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A CONTRIBUTION TO THE ITALIAN VALIDATION
OF KELLEY'S FOLLOWERSHIP QUESTIONNAIRE

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Followership, despite its pervasiveness in the workplace, is a neglected topic. This study contributes to validating the Italian version of Kelley's followership scale (1992), with its two dimensions of active engagement (AE) and independent critical thinking (ICT). A self-report questionnaire was administered to 610 workers. The structure of the scale was investigated through exploratory factor analysis, and confirmatory factor analysis showing that the version of the instrument which exhibits the most satisfactory properties consists of 14 items for two dimensions. The two subscales' correlations with the other investigated variables (behavioral disengagement coping, extraversion, lie, job satisfaction, disengagement, emotional exhaustion, leader-member exchange and organizational citizenship behaviors) were in line with expectations and differed for AE and ICT. The two subscales also had significant differences on the basis of socio-demographic characteristics. Results indicate that the final version of Kelley's scale can be regarded as a useful research tool, although it requires further study.

Followership has received scant attention in the literature. This gap has been said to be one of the four "inalienable truths of leadership" (Dixon, 2008, p. 159), or "one of the most interesting omissions in theory and research on leadership" (Avolio, Walumbwa, & Weber, 2009, p. 434). The objective of this study is to remedy this "omission" by presenting an initial Italian validation of Kelley's followership scale (1992). Contrasting with this lack of attention to followership, and one of the primary reasons for investigating it further, is its pervasiveness in the workplace and organizational life: "we are all followers in some way" (Steger, Manners, & Zimmerer, 1982, p. 22) and "even those with the highest levels of leadership responsibilities, answer to someone" (Tanoff & Barlow, 2002, p. 157). Not only does every organization have more followers than leaders (Collinson, 2006), but many people (notably those in middle management) find themselves alternating between the two roles in the course of their work (Kelley, 1988, 1992).

Current uncertainties in the world of work call for leaders who are capable of drawing up an effective strategy to tackle them (Montgomery, 2008), and who can influence their team's change readiness norms (Caldwell, Chatman, O'Reilly, Ormiston, & Lapiz, 2008). In addition, these changes also make it essential to have followers who can provide solid and positive support in these difficult times. As Collinson (2006) emphasizes, an increasing number of scholars argue that followers are a precondition for successful organizations, a stance confirmed by Agho's

(2009) findings: more than 98% of 302 respondents agree with statements regarding the influence that effective followers have on the organization and on the work group. Thus, followers "who recognize a leader's flawed thinking and challenge the leader to consider alternative courses of action […] are highly desirable in today's organizational environments" (Carsten, Uhl-Bien, West, Patera, & McGregor, 2010, p. 557). This points to the importance of proactive followership: a type of followership which can only be formed and expressed if the organizational context is suitable.

Another reason for interest in this issue is that the study of leadership per se might benefit from a better knowledge of followership (Brown & Thornborrow, 1996), given that followership is a complement to leadership (Howell & Costley, 2006) and that "leadership and followership are linked concepts" (Heller & Van Til, 1982, p. 405). It is precisely because of this two-fold link between leadership and followership that the literature on the latter should be re-read in conjunction with the leadership literature, as Shamir (2007) and Crossman and Crossman (2011) have done. The latter identified "four broad overlapping categories within a fluid continuum" (Crossman & Crossman, 2011, p. 484) — namely individualized or leader-centric theories, leader-centered theories which rely on the follower's perspective, multiple leadership which encompasses shared, distributed or collective leadership, and followership literature per se — which present different visions of followers and followership.

This study is concerned with one of these categories, that of the followership literature per se, which includes the pioneering investigations by Kelley (1988, 1992) and Chaleff (1995), the "primary works on which subsequent discussions of followership were based" (Baker, 2007, p. 50). The study concentrates on Kelley's work (1992) and on the instrument he proposed, whose characteristics are investigated in a sample of Italian workers.

MEASURES OF FOLLOWERSHIP

As yet, there has been little quantitative research on followership and the instruments used to measure it are poorly validated and vulnerable to criticism, largely because the construct itself has been variously defined and is supported by few qualitative studies (Crossman & Crossman, 2011).

Before describing Kelley's scale, three other instruments should be mentioned. The performance and relationship questionnaire (PRQ) by Rosenbach, Pittman, and Potter (1996) measures two dimensions of followership, namely "performance initiative" and "relationship initiative". Each dimension is further divided into four behavior patterns or domains (Potter, Rosenbach, & Pittman, 2001). The scale was tested by Baker and Gerlowski (2007), with results that were partially in line with the original model.

Mention should also be made of The Followership Profile (Dixon & Westbrook, 2001), a self-assessment scale for the five behaviors that Chaleff (1995) uses to define "courageous followers." A more recent instrument, and one constructed from a different perspective and with different research goals, is that developed by Sy (2010) to investigate leaders' implicit followership theories (IFTs). As Baker (2006) noticed, all these instruments (unavailable in Italian) require further investigation in order to explore the validity and the possibility of adequately detecting the construct (Baker, 2007); indeed the authors develop and employ these scales primarily for

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training rather than research objectives (they often identify a specific style of followership within a typology from the scores of their scale) and, in most cases, do not provide information on their psychometric characteristics. An exception is the above mentioned test of PQR made by Baker and Gerlowski (2007).

As indicated earlier, this study has chosen to consider the scale proposed by Kelley (1992) to measure followership behaviors. Kelley is not the only scholar to emphasize followers' importance in organizational dynamics, and recent work has built fruitfully on his definition of followership (Carsten et al., 2010; Uhl-Bien & Pillai, 2007). Nevertheless, Kelley is acknowledged to have been the first to draw attention to why people follow and the type of followers (Black-shear, 2003), as well as to the topic of followership per se (Baker, 2007; Crossman & Crossman, 2011). In addition, his instrument has been adopted in a number of investigations published in the last decade (e.g., Blanchard, Welbourne, Gilmore, & Bullock, 2009; Mushonga & Torrance, 2008; Tanoff & Barlow, 2002).

