even leaving the country.

Participant 6's narrative illustrated the dynamics and consequences of exercising leadership in a strong authority context:

Sorry I'll be quick I was fired from 2 different schools for Challenging authority, so, I learned pretty early that there are consequences when you do it... Yeah, the 1st story is: It was in high school. I went to a music school back then, and there was an opportunity for some selected students to play concerto with an orchestra and there was a kind of Town Hall style meeting with the headmaster of the school, and some teachers and all of the students where. This opportunity was presented, and some conditions were also presented, and one of the students who was already selected for this program pointed out that one of these conditions was not realistic. And then the headmaster's response to it was that, okay, so you are then excluded from this program. And then to me this was quite shocking, because the student was right. And also this reaction was pretty shocking. So. I also stood up and said that the student is right, and so they should perhaps consider this. And then direction was that okay, You are also excluded from the program. And then. The next day, the deputy headmistress called me into her office and told me that you know this can be made right if I apologize to the headmaster and that I should, you know go and say, sorry for what I did. And I told her that I was not willing to do that because I think we were right, and his reaction was wrong. And so the next week I was fired. I wasn't actually fired from the school. I was fired from the student dorm the next week under some entirely false pretext.

In response to a follow-up question about how the participant felt in this situation, Participant 6 noted:

Pretty angry, I guess. Yeah. I felt it was an unjust way to. Also a little bit like it was a little bit surreal, because the pretext. Under which they fired me was, was so far from the truth that it was also a little bit ridiculous like. It was hard to take it all seriously in the end.

Participant 6 provided insights into citizens' behaviors and their reactions to authority:

I feel like there's like a missing continuum between two extremes in my own life, as well as in what I see around me. Like I think there is one tendency to sort of for learned helplessness to not challenge authority, to not try to negotiate, to, not ask questions. So so sort of, you know, shut up and not get in trouble. And then there is another extreme, which I myself and people are also very capable of, which is to rebel if it gets too much. And then, you know suddenly you had enough, and you no longer want to shut up. You just explode and rebel against it. And this like middle, which many of you mentioned as missing like this ability to negotiate. For me is, is often missing. In my own relationship to authority, and what I see around me.

As highlighted above, the intertwined perception of leadership and authority has led participants to expect leadership qualities to align with the functions of positional authority. This may explain why Hungarians often elect charismatic leaders. Participant 4 stated:

Leadership is necessary in any organization. It's a part of any hierarchy and in a hierarchy the leadership also has some authority. I generally defined predefined by the charter or any rules. But, in a good case, the, respect of the leadership is not comes from the authority but the good examples, the good attitude, so more like the soft tools. But of

course if it has to be for something that it takes the, authority rules, the leadership. And that's why for many of us who had the experience either in a communist country. Or any time when the authority, the leadership is not for sure either democratically elected or talented leadership at all often create a situation when not the best decisions that the best leadership take the control and take advantage in the authority rules.

In the same vein, Participant 1 noted: "So, I would say that a good leader must be able to use some level of authority, but use it in a good way. So a good leader must find let's say good authority...what I would expect of a leader is to lead."

Participant 1 emphasized how the enabling social context shapes social expectations of leadership and leadership behavior:

Just going back to Participant 2 for a second or or connecting to what [they] said is that probably the those in management, slash leadership, slash authority positions who are long term there. I think, in Hungary they usually. even in the many Companies, in in the private sector because these people rotate around. Usually. They sort of get used to how they need to behave. They sort of get used to the fact that they need to show authority. Let's say they need to show dominance to some extent. Otherwise at some point somebody will kick them out. So, connecting to, I think Participant 2 mentioned this. So these people with authority in Hungary, but I can imagine that, worldwide as well, who are long enough in these positions Are usually experienced in that, in in such a manner, or in or in that sense, that they need to be authoritative, they need to be dominant. and the whole situation forces them to be like that as well.

Participant 6 discussed their leadership journey, which led to teaching leadership in Hungary, and the challenge of separating leadership from authority:

So, I grew up with these patterns of leadership equals exercising authority. And then it took me, maybe a decade to start thinking about it differently. So, my own personal experience is that, yes, this is the, this is the paradigm we grow up in, where where leadership is, about telling people what to do and how to do it, and when to do it, and where to do it, and when you did it right, and when you didn't do it right.

Participant 9 associated expectations for leadership with macro-political patterns, highlighting the role of dependence in shifting responsibility:

Actually, I can agree with this idea that Hungarian people tend to elect strongman in order to take the responsibility, and so that they should not have this burden of responsibility, because if something goes wrong, then they can say they can blame someone. And it's always better well its an exaggeration. But forget me, forgive me. So it's always better to to blame someone, than blame ourselves that we did not take the or made the right decisions. And I think it's more comfortable.

Participant 6's powerful statement highlighted why authority and leadership are perceived as inseparable and how this leads to the "corrupted concept" of leadership in the Hungarian context:

I think there's also this sense that because the leaders that we do have exercise their leadership in a very authoritative or directive, or even author authoritarian way, like, there is also this false image, that that you know, one starts to develop that this, that we started creating leadership with authority because our leaders are authoritarian and and start believing that that's the only way to exercise leadership, or that's the right way to exercise leadership. So, then, when you are asking, okay, how does authority impact leadership? I think that. It kind of corrupts it in a way like it corrupts the concepts we have of leadership. In Hungary, like I think there are very few people who understand

leadership the way you do that anyone can lead, and anyone can step up and anyone can be a leader. I think most of us understand leadership as a concept that's much closer to having authority, and that's probably not by accident. It's because, leadership and authority are exercised in a certain way here.

