

IMPACT OF LEADER MEMBER EXCHANGE ON JOB PERFORMANCE AND STRESS: MEDIATING ROLE OF HIGH-QUALITY WORKPLACE RELATIONSHIP.

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: The aim of study is to establish relationship between leader member exchange and job outcomes including job stress and job performance and to establish mediating role of high-quality workplace relationship.

Method: A cross-sectional study with sample size of 300, with 5% margin of error and confidence interval of 95%, in 4 health sector using non-

probability convenience sampling was conducted. Those who were not willing to participate and having experience of less than 1 year in institution were excluded from study. A validated questionnaire tool with 5 sections and 4 variables with respective items was employed (Tran, 2018), and data collected was analyzed through SPSS version 26 and Microsoft Excel 365.

Findings: LMX has positive significant effect on job performance owing to high LMX which is established on trust, responsibility and commitment and this tends to increase job performance and decrease turnover intention. Significant positive role of HQWR with JP is also established. Negative influence of LMX on JS is also established through mediating role of HQWR.

Originality / Value: Limited data was available in Pakistan considering impact of leader member exchange on job outcomes. Our study though not all in one added to the knowledge and established positive relationship between leader member exchange and job outcomes through mediating role of high-quality workplace relationship. This study provides new insights about the effects of LMX on JS and JP through mediating role of HQWR. This is a conceptual model developed and tested and first of its kind in Pak-Army institutions.

Limitations: Since sample size was small and study was conducted in 4 healthcare centers, it can't be generalized to whole population. Present research is based on self-report measures, the limitations of social desirability bias and common method bias are inherent. However, sufficient care is taken to minimize these limitations.

Implications: Our study has found a way to improve job outcomes considering role of high-quality workplace relationship and leader member exchange. The research has implications for human resource managers in work organizations.

Keywords: Leader member exchange, Job performance, Job stress, Mediating role, High-quality workplace relationship.

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INTRODUCTION

There are three types of relationships in any organization: organization-employee, leader-employee, and employer-employee relationship. Quality exchange relationship between employees and their leaders has a significant effect on employees' job outcomes. In the literature, this relationship is known as leader-member exchange (LMX). Employees consider their leader to be part of the management and thus look to them for justice (Sheeraz, 2020). Leader-member exchange (LMX) refers to the quality of relationship exchange formed between a leader and subordinates (Gerstner, 1997). Leaders may be supervisors, managers, or administrators. LMX theory is based on the idea that leaders develop unique relationships with each subordinate, and the quality of this relationship then has the power to influence various attitudes, behaviors, and job outcomes. Whereas most leadership theories focus entirely on the role that a leader plays, LMX differs in that it emphasizes the dyadic nature of the relationship between leaders and followers; that is, both leader and follower have the power to impact the nature of the relationship and influence each other (Dulebohn, 2012). High-quality LMX relationships usually involve a great degree of respect, trust, and obligation between the two parties, whereas low-quality LMX relationships tend to be more transactional in nature, meaning the leader and follower have a mere surface-level relationship that is simply based on doing work in exchange for pay (Graen, 1995). LMX is important because high LMX quality is positively associated with follower behaviours and attitudes in the workplace. When measured from followers' perspectives, LMX is moderately associated with better follower job performance, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and organizational citizenship behaviours (Dulebohn, 2012); (Martin, 2016). There is a moderate negative relationship between LMX and counterproductive performance, meaning that higher LMX quality is associated with fewer counterproductive behaviours such as acts of theft, deviance, aggression, and property misuse in the workplace (Martin, 2016). High LMX quality is also moderately associated with lower turnover intentions but is not associated with the actual rate of turnover (Gerstner, 1997).

The main limitation of LMX theory is that it focuses on dyadic leader-member relationships and fails to consider the fact that the

relationships occur in a wider social context of the group as a whole (Hogg, 2003). Leader-member dyads are treated as though they develop, and have their effects, in isolation from other leader-member dyads, from other dyadic relations, or from the group. Most of the research on LMX is, quite explicitly, located at the dyadic level, with very little theorizing or empirical work examining LMX at the group or social-network level. One consequence of this approach is that LMX theory assumes that people evaluate their own LMX relationship in an absolute sense.

While much work has been done on leader-member exchange (LMX) in the past forty years, LMX is still being actively researched. One of the main questions regards how LMX relationships form and how managers can most effectively create them. Thus far, most large-scale studies have relied on existing dyads and investigated the consequences of those existing relationships. There exist many theories about how the initial dyadic relationship forms, and how to form strong leader-member relationships, yet there is little consensus among scientists.

Additionally, there is much to be learned about the contexts surrounding LMX. Although some research has been done examining national culture and LMX, it is still being heavily investigated. Another area for future research, which is suggested by (Graen, 1995), is investigating LMX relationships on a network scale. This involves looking at multiple LMX relationships across an organization and analyzing how these relationships influence and depend on each other, and how the quality of these relationships influences performance across the organization. Further research could also be done on how LMX and job embeddedness may interact to lead to higher job satisfaction. According to a study by (Harris, 2011), LMX leads to job embeddedness, which then leads to higher job satisfaction (Harris, 2011). Job embeddedness is a measurement of the extent to which people feel a part of their company and it is also related to the many antecedents of LMX that are discussed above. Currently most of the research on LMX focuses more on behavioral and job performance outcomes than on employee's job satisfaction. Since employee job satisfaction can have many organizational benefits, this area might warrant further investigation.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Leadership practices in healthcare setup are facing challenges in today's era to improve performance and well-being of the healthcare workers (Tran, 2018). In the complex or

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nization LMX relationship between leaders and their employees are fundamental and have been described as the foundation of leadership. The LMX relationships are unique in quality from low to high. The quality and nature of LMX relationship can be assessed through exchange and communication between leaders and employees and the relationship developed through reciprocal exchange process (Graen, 1995). The LMX process is also altered through the interactions and exchanges between the leaders and employees (Brower, 2000). The occurrence of affective event can cause the relationship to fluctuate in quality in each of their development stages. LMX making the relationship dynamic rather than static (Brower, 2000).