In Kelley's work, followership is operationalized along two main dimensions. The first is independent critical thinking (ICT), where behaviors range from offering constructive criticism and showing the ability to think for oneself, with creativity and innovation, at one end of the spectrum, and passively accepting orders and performing tasks without thinking at the other end. The second dimension is active engagement (AE); here, the spectrum goes from the propensity to take initiative, participate actively and be self-starters at one end, to a general passivity with a need for constant supervision and prodding by superiors at the opposite end. The scale was developed on the basis of the behaviors that Kelley (1992) identified as typical of the positive side of the spectrum for each dimension. To date, only Blanchard and colleagues (2009) have investigated Kelley's scale, doing so in a sample of university employees. The authors tested the scale and put forward an alternative version which maintains the two subscales (AE and ICT), but eliminates a number of items from the original. Blanchard and colleagues point out that Kelley's followership dimensions are "in need of empirical testing" (p. 114) and suggest that the instrument be tested further across a diversity of samples, introducing measures for controlling for problems with self-reporting bias, and particularly for social desirability (Roccato, 2003).

As regards the relationships between followership and other constructs, Kelley's scale is adopted in three studies. The first two concentrate on personal characteristics in relation to followership behaviors: Tanoff and Barlow (2002), in particular, investigate leadership personality traits using a tool which adopts the Five Factor Model (McCrae & John, 1992). The personality factors showed a positive association with the two factors of followership, above all Dynamic (Extraversion) and Conscientious (Conscientiousness). Mushonga and Torrance (2008) conducted a similar study, combining the Five Factor Model with the two dimensions of followership. They found that conscientiousness and extraversion have a significant relation with ICT, and the former also has a relation with AE.

By contrast, the study by Blanchard et al. (2009), cited above, concentrates on wellbeing and motivational indicators in relation to the dimensions of followership: in the sample of university employees, the authors found that AE was positively related to job satisfaction (intrinsic and extrinsic) and organizational commitment (affective and normative), whereas ICT was negatively related to normative organizational commitment and extrinsic job satisfaction. The authors concentrate in particular on the role that the interaction between the two dimensions assumed in the original model could have in the relationship with the outcomes, and conclude that active en-

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gagement could be "the driving factor" (p. 127) in these relationships. AE, they state, may buffer the potential negative effects of ICT. While the tendency toward independent critical thinking may in the abstract be valued at the workplace, the authors conclude, in practice it can be a "double-edged sword" (p. 127) whose effects are still largely unexplored.

The main aim of the study presented here is to analyze the psychometric properties of the Italian version of Kelley's followership scale in a sample of workers. The study thus seeks to obtain information about the scale and its potential for effective practical use. In addition, the study explores the correlation patterns between the followership scale and other constructs, including personal variables (i.e., extraversion and behavioral disengagement coping), wellbeing indicators (job satisfaction, disengagement and emotional exhaustion) and motivational indicators (organizational citizenship behaviors) to test the criterion-related validity of the scale. Finally, we investigated a dimension of leadership to test the discriminant validity of Kelley's instrument, since the leader-member exchange scale (LMX) is a measure of the quality of the relationship that focuses on the exchange between leader and follower (Liden & Maslyn, 1998; Rhoades Shanock, Roch, & Mishra, 2012).

Though the limited amount of empirical work published in this area makes it impossible to advance precise hypotheses about the nomological network of followership, a few expectations can nevertheless be formulated. As regards the personal variables, extraversion, also known as "surgency" (Goldberg, 1990) and defined as people's tendency to describe themselves as dynamic, active, energetic, talkative and dominant (Caprara, Barbaranelli, & Borgogni, 1993), can be expected to correlate positively with both AE (Tanoff & Barlow, 2002) and ICT (Mushonga & Torrance, 2008; Tanoff & Barlow, 2002), while behavioral disengagement coping (Carver et al., 1989), described as the reduction in the efforts made by an individual to cope with the stressor, also ceasing to try to achieve the objectives with which these same sources of stress interfere (Carver et al., 1989), should correlate negatively with both dimensions of followership, and in particular with AE, especially as regards the engagement component (Bakker & Demerouti, 2008). For the outcome variables, we can expect to see a positive relation between the two dimensions of followership and job satisfaction, a positive emotional state resulting from the evaluation of one's own work (Locke, 1976), as found by Blanchard et al. (2009), especially for ICT. Conversely, and in line with studies of positive and negative employee wellbeing (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007), a negative relation can be expected between the two dimensions of followership and disengagement (described as the progressive detachment of individuals from their work, its objectives and its contents; Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner, & Schaufeli, 2001) and emotional exhaustion (one of three components that contribute to burnout syndrome in the classical definition of Maslach and Jackson, 1986), as negative indicators of wellbeing (Demerouti et al., 2010). As regards organizational citizenship behavior, given that it is a construct expressing the degree of involvement in the organization (Van Dyne et al., 1994), related to behaviors that, while not critical to the job or to carrying out the tasks are, however, beneficial for organizational functioning (Lee & Allen, 2002), we can expect there to be a positive relation with the two dimensions of followership, like that found between commitment and AE by Blanchard et al. (2009).

Finally, as regards leadership, LMX — as an expression of mature leadership relationships that lead to partnerships between the leader and follower (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995) — could show a positive correlation with both dimensions of followership.

METHOD

Participants

The sample consisted of 610 respondents from different organizational settings: 428 respondents who were nurses in a healthcare organization (71%), 100 from heterogeneous work settings (snowball sampling, 16%) and 82 bank tellers (13%). The sample was 77% female and 23% male. All respondents were employed under open-ended contracts and had a medium-high education level: only 5% of the sample had less than a high school diploma, while 42% had a high school diploma, 47% had a bachelor's degree, and 6% held a master's or other graduate degree.

Average length of employment was 17.1 years ($SD = 9.74$), with respondents working an average of 35.9 hours per week ($SD = 6.04$). Respondents' tenure with the current supervisor averaged 5.8 years ($SD = 6.13$).

As for organizational rank, in addition to the 82 bank tellers, the 428 respondents in the health care sector were all nurses, while the majority of those from heterogeneous work settings were white collar workers (around 76%), followed by blue collar workers (around 12%) and by supervisors, middle managers and executives (12%).

Procedure

Kelley's scale was translated into Italian using a procedure involving the following steps (Brislin, 1970): a) two experts translated the scale independently; b) the experts compared their translations to arrive at a consensus version; c) this version was translated blindly (i.e., without seeing the original scale) back into English by a native speaker; d) the back-translated version and the original source were matched, and any discrepancies were analyzed.