Participants were also asked to identify several changes needed to foster more leadership.

Participant 3 emphasized the significance of leadership development, stating:

I think, leadership training. But maybe I'm biased because I work in a business school. But since I since I do, and I see, you know leaders to come here and actually train for themselves for for a week or so. I can see, you know, the just to have the the open mindedness to come here, and some come voluntarily. Some are brought by their companies. But even those who are, you know it's not a choice, but both brought by their companies, they leave with a more open mind. So I think, you know, getting just like reflecting, and it starts itself reflecting, and also to kind of be receptive to the, to the ideas that are out there in the international environment, about leadership and not authority, but leadership.

Participant 4 emphasized support instead of control by authority: "More supportive help than controlling. That's the most important. And that concludes the retorsions and the negative feedback. Well, so instead of that more help."

Participant 6 emphasized the importance of taking small steps to regain self-confidence during the process of change:

I think if you start small. And you know, show people that they can lead. And if people have more and more of those experiences in their own lives like being able to take charge of something small and make a difference. change something that can always be super

helpful in terms of building confidence that it is possible that you're not always going to get knocked down, that that things will change if you make an effort, and maybe this is not possible on a large social scale right now, but it's certainly possible in small circles. However, not all participants were optimistic in envisioning any type of change in Hungary.

Participant 1 concluded:

So that we need more people who have in big words, seeing the world, experienced other cultures, experienced best practices elsewhere and are also ready to bring them home. Have the ability, have the chance have the possibility to bring them home. That that would be beneficial. Because one of the main problem. Okay, so there, there are 2 things one is that honestly. having lived close to 45 years in Hungary. I must say that sadly. I don't have high hopes. I have lived through most of the eighties nineties, 2,000 2,000 tens. And I have lived through the last days of Socialism. I seen the form of Socialism. I have seen the change of system. I have seen how it worked in the nineties early 2000, when I would say, even by Western standards, we had true liberal democracy in such a sense that there were actual elections, there were an abundance of parties to choose from and whatnot, and still. somehow. now, after 35 years we are back to, I would say, square one, because we are living in a political sense, I'm I'm sorry to say, but this is, as I mentioned my personal opinion and my personal experience. We are back to the eighties again. There is one non changeable party ruling over the country, and we brought it up. Brought it upon ourselves. So it very much seems for me sadly. It very much seems that we cannot live cannot value the opportunity that we are presented and that would be needed to be changed. And I think a very good way, for that would be if there were enough People who have been abroad who have seen other cultures who have seen best

practices. And after that also returned home. Sadly again The reality or the trends of reality are not that. now it's irrelevant. Why. but a significant proportion of people who have experience living abroad. shorter term, or longer term. a significant of parts of them, never return. And this leads back to the wasted opportunity. In in many senses and to the situation we have right now.

The Importance of Context: “You Don’t Know You Could Do Something Different”

In addition to education as a factor influencing dependence on authority, research participants extensively discussed the broader—enabling—Hungarian context surrounding authority, dependence, and leadership. They dedicated significant time to distinguishing and comparing the Hungarian context with various international environments. In this regard, context emerged as a key theme, with participants attributing different meanings to phenomena based on their experiences in international versus Hungarian settings.

Throughout the research, participants linked Western and Hungarian environments to how authority and leadership are exercised, as well as to their practices and lived experiences in both the corporate and private sectors. Most participants, with few exceptions, described international and Western environments as supportive, enabling, and conducive to exercising leadership. This contrasts sharply with their negative perceptions of the Hungarian context. For instance, Participant 11 shared their perspective and experiences at the organizational level, asserting that:

As I mentioned, I have always been working for foreign owned company. So that's why I think, does the explanation for that I think, as a positive thing. Because if I take into consideration someone works for a Hungarian company with, Hungarian leaders,

leadership, many times I have heard that they there is no possibility to discuss anything, any problem, any issues. Either personnel or workwise. But in an international environment I think it is possible it is always possible, and they can act flexible flexibly, in a flexible way. While in my opinion, and the reason for me, I would never like working for a Hungarian company, that I imagine that they cannot understand your point of view. They I mean, if if you in a Hungarian, they would force you to do something without discussion. And without helping, and in international level I think helping, supporting each other is the key factor.

In a similar context, Participant 9 mentioned: “I just have an idea or an impression that Hungarians are not as supportive as Anglo-Saxon people are towards each other.”

Participant 7 summarized the current Hungarian reality as follows: “We are depressed and oppressed population the whole society.” Participants discussed the rather negative environment in relation to dependence. Participant 9 noted:

So, in Hungary I feel that we tend to blame the victims. We tend to blame people who speak up for themselves...and because of this attitude and because we feel we we can feel that we won't be supported by our workmates or or the public that's why we are more afraid of making mistakes because we were. We will be blamed for that mistake. just as at school.

Participant 3 compared dependence on authority in Hungary with civic activism that is present in France:

Maybe you remember better, but there was a time when they sent them, one day yeah sent away I don't know 30% of the teachers in Hungary. I don't know if you will recall that time. And I remember I was already in Paris, and we were talking about that and

with my partner and so there was basically no you know, reaction from the Hungarian people. So they did that and I think the same thing happened also in the public sector. So, basically everything happened overnight, and I don't know if the people didn't know about it or just didn't react. So that is something I feel like, that could never happen in France in comparison. So for the smallest injustice or if if the people feel like there is even a small injustice or something that is against their will or interest they go on the street.