Kelley's (1992) paper presenting and describing the scale had already been translated and published in Italian (1994). The final version produced by the group of translators was compared afterward with the published Italian version, and a few nonsubstantial differences were found. The entire process called for careful thought and analysis, not least because the items in their original formulation were rather long and complex: back-translation, in fact, is not sufficient to eliminate problems that may arise from differences that are cultural rather than only linguistic (Su & Parham, 2002).

The Italian version of the scale (see Appendix 1 for the original version of Kelley's questionnaire and its Italian translation) was included in a self-report questionnaire that also investigated other constructs (see Measures).

The questionnaire was administered in paper-and-pencil format to the nurses, and in Web-based format to the other respondents. Participants were asked to answer all questions as accurately as possible and voluntary participation was emphasized. In both administration modes, the survey could be filled out anonymously to guarantee that individual findings were strictly confidential.

Measures

The followership scale (Kelley, 1992) is made up of 20 items (ten ICT items and ten AE items) to be rated on a Likert-type scale, from 0 (*rarely*) to 6 (*almost always*). As previously mentioned, the entire scale is presented in Appendix 1, in both English and Italian.

In addition to the followership scale, which will be presented thoroughly in the results section with its psychometric qualities, this study takes a number of other variables into consideration. These included the following personal variables.

Behavioral disengagement coping: four items (e.g., "I reduce the amount of effort I'm putting into solving the problem"), with response choices scored from 1 (*I usually don't do this at all*) to 4 (*I usually do this a lot*) from the COPE scales developed by Carver et al. (1989). Cronbach's alpha for the current sample was .77.

Extraversion: 10 items (e.g., "Feel comfortable around people") on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (*very inaccurate*) to 5 (*very accurate*), taken from Goldberg (1992). Alpha for the current sample was .85.

Lie scale: seven items from the Italian adaptation of the Big Five Questionnaire constructed by Caprara et al., (1993) were used as a measure of the participants' tendency to present a distorted picture of themselves (e.g., "I've always solved every problem that has occurred"). These items were presented with a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (*very inaccurate*) to 5 (*very accurate*). The use of lie scales in questionnaires is one of the possible strategies for quantifying some of the more significant types of response bias (Paulhus, 1991). Alpha for the current sample was .75.

The following wellbeing indicators were considered.

Job satisfaction: four items in a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (*very unsatisfied*) to 5 (*very satisfied*), from the questionnaire developed by Pejtersen, Kristensen, Borg, and Bjorner (2010). Satisfaction is investigated in connection with the job in general, the physical conditions at the workplace, work prospects, and how the respondent's abilities are utilized. Alpha for the current sample was .84.

Disengagement: seven items (e.g., "Over time, one can become disconnected from this type of work") in a 4-point scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 4 (*strongly agree*), from the Oldenburg Burnout Inventory (OLBI; Demerouti et al., 2010). Alpha for the current sample was .79.

Emotional exhaustion: six items (e.g., "During my work, I often feel emotionally drained") in a 4-point scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 4 (*strongly agree*), taken from the OLBI (Demerouti et al., 2010). Alpha for the current sample was .77.

The measure of leadership we considered was as follows.

Leader-Member Exchange: 11 items (e.g., "I like my supervisor very much as a person") in a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*), from Liden and Maslyn (1998). Alpha for the current sample was .95.

The indicator connected to workers' motivation we considered was as follows.

Organizational Citizenship Behaviors (OCB), which was measured using eight items in a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (*never*) to 7 (*always*) from the scale developed by Lee and Allen (2002). This scale taps organizational citizenship behaviors along two dimensions, distinguishing between behaviors directed at individuals, or OCBI, and behaviors directed at the organization, or OCBO. Examples of the items used include "Go out of the way to make newer employees feel welcome in the work group" (OCBI) and "Attend functions that are not required but that help the organizational image" (OCBO). Alpha for the current sample was .84 for OCBI and .82 for OCBO.

This study controls for gender, length of employment, tenure with the current supervisor, and education level. Organizational tenure and gender are considered important control variables

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in the leadership literature (Eagly & Johnson, 1990), and age and education have been shown to influence followers' preferences for leadership behaviors in prior studies on leadership (e.g., Boatwright & Forrest, 2000; Stinson & Robertson, 1973). Baker, Mathis, and Stites-Doe (2011), therefore, suggest that these variables, together with race/ethnicity, may also influence followership behaviors. Moreover, organizational tenure has been shown to have a strong positive relationship with critical thinking (Blanchard et al., 2009), and Carsten et al.'s (2010) qualitative study found that tenure with the current organization and tenure working with the current supervisor may affect the social construction of followership.

Data Analyses

Random sampling stratified by gender and organizational setting was used to split the total sample into two subgroups ($n1$ = 303 and $n2$ = 307). This was done so that one subgroup could be used at the exploratory stage as a calibration sample in order to assess the model's validity, and the other subgroup could be used as a validation sample (Bobbio & Manganelli Rattazzi, 2006; Sonnentag & Fritz, 2007). For all measures, descriptive analyses (*M*, *SD*, asymmetry and kurtosis) of individual items were conducted on the entire sample in a preliminary exploration of the properties of the followership scale.

Exploratory factor analysis (Maximum Likelihood Method, ML) using the Predictive Analytics SoftWare (PASW) 18 was performed on the calibration sample ($n1$ = 303) to investigate the psychometric properties of Kelley's scale and provide evidence of the measure's construct validity by creating a more parsimonious representation of the original set of observations (Hinkin, 1998). The validation sample ($n2$ = 307) was then used for a confirmatory factor analysis with Lisrel 8.72 (Jöreskog & Sörbom, 1992). The goodness of fit of the model was evaluated using the comparative fit index (CFI), the goodness-of-fit index (GFI), the Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI, also known as the Bentler-Bonett non-Normed fit index, NNFI) and the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA). Hu and Bentler (1999) state that a cut-off value of .95 or more for CFI and TLI/NNFI and of .06 or less for RMSEA are needed before we can conclude that the fit is reasonably good. However, Marsh, Hau, and Wen (2004) emphasize that these guidelines should not be interpreted too rigidly. After confirmatory factor analysis, the average variance extracted (AVE) was calculated on each of the two followership dimensions as a measure of the common variance for each latent variable (Ping, 2005). Fornell and Larcker (1981) have suggested that AVE can be used as an index of convergent validity and that a compelling demonstration of convergent validity would be an AVE of .50 or above.