Participant 6 pointed out that dependence on authority hinders leadership in the Hungarian context:

It yeah, certainly a barrier, because as soon as you put up your hand and you want to change something, you get knocked down, and it's a barrier for the person themselves, right like. If you don't have a different idea of what leadership could be like. You are not really in a position to exercise leadership because you have this pattern that you want to follow, because that's what you think leadership is, and you don't know that you could do something different. So it's not just a barrier to others but also to the person in the position of authority, as well.

Many participants referred to the current Hungarian political governance and its connection to the way authority is present and exercised along with dependence mechanisms. For example, Participant 7 commented on the current Hungarian government: "Whereas centrally we are told who to be afraid of what we hate." Participant 2 shared a personal story:

But if I may tell a story that's very much tied to the upper authority of the country. So my parents are from an agricultural city that's quite big. With 70,000 inhabitants. And my mother had a share in a cooperative because she was in an accountant so and what

happened, you know, what I've given after the changes that cooperative like became like a agricultural company or whatever, but it's flourished because the land is good. And, it was amazing that, like lawyers and yes, it was. Mészáros [richest entrepreneur in Hungary belonging to PM Orbán's inner circle] doing and this is something that here you hear that this is happening, but it's very much different from when you see it. How smartly it was done...They visited all of the little stockholders. All of the little people, you know, like my mother who was at that time like 70 old people who had tiny share on this company and they offered them money for their share and bought off everybody. But it was one thing and lawyers did that. From Budapest. That they cannot talk to each other. So there was no formal meeting that actually they wanted to buy everybody's share. Was never announced by the event to individuals from house to house to buy everything. And then they had enough share one day they just showed up at the headquarters of this company. Like in an instant they managed to remove the president. And the whole and then it was just like what was a total takeover of power. And this is amazing that now. This company that is like a very very very good like you know like your bread comes from this area of the country. Is now managed from Budapest, through people who don't know You know, don't know the situation. They don't know the land. They don't know what can be done that and they are not there So this . That's just It was just very in a way frightening to see.

Participant 4 highlighted how this system discourages leadership: "I have a déjà vu feeling, because in the last few years exactly, this came back with how to create the hierarchy in a feudal system quality competency-based leadership Keeps away many people for taking the leadership."

Participant 6 concluded with an important question for leadership scholarship to consider:

“And I think maybe one question to think about is how to provide the security, predictability, and clarity in other ways rather than through authority, that are not a barrier to leadership.”

Chapter 5 - Discussion and Implications

This study concerned the relationship between authority, dependence on authority, and leadership. The research incorporated and addressed the following questions:

1. What is the perception of authority and leadership in Hungary?
2. How does authority affect citizens' behavior?
3. How does dependence on authority manifest itself in research participants' stories and lived experiences? What factors impact dependence on authority?
4. What does leadership look like in the Hungarian context?
5. How do authority and dependence on authority affect leadership?

Chapter 5 will (a) highlight and discuss key findings in relation to relevant literature; (b) present a new model to understand authority, dependence on authority, and leadership in the Hungarian context; and (c) propose implication and future research opportunities.

Authority in the Hungarian Context

As highlighted in the literature review, although there are various definitions and approaches to the concept of authority, in most cases authority is distinguished from the concepts of leadership and power. Many conceptualizations describe authority as employing power and coercion, typically tied to some position. As Jacobs (1970) argued, authority can be viewed as “relationship between positions” (p. 231). Rost (1991) emphasized another key attribute of authority is that it is built on coercion and power, while in leadership, non-compliance is allowed. In other words, leadership is characterized as an influence relationship where individuals or groups choose to follow willingly.

Chapter 4 presented findings that illuminated research participants' perceptions of authority. Most participants expressed negative feelings toward authority and used negative terms to describe it, such as: “hierarchical,” “rigid,” “commands,” “strict,” “rules,” “cruel,”

“forced,” “control,” “cold,” and even “abuse.” However, one participant acknowledged that their negative view of authority stemmed from their experiences specifically within the Hungarian context. This not only highlights the importance of the social context but also raises further questions about why authority is perceived so negatively in Hungary, warranting further exploration into the lived experiences of Hungarians.

Participants’ descriptions of their lived experiences revealed a hierarchical relationship that aligned with French & Raven’s (1959) coercive base of power and Lunenburg’s (2012) discussion on the inappropriate crossing of boundaries regarding legitimate power and abuse of power. For instance, Participant 12’s reference to racial profiling as a law enforcement practice exemplified this abuse. As Lunenburg (2012) noted, “coercive power is a person’s ability to influence others’ behavior by punishing them or by creating a perceived threat to do so” (p. 3). This perceived threat, described by Lunenburg (2012) were present in many stories shared by participants. Participant 1’s experience with the rector’s irrational actions regarding the use of his titles was only one example. Participants referenced various authority relations (e.g., teachers, superiors, authorities, decision makers in high positions) while also calling attention to the dangers of challenging authority within the Hungarian context. These findings illuminate the nature of Hungarian power dynamics. As Participant 6 stated:

Authority is really just a tool in a system of abuse to keep the abusers in the abuser role and the abused in the abused role. And it’s really the antithesis of leadership where leadership is about initiating change, mobilizing people to drive change and authority is is a tool to keep things exactly the way they are.

Additionally, the findings suggest that Heifetz’s (1994) definition of authority as “conferred power to perform a service” (p. 57) takes on a unique meaning in the Hungarian

context. Because of the absence of merit-based selection and recruitment of authority—which Participant 2 described as, “If he is a boss he for sure did not get through an honest way”—power is not granted by those affected by the actions and behavior of authority figures. These findings pointed to a controversial leader-follower relationship in Hungary, where, though citizens depend on authority, these authority relationships are also characterized by cynicism and distrust towards authority. This understanding aligned with Lunenburg’s (2012) description of a relationship in which subordinates often comply out of fear rather than respect.

Dependence on Authority and the Way Authority is Exercised

Dependence on authority—which has been described by Heifetz (1994) as a hierarchical relationship where the expectations of others (authority) are placed upon people (dependents)—has been understudied in leadership scholarship. Kark et al. (2003) emphasized that dependence on authority can manifest in various ways. Heifetz (1994) identified two main types of dependency: appropriate and inappropriate. Appropriate dependency refers to the “explicit hierarchy of authority by which to orchestrate the actions” and people’s everyday reliance on those who possess the necessary knowledge, skills, and authority to address problems (Heifetz, 1994, p. 71). In contrast, inappropriate dependency occurs when individuals, without justification, shift responsibility onto authority figures and expect them to take action (Heifetz, 1994). As noted in Chapter 4, many descriptions and examples provided by research participants aligned with the concept of inappropriate dependency outlined by Heifetz (1994).

Participant 9’s experience with a team member who relied on her by shifting responsibility exemplified inappropriate dependency. Participants noted that certain personality types often needed to be directed in their tasks. However, the participants’ accounts and lived experiences revealed two additional dimensions of dependence: (a) dependence mechanisms

linked to the way authority is exercised in Hungary, and (b) dependence as a collective social attitude. Both dimensions represent new aspects of dependence and are associated with a key finding of this research: the social chain of dependence. Participants' experiences and descriptions of how authority is exercised in the Hungarian context aligned with Yukl's (1998) point:

Personalized power leaders seek to dominate subordinates by keeping them weak and dependent. Authority for making important decisions is centralized in the leader, information is restricted, and rewards and punishments are used to manipulate and control subordinates. Assistance and advice to a subordinate is done in a way that demonstrates personal superiority and the inferiority and dependence of the subordinate.

(p. 142)

In this hierarchical relationship, subordinates are often silenced, lacking any opportunity to question or challenge the authority's decisions, which was reflected in Participant 10's experience.

The findings of this study suggest that the perceptions of and experiences with the way authority is exercised in Hungary significantly influence citizens' attitudes, leading to dependence. In fact, most references in this research fell into two categories: (a) "the way authority is exercised" and (b) "authority lived experiences: negative." Many participants' stories and lived experiences related to authority were connected to the fear that Lunenburg (2012) described, resulting in a dependence on authority. As Heifetz (1994) argued, dependence "makes us feel vulnerable, controlled, or overwhelmed" (p. 70). Participant 7's statement that described the Hungarian society as a "depressed and oppressed population the whole society" aligned with Heifetz's (1994) point.

Examining different types of followership can also help explain the dependence on authority observed within the Hungarian context. In considering research participants' experiences, Padilla et al.'s (2007) followership category of conformers seemed self-explanatory: "Conformers comply with destructive leaders out of fear...conformers try to minimize the consequences of not going along" (p. 183). Howell and Shamir's (2005) concept of a personalized charismatic relationship also aligned well with the Hungarian experience. Howell and Shamir (2005) emphasized that in the personalized charismatic type of relationship, followers identify closely with their leader, which helps them gain "a clearer sense of self and greater self-confidence" (p. 100). Findings suggest that this is particularly relevant in a society like Hungary, which is characterized by uncertainties.

As Participant 9 noted, "and because of this attitude and because we feel we we can feel that we won't be supported by our workmates or or the public that's why we are more afraid of making mistakes because we were, we will be blamed for that mistake—just as at school." Kellerman's (2004) concept of bystandership also effectively described the mechanisms of dependence in Hungary. Specifically, Kellerman's (2004) reference to the followership under Nazi Germany shed light on the attitudes of Hungarian citizens: "Bystanders behaved badly either because they had no issue with the Nazi agenda or because, if they did, they calculated that the cost of resisting was greater than the cost of doing nothing" (p. 27). Many participants noted that challenging authority often comes with significant risks in the Hungarian context, contrasting sharply with the relatively lower cost of inaction referred to by Kellerman (2004).

As highlighted in Chapter 3, Thoroughgood et al. (2012) presented a detailed taxonomy that identifies three types of conformers: "lost souls," "authoritarians," and "bystanders" (p. 902). In examining participants' descriptions of dependence in Hungary, findings suggest that

the lost souls and authoritarian types are both present. Lost souls were defined by Thoroughgood et al. (2012) as followers “attracted to charismatic leaders who they believe can provide them clarity, direction and increased self-esteem; offer them a sense of community and belonging; and instill in them a clear sense of self” (p. 903). The authors pointed out that this follower mindset can lead to dependence, vulnerability, and susceptibility to manipulation, especially under the influence of a charismatic leader. On the other hand, authoritarians “possess rigid hierarchical attitudes that prescribe leader’s legitimate right to exert power over them...authoritarians do not obey because they seek approval or fear retribution, but simply because the leader holds a higher rank” (Thoroughgood et al., 2012, p. 905).

One of the key findings of the research was the social chain of dependence. As demonstrated in accounts by Participants 12 and 10, citizens in authority relations try to please their superiors, thus forming a social chain of dependence that aligns with the types of followership mentioned earlier. This magnitude of dependence and the corresponding followership attitudes were also found to be consistent with Kellerman’s (2004) concept of bad followership, as well as Heifetz’s (1994) reference to charismatic authority relationships that arise from the “community’s investment” (p. 247).