Once the factor solution had been found, alpha was calculated for the total sample as an estimate of reliability, that is, homogeneity and internal consistency (Nunnally, 1978). In addition, the inter-item correlations and corrected item-total correlations were calculated for the total sample. The scores relative to the two followership subscales were subjected to analysis of variance by organizational setting, length of employment, and tenure with the current supervisor. The correlations (Pearson's *r*) were calculated between the two followership subscales and LMX, as a measure of discriminant validity (Bagozzi, Yi, & Phillips, 1991; Hinkin, 1998), and between the followership scale and the other variables considered as a measure of the scale's criterion-related validity (Hinkin, 1998).

RESULTS

Descriptive Statistics for Individual Items

Descriptive analyses performed on the entire sample indicated higher mean scores for five items relating to the ICT dimension in Kelley's model (items 5, 12, 19, 20, 16) and for one item (13) for AE (Table 1). Furthermore, 12 items out of 20 had a low negative asymmetry (the distribution tail was longer on the left of the mean), whereas eight items had a low positive asymmetry (the distribution tail was longer on the right of the mean). Almost all items, moreover, had a negative kurtosis index: the distribution was flat with wide tails. Nevertheless, all values of asymmetry and kurtosis ranged between –1.0 and +1.0 (Table 1). Consequently, not much distortion of normal distribution was found (Barbaranelli, 2003; Muthén & Kaplan, 1985).

TABLE 1
Descriptive statistics for individual items (7-point scale from 0 to 6)

Items	M	SD	Asymmetry	Kurtosis
1. Societal goal and personal dream (ICT)	2.21	1.46	.25	−.48
2. Personal goals align (AE)	2.26	1.39	.22	−.49
3. Committed and energized (AE)	2.54	1.35	.25	−.42
4. Enthusiasm (AE)	2.52	1.37	.11	−.47
5. Personally identify (ICT)	3.21	1.29	−.18	−.10
6. Actively develop (AE)	2.83	1.38	.14	−.20
7. Build success (AE)	2.38	1.32	.39	.14
8. Highest quality work (AE)	3.11	1.49	−.11	−.43
9. Take initiative (AE)	2.63	1.52	.10	−.60
10. Contribute high level (AE)	2.85	1.44	−.05	−.60
11. Think up new ideas (ICT)	2.89	1.40	−.05	−.44
12. Solve tough problems (ICT)	3.27	1.49	−.17	−.43
13. Help coworkers (AE)	3.27	1.35	−.07	−.17
14. See opportunities and risks (ICT)	2.99	1.41	−.14	−.28
15. Understanding needs and objectives (AE)	2.76	1.38	−.01	−.23
16. Recognize one's strengths and weaknesses (ICT)	3.39	1.27	−.17	.00
17. Question decisions (ICT)	2.77	1.54	−.02	−.61
18. Contrary (ICT)	2.44	1.53	.12	−.61
19. Ethical standards (ICT)	3.31	1.43	−.13	−.54
20. Assert issues (ICT)	3.37	1.45	−.30	−.43

Note. The complete items are reported in the Appendix, the brief version of the items was taken from Blanchard and colleagues (2009), except for items 14, 15, and 16. AE indicates which items Kelley (1992) proposed to be related to active engagement and ICT indicates which items Kelley proposed to be related to independent critical thinking.

Exploratory Factor Analysis

Exploratory factor analysis (ML) was performed on the calibration sample ($n1$ = 303). The first factor analysis yielded three factors with eigenvalues > 1, explaining 58.58% of the variance. All three factors consisted of more than three items, and only item 16 showed a factor loading below .50. Item 17 had fairly similar loading on factors 1 and 3 (Table 2). Factors 1 and 3

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TABLE 2
Exploratory factor analysis on the calibration sample ($n1$ = 303): Twenty items,
three factors extracted (ML, Promax rotation)

Items	Factors		
	AE	Attitude	ICT
9. Take initiative (AE)	**.90**	−.08	−.06
8. Highest quality work (AE)	**.90**	−.17	−.04
10. Contribute high level (AE)	**.82**	−.01	−.03
12. Solve tough problems (ICT)	**.78**	−.10	.13
11. Think up new ideas (ICT)	**.76**	.05	.06
6. Actively develop (AE)	**.75**	.17	−.02
7. Build success (AE)	**.75**	.13	−.12
15. Understanding needs and objectives (AE)	**.73**	.15	−.14
5. Personally identify (ICT)	**.71**	.03	.07
13. Help coworkers (AE)	**.70**	.07	.04
14. See opportunities and risks (ICT)	**.63**	−.03	.23
16. Recognize one's strengths and weaknesses (ICT)	**.42**	.13	.22
1. Societal goal and personal dream (ICT)	−.14	**.79**	.03
2. Personal goals align (AE)	−.00	**.78**	.05
3. Committed and energized (AE)	.07	**.78**	−.04
4. Enthusiasm (AE)	.23	**.52**	−.02
19. Ethical standards (ICT)	−.03	−.02	**.81**
20. Assert issues (ICT)	−.06	.05	**.79**
18. Contrary (ICT)	−.03	−.00	**.62**
17. Question decisions (ICT)	.33	−.02	**.51**
Factor correlation matrix	AE	Attitude	ICT
AE	–		
Attitude	.63	–	
ICT	.63	.33	–

Note. Factor loadings > .40 are written in bold type. The complete items are reported in the Appendix, the brief version of the items was taken from Blanchard and colleagues (2009), except for items 14, 15, and 16. AE indicates which items Kelley (1992) proposed to be related to active engagement and ICT indicates which items Kelley proposed to be related to independent critical thinking. ML = Maximum Likelihood.

appear to match Kelley's conceptualization. The factor labeled ICT loaded four items that appear to be aligned with the critical thinking dimension (e.g., "Contrary," item 18, or "Question decisions," item 17). In contrast, the factor labeled AE loaded a mix of 12 items, some relating to active engagement and others to independent critical thinking (e.g., "Contribute high level," item 10, AE, or "Solve tough problems," item 12, ICT).