The Role of Context and Socialization

During the focus group interviews, participants frequently referred to the social context in Hungary, including the country’s historical background (i.e., communism and Hungarian sentiments towards monarchs); the current political system; and the social patterns they observed while living, studying, and working in Hungary. Discussions also highlighted the role of education in fostering dependence. In Chapter 4, it was noted that participants often compared the Hungarian social context to other international contexts, particularly those in the West.

Participants' stories and their exploration of authority, dependence on authority, and leadership in this research revealed an understanding of these constructs as embedded in the specific Hungarian context, which was primarily described in negative terms. Consequently, the Hungarian environment emerged as a central theme in the research.

Participants' discussions about Hungarian education illuminated how, as a socialization agent, it contributed to dependence on authority and a lack of leadership. Harro (2000) provided a detailed framework known as the cycle of socialization, and many aspects of this framework were found to be particularly relevant to the Hungarian context. For instance, the fear of negative consequences, as expressed by many participants, was exemplified by Participant 9's statement: "we are more afraid of making mistakes because we were, we will be blamed for that mistake, just as at school." This fear is partly associated with the lack of solidarity among Hungarians, which participants emphasized, and partly enrooted in a politically inbred (i.e., parochial) society in which—as two participants suggested—authority can go after people in retaliation. This aligned with Harro's (2000) explanation of conforming behavior (dependence). Supported by data from this study, it became evident that Hungarian education—as part of Harro's (2000) cultural-institutional socialization—plays a crucial role in maintaining dependence on authority.

The fear mentioned above is heightened by the country's painful historical experiences, including the Hungarian revolutions of 1848 and 1956, as well as the legacy of communism (discussed in Chapter 1), which led citizens to conform and uphold the status quo. These experiences, along with the effects of cultural and institutional socialization described by Harro (2000), set a high threshold for tolerating oppression. Participant 1's references to forms of dependence (e.g., "blend in," "be evasive," and "bow their head") and Participant 7's description of Hungarian society as a "depressed and oppressed" nation emphasized this reality. Even during

the first stage of socialization, known as early socialization, the sociocultural context significantly impacts individuals (Harro, 2000). In the Hungarian context, parents, who have themselves been socialized within the same cultural context built on strong authority, prepare their children to adapt to hierarchical structures, societal rules, and authority relations. Mirroring Harro's (2000) description of the cycle of socialization, this process often occurs unconsciously, as parents convey patterns of Hungarian cultural-institutional socialization through their attitudes, promoting dependence in their children.

The Impact of Authority and Dependence on Authority on Leadership: The Corrupted Concept of Leadership

Considering the findings of this study and the discussion above may raise an important question as to the relevance of these findings to leadership. Chapters 2 and 4 highlighted the interconnectedness of authority, dependence on authority, and leadership. The accounts given by participants provided descriptions and presence of different levels and forms of dependencies in Hungary that significantly influence perceptions of and expectations for leadership. As emphasized in Chapter 2, leadership is a complex phenomenon that has been explored from multiple perspectives. The various theories and frameworks discussed in this study exemplify this complexity.

The literature review pointed out that as different leadership theories have emerged, many have sought to distinguish leadership from authority and power. As noted by Rost (1991), "the view of leadership as control and authority had clearly lost its dominance among those who wrote about leadership in the decade before World War II" (p. 48). Adaptive leadership is one of these theories that clearly separates leadership functions from authority. Heifetz (1994) described leadership as the activity of mobilizing individuals to address adaptive challenges and make

progress. This concept emphasizes adaptation derived from biological evolution. Within this framework—and many other approaches to leadership—authority is tied to a position intended to provide “direction, protection, and order” (Heifetz, 1994, p. 69).

The adaptive leadership framework also differentiates real (adaptive) leadership from *counterfeit* leadership described by Williams (2005) stating, “Much of what passes for leadership, I suggest, is actually counterfeit leadership, even though it might have the appearance of being effective leadership because people are following the leader or buying into his or her agenda” (p. IX). Williams (2005) further argued that “fundamentally, real leadership gets people to confront reality, and change values habits, practices and priorities in order to deal with the *real threat*, or the *real opportunity* the people face” (p. IX., emphasis in original). In contrast, “counterfeit leadership...provides false solutions, and allows the group to bypass reality” (Williams, 2005, p. IX).

Although research participants used varied keywords to describe their gut feelings and thoughts about leadership, the findings indicated that their perceptions and descriptions aligned with the functions of authority outlined by Heifetz (1994). As discussed in Chapter 4, most participants emphasized the need for direction and the social expectation for leadership to prevent chaos and anarchy. Even Participant 6, who had significant experience in teaching leadership, used terms such as “direction,” “structure,” and “the ability to understand and align these needs.” These references clearly reflected the dependence perceptions and expectations regarding leadership. This perspective contrasted with adaptive leadership, where the locus of work resides with the leader. As Participant 6 pointed out:

So, I grew up with these patterns of leadership equals exercising authority...this is the paradigm we grow up in, where where leadership is, about telling people what to do and

how to do it, and when to do it, and where to do it, and when you did it right, and when you didn't do it right.

Chapter 4 provided a detailed account of dependence on authority, but it also highlighted that participant observations revealed a great deal of dependence on me, as the researcher, contributing to challenges in engaging participants in decision making of research directions. Consequently, dependence on authority that shaped expectations towards leadership resulted in what Participant 6 described as a “corrupted” concept of leadership:

I think there's also this sense that because the leaders that we do have exercise their leadership in a very authoritative or directive, or even authoritarian way, like, there is also this false image, that that you know, one starts to develop that this, that we started creating leadership with authority because our leaders are authoritarian and and start believing that that's the only way to exercise leadership, or that's the right way to exercise leadership. So, then, when you are asking, okay, how does authority impact leadership? I think that. It kind of corrupts it in a way like it corrupts the concepts we have of leadership.

In this concept of leadership equals authority, authority and leadership are intertwined, leaving little room for “real leadership” (Williams, 2005, p. IX). Based on participants' descriptions, the way authority is exercised in Hungary aligns with toxic leadership described by Padilla et al. (2007). Additionally, Participant 2 offered an iconic statement regarding the Hungarian sentiment: “In Hungary, with this mentality, life sucks no matter what we do. Our leaders will always be bad, so let's just accept it and drink pálinka [Hungarian fruit spirit].” This sentiment not only reflected on dependence and on accepting destructive leadership but also pointed to a

need for exploration of the question: What are the perspectives of leadership in the Hungarian context?

Challenges with Exercising Leadership in the Hungarian Context

In addition to the challenges of dependence on authority and the way authority is exercised, which Participant 6 described as a “barrier to exercising leadership,” two further adaptive challenges were identified that leadership must confront in the Hungarian context: the lack of social solidarity in leadership activity and a high threshold for tolerating toxic leadership.

One key principle of adaptive leadership is that leadership is a dangerous activity. Therefore, those who take the initiative should seek alliances and build factions of supporters. As Heifetz et al. (2009) emphasized, “Don’t do it alone” (p. 41). However, research findings suggest that, due to centrifugal social dynamics in Hungary, adaptive leadership faces a significant barrier in terms of collaboration with others to exercise leadership: a lack of social solidarity and an unfavorable social context, as noted by many participants. Participant 9 provided a particularly compelling description:

So, in Hungary I feel that we tend to blame the victims. We tend to blame people who speak up for themselves...and because of this attitude and because we feel we we can feel that we won’t be supported by our workmates or or the public that’s why we are more afraid of making mistakes because we were. We will be blamed for that mistake. just as at school.

Social and historical factors discussed in Chapter 1 contributed to social disconnection and atomization among citizens. These factors, along with fear, explain the challenges in finding allies to exercise leadership. The findings revealed that those who take risks often face marginalization, as few individuals are willing to join them in exercising leadership and

challenging authority. The experiences shared by Participants 9 and 6 in Chapter 4 highlighted a potential prognosis for the results of exercising leadership in the Hungarian context.

Analysis of participants' stories found the other challenge facing leadership in Hungary is the high threshold for tolerating destructive leader behavior, along with the two extremes of citizen behavior in relation to authority. This was described by Participant 6:

I feel like there's like a missing continuum between two extremes in my own life, as well as in what I see around me. Like I think there is one tendency to sort of for learned helplessness to not challenge authority, to not try to negotiate, to, not ask questions. So so sort of, you know, shut up and not get in trouble. And then there is another extreme, which I myself and people are also very capable of, which is to rebel if it gets too much. And then, you know suddenly you had enough, and you no longer want to shut up. You just explode and rebel against it. And this like middle, which many of you mentioned as missing like this ability to negotiate. For me is, is often missing. In my own relationship to authority, and what I see around me.

As discussed in Chapter 2, Heifetz et al. (2009) identified a critical element of exercising leadership as creating heat in the system for learning to occur. However, in the Hungarian context, findings suggest that this may be counterproductive as citizens either tolerate authority "or shut the door" and resort to revolutionary actions when the heat seems unbearable. Tolerating heat is associated with the historical traditions of oppression and, as this study revealed, the way authority is exercised reinforced by the cycle of socialization.

Implications: Toward a New Model for Understanding of the Relationship Between Authority, Dependence on Authority, and Leadership in Hungary: The Hungarian Vicious Circle

This study began by highlighting a twofold challenge: the rise of authoritarianism—particularly Hungary’s transition from a liberal democracy to an illiberal regime—and the scholarly challenge of situating authority and power in leadership, as described by Dugan (2017). Rather than providing straightforward answers to this challenge, the study contributes significantly to leadership scholarship by (a) developing a model that helps understand the relationship between authority, dependence on authority, and leadership in Hungary and (b) raising further questions for leadership scholars to consider.

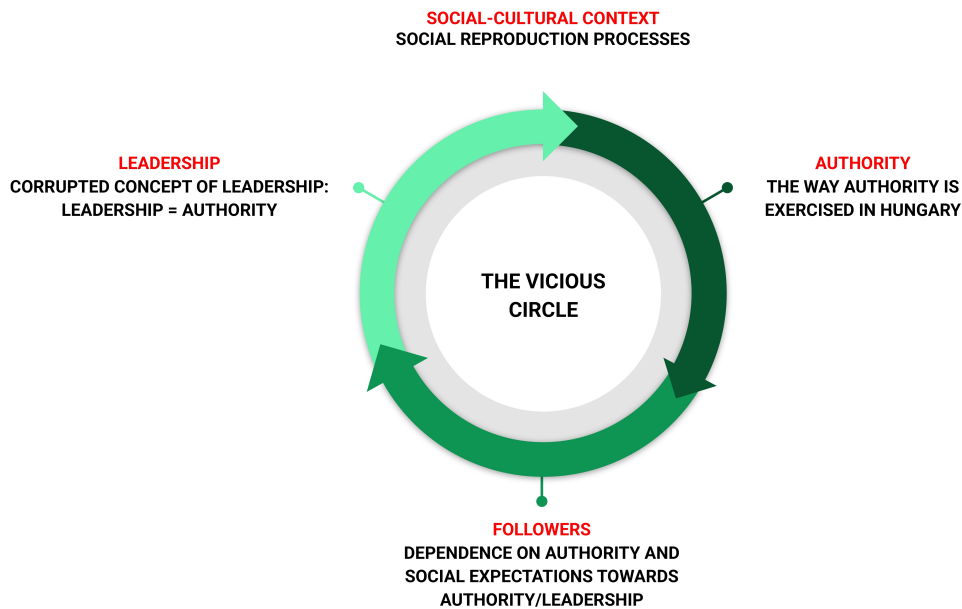
As previously highlighted, the descriptions and lived experiences of research participants illuminated how authority, combined with the enabling Hungarian social environment and socialization processes, leads to a dependence on authority and sustains social expectations toward leadership. Findings suggest that the outcome of this process is the corrupted concept of leadership, as described by Participant 6. This vicious cycle reproduces the same outcomes: “leaders” who, to meet followers’ expectations, provide direction, protection, and order (Heifetz et al., 2009). Ultimately, they also often resort to coercion to maintain their positions. As discussed by Participant 1:

Those in management, slash leadership, slash authority positions who are long term there. I think, in Hungary they usually even in the many Companies, in in the private sector because these people rotate around, usually they sort of get used to how they need to behave. They sort of get used to the fact that they need to show authority. Let’s say they

need to show dominance to some extent. Otherwise at some point somebody will kick them out.

Figure 5.1 illustrates the Hungarian vicious circle that explain this interconnectedness and relationships between authority, dependence, and leadership.

Figure 5.1. The Hungarian Vicious Circle



Based on the findings, the study raises three questions for leadership scholars to consider regarding the relationship between authority and leadership:

1. If perceptions and social expectations of leadership are limited to the functions of authority, how can these two concepts be distinguished in a strong authority context, such as in Hungary?
2. Given the vicious circle model described above, how can leadership development foster a mindset shift, particularly in light of followers' reluctance to relinquish their dependence on authority and exercise leadership?

3. How can leadership provide the security, predictability, and clarity in non-authoritarian ways so as to encourage adaptive leadership activity?⁵

In addressing the gaps outlined in Chapter 1 and being the first to focus on the relationship between authority, dependence on authority, and leadership in Hungary, I propose the following implications and intervention strategies for different stakeholders: (1) individuals seeking to exercise leadership, (2) educators and leadership development practitioners aiming to build leadership capacity, and (3) social-organizational systems that can create enabling environments for leadership in the Hungarian context.

This study highlighted significant obstacles and limitations to exercising leadership in the Hungarian context. As many research participants noted, those who challenge authority or the status quo, or who refuse to comply with established authority, often face severe repercussions. Under these circumstances, as one participant pointed out, citizens should take small steps within their micro-environments to connect with others in order to push back against some of the barriers that prevent effective leadership. Additionally, part of the socialization cycle, parents can play a crucial role in developing critical thinking and reflective skills, which counteract the dependence on authority reinforced by institutional socialization in Hungary. Studying or working in Western societies can also help raise awareness and develop these critical reflection skills.

Instead of solely focusing on leadership training and development, educators and leadership development practitioners may begin by training individuals on how to exercise authority effectively before delving into broader leadership development. This training can

⁵ This third question was adapted from Participant 6's concluding thoughts: "And I think maybe one question to think about is how to provide the security, predictability, and clarity in other ways rather than through authority, that are not a barrier to leadership."

include concepts from organizational leadership such as Theory Y (Weisbord, 2012), empowerment, and conflict management, which can help shift away from the control-and-command style of micromanagement that fosters dependence on authority.

Lastly, at the systems level, participants identified opportunities for change; Globalization and the presence of international corporations introduce systems, mechanisms, and values that differ from those rooted in strong authority contexts. Emphasizing performance-based mechanisms, rather than loyalty to and dependence on authority, is more conducive to fostering leadership, critical thinking, and adaptive change.

Besides the implication and the exploration of the questions raised above, future research opportunities can surface further layers of the relationship between authority, dependence on authority and leadership. With the acknowledgement of the limitations of this study in terms of empirical generalizability, quantitative or mixed methods research can facilitate broader generalizations, test the proposed model in Hungary, and recruit a larger sample to further explore aspects in the relationship of these concepts. Additionally, comparative studies in other strong authority or similar contexts can lead to a better understanding of the social dynamics and leadership in these contexts.

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Appendix A - IRB Approval Letter

Appendix Figure A.1. IRB Approval Letter



TO: Tim Steffensmeier
School of Leadership Studies
Manhattan, KS 66506

Proposal Number IRB-12218

FROM: Lisa Rubin, Chair
Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects

DATE: 06/10/2024

RE: Approval of Proposal Entitled, "Dependence on authority and exercising leadership in Hungary."

The Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects has reviewed your proposal and has granted full approval. This proposal is **approved for three years from the date of this correspondence.**

APPROVAL DATE: 06/07/2024

EXPIRATION DATE: 06/06/2027

In giving its approval, the Committee has determined that:

No more than minimal risk to subjects

This approval applies only to the proposal currently on file as written. Any change or modification affecting human subjects must be approved by the IRB prior to implementation. All approved proposals are subject to continuing review, which may include the examination of records connected with the project. Announced post-approval monitoring may be performed during the course of this approval period by URCO staff. Injuries, unanticipated problems or adverse events involving risk to subjects or to others must be reported immediately to the Chair of the IRB and / or the URCO.