The factor labeled Attitude loaded four items. As was noted by Blanchard and colleagues (2009), some of these items (e.g., "Committed and energized," item 3, or "Personal goals align," item 2) seem to be associated with attitude and affect rather than with behaviors.

Factors showed a high positive correlation: AE was correlated with both Attitude (r = .63) and ICT (r = .63), while Attitude and ICT exhibited a lower correlation (r = .33). Following the lead offered by Blanchard et al. (2009), we re-ran the factor analysis without the four items of

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factor 2 and omitting items 15 and 16 (which had low loadings in those authors' study), retaining a total of 14 items. The factors with eigenvalues greater than 1 were the same two described earlier (59.78% explained variance) with a high correlation ($r = .65$), resulting in an AE subscale (10 items) and an ICT subscale (4 items) consisting of the same items used by Blanchard et al. (Table 3).

TABLE 3
Exploratory factor analysis on the calibration sample ($n1 = 303$): Twenty items, three factors extracted (ML, Promax rotation)

Items	Factors	
	AE	ICT
6. Actively develop (AE)	**.89**	−.07
7. Build success (AE)	**.84**	−.12
9. Take initiative (AE)	**.83**	−.04
10. Contribute high level (AE)	**.81**	−.03
11. Think up new ideas (ICT)	**.80**	.05
5. Personally identify (ICT)	**.76**	.03
8. Highest quality work (AE)	**.76**	−.01
12. Solve tough problems (ICT)	**.72**	.14
13. Help coworkers (AE)	**.72**	.05
14. See opportunities and risks (ICT)	**.56**	.27
19. Ethical standards (ICT)	−.06	**.82**
20. Assert issues (ICT)	−.04	**.78**
18. Contrary (ICT)	−.05	**.64**
17. Question decisions (ICT)	.31	**.51**
Factor correlation matrix	AE	ICT
AE	−	
ICT	.65	−

Note. Factor loadings > .50 are written in bold type. The complete items are reported in the Appendix, the brief version of the items was taken from Blanchard and colleagues (2009), except for item 14. AE indicates which items Kelley (1992) proposed to be related to active engagement and ICT indicates which items Kelley proposed to be related to independent critical thinking. ML = Maximum Likelihood.
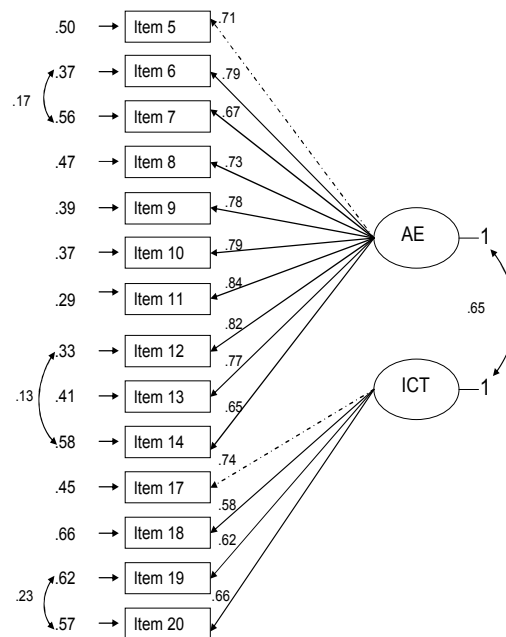
Confirmatory Factor Analysis

On the basis of the results of exploratory factor analysis, we tested a 14-item two-correlated-factor model on the validation sample ($n2 = 307$). For semantic and lexical reasons stemming from item formulation, moreover, we estimated the error correlations between the following item pairs: i6 and i7 (AE dimension), conceptually connected by the idea that a follower could be a valuable resource for the supervisor; i12 and i14 (AE dimension), conceptually connected by the idea that a follower may be able to cope and willing to deal with complex situations, and i19 and i20 (ICT dimension), conceptually connected by the idea that a follower is not just a performer but critically examines the content of the leader's requests, doing so in terms of values deemed to be important.

Fit indexes were satisfactory: $\chi^2 = 208.91$, $p < .001$; χ^2 and $df(73)$ ratio = 2.86; GFI = .91; NNFI = .97; CFI = .98; RMSEA = .08; SRMR = .06. The same satisfactory solution was not found when the above correlations between errors were not calculated. In this case, fit indexes

were: χ^2 = 296.66, p < .001; χ^2 and df(76) ratio = 3.90; GFI = .88; NNFI = .96; CFI = .96; RMSEA = .10; SRMR = .07.

The AVE statistics for AE and ICT were .57 and .43, respectively. Because the AVE score for AE was higher than the recommended cut-off threshold of .50, this result provides evidence of the subscale's convergent validity. By contrast, the AVE score for ICT was lower than the cut-off. Loadings were also adequate, but less satisfactory for ICT than for AE. As can be seen from Figure 1, factor correlation was high (r = .65).

Note. AE = active engagement; ICT = independent critical thinking.

FIGURE 1
Confirmatory factor analysis on the validation sample ($n2$ = 307): Completely standardized solution.

Reliability

Results for the final model with 14 items showed good reliability for both subscales: the alpha coefficient for the total sample of 610 participants was .94 for AE and .79 for ICT, while corrected item-total correlations ranged from .69 to .80 for AE and from .56 to .65 for ICT.

Analysis of Variance and Correlations

Independent samples t-tests and ANOVA were performed on the total sample to determine whether scores for the AE and ICT subscales in the 14-item model differed on the basis of several socio-demographic variables.