Electronically signed by Lisa Rubin on 06/10/2024 11:16 AM ET

Appendix B - Round One Focus Group Interview Protocol

Focus Group Interview Questions (first round of virtual, two-hour long focus group session)

1. What comes to your mind when you hear the word “authority”? What feelings do you have?
2. What comes to your mind when you hear the word “leadership”?
3. Do you see any difference between the two?
4. Can you list some authority relations you were in/experienced? How did these relations work out for you?
5. How do you make sense of authority in the Hungarian contexts? How do people behave when they possess authority? And how do people behave when they face authority?
6. What are some specificities of exercising authority in the Hungarian context? Do you see any difference if you think of how authority is exercised in Hungary and in other contexts? How does it differ?
7. To what extent do you think that loyalty to authority is an important feature of Hungarian culture? Why?
8. What are some consequences of exercising authority in Hungary?
9. Is it easy to confront/challenge the authority in Hungary? What are some consequences of doing so?
10. How does authority impact leadership in Hungary?

Appendix C - Preliminary Debriefing Before Focus Group Round 2

Research Title: Dependence on authority and exercising leadership in Hungary

1. Purpose of Research Project

The proposed doctoral research project aims to explore how dependence on authority unfolds in participants' lived experiences and how it impacts exercising leadership in Hungary.

Research goals incorporate:

- Exploring authority, power dynamics, and dependence on authority in relation to leadership
- Providing micro-level exploration and perspectives of the relationship between dependence on authority and leadership
- Exploring authority, dependence on authority in relation to leadership in a specific East-European cultural-, social-political context

Format: Two rounds of two-hour Focus group interviews will be conducted for two cohorts virtually using the Zoom video conference platform. Zoom sessions will be recorded and transcribed. For data analysis, NVivo data analysis software will be used.

2. Doctoral Research Questions (the Focus Group Interview data need to align with these research questions)

RQ1: How do research participants describe authority, dependence on authority and leadership in Hungary.

RQ2: What factors do participants describe as having an impact on dependence on authority in the Hungarian context?

RQ3: From participants' experience in what ways do authority and dependence on authority affect exercising leadership in Hungary?

3. Definitions (Authority, Dependence on Authority, Leadership) With Examples

Authority (formal and informal): “people in (high) position, in a hierarchical relationship with others or having enormous informal power endorsed by others. Services of authority include providing “direction”, “protection”, and “order”” (Heifetz, Grashow & Linsky, 2009, p. 28).

“conferred power to perform a service” (Heifetz, 1994, p. 57)

Dependence on authority: “A hierarchical relationship where the expectations of others (authority) are placed upon people (dependent(s))” (Heifetz, 1994). People instead of facing/addressing their problems endorse their authority to the formal or informal authority and expect him/her/them to solve their problem.

Heifetz (1994) distinguished *appropriate* (where the knowledge or technical expertise is needed to make progress) and *inappropriate dependencies* (where holder of a given problem could address the problem but avoid doing so).

Examples for dependence on authority:

- An employee working with a business school is assigned a task. Instead of experimenting or exploring ways to complete the task she approaches her superior asking for direction/clear guidance how to complete the task.
- An employee prepares a memo for the rector of a university and reaches out to the rector’s cabinet asking his personal assistant about the format. The personal assistant wants to make sure that the rector is satisfied and provides information regarding the expectations that the rector himself does not anticipate/expect.
- In an all-stuff meeting the rector of the school publicly humiliates a colleague who asks “provocative” questions that affect school taboos (questions nobody wants to talk about). Although there are more than 100 people in the room, nobody is speaking up - everybody remains silent.

Leadership (adaptive leadership): “the practice of mobilizing people to tackle tough challenges and thrive” (Heifetz et al., 2009, p. 31). Anyone can exercise leadership anytime. You do not need to have power or position.

Example for exercising leadership:

- A patient who has a terrible back pain visits his GP (Doctor) asking for pain killers. The doctor instead of prescribing a medication is engaging in the difficult conversation with the patient regarding the lifestyle changes the patient needs to make to solve the problem. He prescribes medication but asks the patient to return with a monthly swimming pass next week. (Prescribing a pain killer would mean throwing a technical solution on an adaptive challenge – would not solve the chronic back pain. Notice that the doctor cannot solve the patient's problem, he can only mobilize the patient to make life style changes that would solve the adaptive problem).

Appendix D - Round Two Focus Group Interview Protocol

RQ2

1. What other factors than listed last time contribute(d) to dependence on authority in Hungary? How does Hungarian education influences dependence on authority? What is the role of education.

RQ1/RQ3

2. Now that you have seen the description of exercising (adaptive) leadership, would you be willing to exercise leadership in the Hungarian context? Why? What are/would be some consequences of exercising leadership in Hungary? Would your peers/colleagues, etc. stand behind you if you exercised leadership?
3. How does authority and dependence on authority impact leadership in Hungary?
4. How does the way authority is exercised in Hungary influence your/people's willingness to exercise leadership?
5. Have you ever exercised leadership in the Hungarian context? What happened? What were the consequences?
6. How do the lived experiences you mentioned influence your willingness/capacity to exercise leadership in your workplace, in your weekdays, everywhere?
7. How does your/people's perception on leadership influence your/their intention/capacity to exercise leadership?
8. Tell me an example when somebody depended on you (your authority) or you depended on authority? What happened?
9. To what extent do you think that loyalty to authority is an important feature of Hungarian culture? Why?
10. How is authority recruited/emerges in the Hungarian context?