As Table 4 indicates, males show significantly higher scores than females for both AE and ICT. Analysis of variance (post-hoc LSD) for the variables length of employment and tenure

with the current supervisor, both recoded in three categories, presented some differences in AE levels. Specifically, for the former, $F(2, 591) = 14.51$, $p < .001$, participants whose length of employment was between 0 and 10 years ($M = 32.82$, $SD = 12.08$) had higher scores than those who had been employed between 11 and 20 years ($M = 26.90$, $SD = 8.98$) and between 21 and 40 years ($M = 28.52$, $SD = 12.01$). For tenure with the current supervisor, $F(2, 544) = 6.59$, $p < .01$, participants who had worked with their current supervisor for a period between 0 and 1 year ($M = 32.53$, $SD = 12.34$) had higher scores than those who had worked with their supervisor between 2 and 10 years ($M = 29.14$, $SD = 10.78$) and between 11 and 35 years ($M = 27.79$, $SD = 10.90$). For organizational setting, significant differences were also found for both AE, $F(2, 600) = 111.65$, $p < .001$, and ICT, $F(2, 600) = 50.10$, $p < .001$: bank tellers ($M = 41.87$, $SD = 8.65$) had higher AE scores than nurses ($M = 25.61$, $SD = 8.90$) and workers from heterogeneous settings ($M = 34.43$, $SD = 12.97$), while bank tellers ($M = 15.15$, $SD = 4.55$) and workers from heterogeneous settings ($M = 13.95$, $SD = 5.35$) had higher ICT scores than nurses ($M = 10.71$, $SD = 3.97$).

TABLE 4
Results of t-test and analysis of variance on AE and ICT

Followership	Variables	Groups	N	M	SD	t or F values	Post hoc
AE	Gender	1. Female	463	28.45	10.99	$t(596) = 3.44$ $p < .01$	–
		2. Male	135	32.21	11.89		
	Length of employment	1. 0-10 years	181	32.82	12.08	$F(2, 591) = 14.51$ $p < .001$	1 > 2 and 3
		2. 11-20 years	207	26.90	8.98		
		3. 21-40 years	206	28.52	12.01		
	Tenure with supervisor	1. 0-1 years	147	32.53	12.34	$F(2, 544) = 6.59$ $p < .01$	1 > 2 and 3
		2. 2-10 years	291	29.14	10.78		
		3. 11-35 years	109	27.79	10.90		
	Setting	1. Healthcare	421	25.61	8.90	$F(2, 600) = 111.65$ $p < .001$	3 > 1 and 2
		2. Heterogeneous	103	34.43	12.97		
		3. Banking	79	41.87	8.65		
ICT	Gender	1. Female	464	11.50	4.50	$t(596) = 3.57$ $p < .001$	–
		2. Male	134	13.10	4.70		
	Setting	1. Healthcare	421	10.71	3.97	$F(2, 600) = 50.10$ $p < .001$	2 and 3 > 1
		2. Heterogeneous	103	13.95	5.35		
		3. Banking	79	15.15	4.55		

Note. AE = active engagement; ICT = independent critical thinking.

No significant differences were found in relation to level of education.

Intercorrelations calculated for the total sample (Table 5) showed a number of statistically significant relationships. AE was correlated with extraversion ($r = .24$, $p < .001$). Among the wellbeing indicators, it correlated positively with job satisfaction ($r = .15$, $p < .001$), while among the indicators linked to workers' motivation, it was correlated with OCBO and OCBI ($r = .24$, $p < .001$, and $r = .30$, $p < .001$, respectively). The correlation with LMX was significant but weak ($r = .09$, $p < .05$). In contrast, AE was negatively related with behavioral disengagement coping ($r = -.28$, $p < .001$),

TABLE 5
Means, standard deviations, reliabilities, and intercorrelations of all variables

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1. AE	–												
2. ICT	.55***	–											
3. Behavioral disengagement coping	–.28***	–.21***	–										
4. Extraversion	.24***	.15***	–.20***	–									
5. Job satisfaction	.15***	.03	–.19***	.11***	–								
6. Disengagement	–.13***	.02	.26***	–.16***	–.61***	–							
7. Emotional exhaustion	–.20***	–.14***	.24***	–.21***	–.57***	.55***	–						
8. OCBI	.30***	.16***	–.13***	.20***	.28***	–.29***	–.16***	–					
9. OCBO	.24***	–.01	–.07	.16***	.49***	–.49***	–.25***	.47***	–				
10. LMX	.09**	–.08**	–.12***	.09**	.38***	–.37***	–.21***	.18***	.36***	–			
11. Lie	.27***	.20***	–.13***	.26***	.17***	–.12***	–.20***	.15***	.12***	.08	–		
12. Length of employment	–.14***	–.02	.10**	–.12***	–.02	.05	.03	–.04	–.05	–.12***	.03	–	
13. Tenure with supervisor	–.10**	–.04	.02	–.07	.07	–.01	–.02	.04	–.01	–.03	–.01	.33***	–
M	2.96	2.96	1.79	3.18	3.23	2.16	2.45	5.53	4.48	4.47	2.92	17.07	5.81
SD	1.41	1.49	0.79	1.07	0.91	0.88	0.90	1.19	1.59	1.81	0.98	9.74	6.13
Alpha	.94	.79	.77	.85	.84	.79	.77	.84	.82	.95	.75	–	–

Note. AE = active engagement; ICT = independent critical thinking; OCBI = organizational citizenship behaviors individuals; OCBO = organizational citizenship behaviors organization; LMX = leader-member exchange.
** *p* < .05. *** *p* < .001.

disengagement ($r = -.13$, $p < .001$), and emotional exhaustion ($r = -.20$, $p < .001$), while among the control variables, it was negatively correlated with length of employment and tenure with the current supervisor (respectively, $r = -.14$, $p < .001$, $r = -.10$, $p < .05$).

Independent critical thinking (ICT) had fewer statistically significant relationships: it correlated positively with extraversion ($r = .15$, $p < .001$) and with OCBI ($r = .16$, $p < .001$), and negatively with behavioral disengagement coping ($r = -.21$, $p < .001$) and emotional exhaustion ($r = -.14$, $p < .001$). Unlike AE, it also correlated negatively with LMX ($r = -.08$, $p < .05$). ICT did not show significant relationships with either length of employment or with tenure with the current supervisor. Both AE and ICT were positively correlated with the lie index ($r = .27$, $p < .001$, and $r = .20$, $p < .001$, respectively), though these correlations were not high.

Discussion

Followership has been understudied, particularly by comparison with the attention that has been devoted to leadership (e.g., Bjugstad, Thach, Thompson, & Morris, 2006; Tanoff & Barlow, 2002): this, despite its pervasiveness and importance in organizations (e.g., Collinson, 2006; Montgomery, 2008). Not only have there been few conceptual analyses and in-depth reviews of followership literature, there is even a lack of commonly accepted definitions, and, as Crossman and Crossman (2011) state, "writers use the term *followership* in a number of ways" (p. 482). This little attention is reflected in the paucity of empirical research on the topic, which several authors maintain would benefit from a qualitative exploration. Such scrutiny is particularly suitable for little-investigated constructs (Richards & Morse, 2007), and could help in achieving "a more grounded understanding of what followership means to those acting in such roles" (Carsten et al., 2010, p. 544). On the qualitative front, none of the survey instruments presented in the literature have as yet been adequately tested (Baker, 2007). This study thus concentrates on Kelley's (1992) scale, exploring its characteristics in a sample of Italian workers.

Our exploratory factor analysis resulted in the same factor structure found by Blanchard et al. (2009) with two dimensions that can be labeled as active engagement (AE) and independent critical thinking (ICT), though the items' groupings were not exactly as they were in Kelley's original model. As for confirmatory factor analysis, the validation sample yielded good fit indexes if the correlations between the errors of several items were computed. All fit indexes were coherent with the cut-off values defined by Hu and Bentler (1999), except for RMSEA which was higher than .06. However, as stated previously, such guidelines should not be applied in an overly stringent way (Marsh et al., 2004). Though the discrepancy between the range of loadings of the two subscales is not especially high, the gap between the two AVE coefficients is significant: AVE is over the cut-off for AE and under the cut-off for ICT. The need to calculate the correlations between the errors of some items, and the AVE of ICT under the cut-off of .50 suggest that the item formulation, at least in some cases, is not completely satisfactory.

Further analyses revealed several interesting aspects: comparison of item means showed higher scores for items grouped under ICT in Kelley's model, just two of which were retained as ICT items in this study's final grouping. The two subscales, especially AE, differentiated between groups of participants involved in the research project. Males had higher scores than females for both AE and ICT, which appears to be in line with the findings regarding the differences

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between men's and women's descriptions of their followership roles that emerged from Berg's (1998) qualitative study.

With respect to length of employment, people with a shorter length of employment (between 0 to 10 years) showed a higher level of AE than people who had worked for a longer period. This is in line with Carsten et al.'s (2010) suggestion, and is to some extent consistent with the strong relationship between organizational tenure and ICT found by Blanchard and colleagues (2009). We found a similar pattern for tenure with the current supervisor (Carsten et al., 2010): people working with their current supervisor for a shorter period of time reported higher levels of AE than people who had worked with their supervisor for a longer period.

Furthermore, significant differences were found between organizational settings. Specifically, nurses showed lower levels of AE and, above all, of ICT, a finding that confirms the critical value of the relationship between leader and follower in this profession, as highlighted by the Nurses' Early Exit Study (NEXT; Hasselhorn, Müller, Tackenberg, 2005); in Italy, Cortese (2007) showed that a good relationship with the coordinator is a major factor in nurses' job satisfaction (see also Cortese, Colombo, & Ghislieri, 2010).

Correlations with the other variables considered were generally in line with expectations and similar for the two subscales, though AE showed a larger number of statistically significant relationships. For the personal variables, the two dimensions of followership showed a stronger, albeit negative, relationship with behavioral disengagement coping; among the wellbeing indicators, only emotional exhaustion was found to have a significant negative correlation with both followership dimensions, whereas job satisfaction and disengagement correlate only with AE. As regards the indicators connected to workers' motivation, OCBI had a positive correlation with both AE and ICT.

One noteworthy point concerns the relationships of the two dimensions with LMX: weakly positive for AE and weakly negative for ICT. This, as expected, implies that the constructs of followership and Leader-Member Exchange do not overlap. Though the AE dimension was found to correlate fairly well with the constructs that measure motivational aspects (whether individual or emerging from the individual-organization interaction), the ICT dimension is harder to interpret semantically. For example, Blanchard et al.'s (2009) contention that ICT plays a more "complicated" role can be seen as being borne out precisely by this inverse correlation with LMX: it could correspond to a more cynical and disillusioned attitude toward the job and the relationship with superiors. This dimension is all the more difficult to interpret in the 14-item solution, where it is underrepresented compared to AE and has psychometric properties that are not entirely satisfactory.

CONCLUSIONS

Kelley's (1992) followership scale was the first instrument constructed with the explicit purpose of measuring followership behaviors. This study follows Blanchard and colleagues (2009) in investigating the scale's psychometric properties, but tests them in a non-English speaking context. In addition to moving the issue into another cultural purview, as suggested by the literature on the subject (Carsten et al., 2010) and by that on leadership (e.g., GLOBE studies; House, Javidan, Hanges, & Dorfman, 2002), this study extends the number of variables examined for followership in response to the need expressed in the literature to explore the construct's nomological network (Blanchard et al., 2009; Kelley, 2008).

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Several limitations to this study should be mentioned. First, the sample is "unbalanced" toward the healthcare setting and toward women. The second major limitation is that only self-report data were used. Problems can, therefore, be present with self-report bias, particularly with social desirability (Blanchard et al., 2009): the latter problem was to some extent controlled for by analyzing the correlation of the two subscales with the lie scale which, though significant, is not high. This correlation suggests that the scale should be used with caution, particularly when a personal presentation is of great importance, such as in competitive or selective settings. It is therefore advisable to adopt a scale of social desirability along with this Followership Question-naire, especially in the above specified circumstances. The risk remains of the common method bias, which future studies could, for example, limit by investigating leader's perceptions of followership behaviors in addition to the followers' self-perceptions. A further limitation concerns the operationalization of the construct. This limitation is most apparent for the ICT dimension, which merits additional attention.

Further developments of this validation work could take a number of directions. Future studies could concentrate on other samples, in particular presenting a more balanced distribution of the participants by organizational setting and gender. Other research designs could be used in addition to cross-sectional studies to further verify the psychometric properties of the scale, as well as to achieve a better understanding of this construct and how it can be operationalized through further investigations of the dimensions underlying it (Carsten et al., 2010).

This further work on the construct could find synergies with workplace practice, where we are now seeing a certain "followership in action" but not, to paraphrase Schön (1983), a "re-flection on (this same) action," and not even on its strong link with leadership.

Furthermore, although it has been used in a number of studies over the last decade, we should consider that Kelley's scale is not devoid of critical aspects linked to the formulation of the items, which are, in some cases, syntactically complex and not always suitable for the Italian context. Therefore, for further research, it could be useful to consider the opportunity to develop a new instrument, that could allow easier administration and propose a lexicon that is more syn-tonic with the Italian context.

Our findings are not without practical implications. One area of application is that of leadership and followership training. For leadership training, in addition to proceeding with 360-degree feedback, it would be possible to investigate whether course participants' coworkers demonstrate followership behaviors with high levels of AE and ICT. As an aid in developing true followership training (Crossman & Crossman, 2011; Mmobuosi, 1991), the instrument could be used to stimulate thought about the two dimensions. In particular, the scale makes it possible to identify followership behaviors that can be taught in training sessions, and to compare the participant's post-training and pre-training self-assessments in order to find signs of change, either in general terms or in specific indicators.

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APPENDIX

Kelley's Followership Questionnaire: Original Items, Italian Translation and the Different Groupings

Items	Grouping proposed by Kelley	Grouping in this study's final version
1. Does your work help you fulfill some societal goal or personal dream that is important to you? [Il suo lavoro la aiuta a realizzare una meta di tipo sociale o un'ambizione personale che è per lei importante?]	ICT	–
2. Are your personal work goals aligned with your department's priority goals? [Le sue mete personali sono allineate con gli obiettivi prioritari dell'organizzazione?]	AE	–
3. Are you highly committed to and energized by your work and your department, giving them your best ideas and performance? [Si sente altamente coinvolto ed energizzato dal suo lavoro e dalla sua organizzazione al punto da dare il meglio di sé in termini di idee e risultati?]	AE	–
4. Does your enthusiasm also spread to and energize your coworkers? [Il suo entusiasmo è contagioso e stimola anche i suoi colleghi?]	AE	–
5. Instead of waiting for or merely accepting what your departmental chairperson tells you, do you personally identify which activities are most critical for achieving your department's priority goals? [Invece di aspettare o semplicemente accettare ciò che il suo capo le dice, identifica personalmente quali attività sono più critiche nell'organizzazione in cui opera per il raggiungimento degli obiettivi?]	ICT	AE
6. Do you actively develop a distinctive competence in those critical activities so that you become more valuable to your departmental chairperson and the department? [Sviluppa attivamente una competenza distintiva nelle attività critiche suddette, in modo da rendersi di maggior valore per il suo capo e per l'organizzazione?]	AE	AE
7. When starting a new assignment, do you promptly build a record of successes in tasks that are important to your departmental chairperson? [Quando inizia un nuovo lavoro o incarico, lei ottiene subito una serie di successi che siano importanti per il suo capo?]	AE	AE
8. Can your departmental chairperson give you a difficult assignment without the benefit of much supervision, knowing that you will meet your deadline with highest-quality work and that you will 'fill in the cracks' if need be? [Può il suo capo affidarle un incarico difficile senza l'aiuto di grande supervisione, sapendo che lei arriverà alla scadenza con un lavoro di ottima qualità e che 'tapperà i buchi' se necessario?]	AE AE	AE AE
9. Do you take the initiative to seek out and successfully complete assignments that go above and beyond your job? [Prende l'iniziativa per trovare e portare a termine con successo incarichi che superano e vanno oltre il suo lavoro?]	AE	AE
10. When you are not the leader of a group project, do you still contribute at a high level, often doing more than your share? [Quando non è lei il capo di un gruppo di progetto contribuisce lo stesso a un alto livello, spesso facendo più della sua parte?]	AE	AE

(appendix continues)

Appendix (continued)

Items	Grouping proposed by Kelley	Grouping in this study's final version
11. Do you independently think up and champion new ideas that will contribute significantly to your departmental chairperson's or your department's goals? [Pensa e sostiene in maniera indipendente nuove idee che potrebbero significativamente contribuire agli obiettivi del suo capo o dell'organizzazione?]	ICT	AE
12. Do you try to solve the tough problems (technical or organizational), rather than look to your departmental chairperson to do it for you? [Cerca di risolvere i problemi complessi (tecnici o organizzativi), piuttosto che aspettare che il suo capo lo faccia per lei?]	ICT	AE
13. Do you help out other coworkers, making them look good, even when you don't get any credit? [Aiuta gli altri suoi colleghi, facendo fare loro bella figura, anche quando lei non ottiene nessun merito?]	AE	AE
14. Do you help your departmental chairperson or department see both the upside potential and downside risks of ideas or plans, playing the devil's advocate if need be? [Aiuta il suo capo o il gruppo a vedere sia le potenzialità che i rischi di idee o progetti, facendo 'l'avvocato del diavolo' se necessario?]	ICT	AE
15. Do you understand your departmental chairperson's needs, goals, and constraints and work hard to help meet them? [Capisce i bisogni e gli obiettivi del suo capo e, valutati i vincoli, lavora sodo per aiutarlo a raggiungerli?]	AE	–
16. Do you actively and honestly own up to your strengths and weaknesses rather than put off evaluation? [Riconosce attivamente e onestamente i suoi punti di forza e di debolezza piuttosto che rimandarne la valutazione?]	ICT	–
17. Do you make a habit of internally questioning the wisdom of your departmental chairperson's decision rather than just doing what you are told? [Ha l'abitudine di discutere internamente l'adeguatezza delle decisioni del suo capo piuttosto che fare semplicemente quello che le viene detto?]	ICT	ICT
18. When your departmental chairperson asks you to do something that runs contrary to your professional or personal preferences, do you say 'no' rather than 'yes'? [Quando il suo capo le chiede di fare qualcosa che va contro alle sue preferenze personali o professionali, dice 'no' invece che 'sì'?]	ICT	ICT
19. Do you act on your own ethical standards rather than your departmental chairperson's or your department's standards? [Agisce in base ai suoi standard etici piuttosto che in base agli standard del suo capo o del gruppo?]	ICT	ICT
20. Do you assert your views on important issues, even though it might mean conflict with your group or reprisals from your departmental chairperson? (ICT) [Sostiene il suo punto di vista sulle questioni importanti anche se questo potrebbe significare un conflitto con il suo gruppo o ritorsioni dal suo capo?]	ICT	ICT

Note. AE = active engagement; ICT = independent critical thinking.