The nature of exchange within the LMX relationship both defines the quality of relationship and simultaneously develops it (Sheer, 2015). Exchange process is sometimes perceived as a quantum.

Healthcare is the prevention, treatment, and management of illness and the preservation of mental and physical well-being through the services offered by the medical, nursing, and allied health professions.

Job performance relates to the act of doing a job. Job performance is a means to reach a goal or set of goals within a job, role, or organization (Campbell, 1990). Campbell affirms that job performance is not a single action but rather a "complex activity". Performance in a job is strictly a behavior and a separate entity from the outcomes of a particular job which relate to success and productivity. Employees perform well and have beneficial value for an organization. The combination of attitude, perception, and behavior existing in the organization is a good strength when it is combined with the organizational goal. This strength is insurmountable and basic for enhancing employee's performance.

Job stress is a type of stress and is caused by conditions in the workplace that negatively affect an individual's performance and overall well-being. Job stress, within the context of workplace health, refers to a physiological condition in which work-related duties and responsibilities become burdensome and overwhelming to the point that it imposes unhealthy effects on the mental and physical wellness of employees. The workplace is often a breeding ground for stressful situations because of the relatively high expectations and priorities assigned by employers. The clash of multiple personality types between employees and the fear of losing a source of income can also factor into creating job stress. Workplace relationship is defined as the information exchange between individuals and groups who want to complete their goals in

organization (Ferris, 2009). Individuals are supposed to build and maintain positive relationships with others in the workplace. Employees workplace relationships are very important to the employee well-being, organizational reputation in society and job outcomes of the employee (Tran, 2018). Positive relationship should be maintained by individuals at workplace (Baumeister & Leary, 1995).

Leader-Member Exchange LMX Theory

LMX is widely accepted theory for leader-subordinate relationship. (Scandura T.A., 1984). This theory suggests that leaders should encourage their subordinates, they should motivate them through positive and helping interactions through different exchange levels to positively enhance job outcomes – job stress and job participation. This relationship depends upon the mutual trust, respect, obligation, internal motivation and HQWR. (Liden R.C., 1980); (Matta F.K., 2015); (Lindsey Hall K.K., 2016). High quality LMX employees experience

more information exchange, more support and attention from their leaders as compared to employees of low LMX. Positive association between LMX and employee's information establishes direction for examining of LMX on HQWR. (P.M., 2005). In a working environment where LMX is high, employees show commitment and motivation to their job and workplace. The employees who were well informed, had more job satisfaction, lower intention to quit and more sense of responsibility and commitment towards organization. (M.W., 1996); (Maertz C.P., 2004); (Ballinger G.A., 2010). Azim and Islam stated that perceived social support, which includes informational and instrumental support from others in networking, is an antecedent of nurses' commitment in Saudi Arabia. However, private nurses exhibited a higher level of commitment than nurses working in the public sector (Azim M., 2018).

Based on above literature following hypothesis are made:

H1: LMX has significant negative effect on job stress.

H2:

LMX has significant positive effect on job performance

Graen's leader member exchange model also known as vertical dyad linkage theory views leadership number of dyadic relationships connecting supervisor and employee (Graen, 1995). This quality of relationship depends on degree of mutual trust, loyalty, support, respect, and obligation. LMX suggests that manager should encourage positive interaction between leader member and employees through different exchange levels. High quality LMX employees tend to

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receive more support and attention from their leaders which in turn has positive association with experiences affecting quality of workplace relationship. As a result, quality of LMX is related to number of individual and organizational outcomes. In workplace with positive LMX employees are provided with organizational and instrumental knowledge and are motivated with respect and feedback which in turn appears as employee's motivation to work and lower intention to quit. When there is positive LMX, workplace quality is improved, and job stress is reduced causing significant increase in job performance and negligible intention to leave the job. Based on the above paragraph LMX has positive effect on employee's job performance and negative effect on job stress.

H3: The relationship of LMX and job stress is negatively mediated by HQWR.
H4:

The relationship LMX and job performance

Figure 1: Theoretical research Model: Relationship between LMX and job outcomes is mediated through HQWR.

METHODOLOGY

1. Participants And Procedure

Data was collected from healthcare workers (nurses) from 4 tertiary care hospitals in Rawalpindi with minimum experience of not less than 1 year. This cross-sectional study frame comprised of healthcare workers (nurses). Convenient method of data sampling was employed. We collected data using quantitative methodology since it is appropriate for statistical analysis and applicable to large survey size. A validated questionnaire was used as data collection tool. (Tran, 2018). Those who were voluntarily participating were included in study.

The survey conducted between December 2022 and January 2023, was self-administered and anonymous. Equal number of questionnaires were distributed among each hospital and collected after completion. Data was acquired from nurses through self-administered paper and pen questionnaires and google forms. Since English is official language, questionnaire was in English language. During the survey, the respondents were informed that there are no tricky questions, we asked only close ended questions and requested to report concerning actual experiences in their current job. It was also informed to the participants that their participation

mance is positively mediated by HQWR.

High quality workplace relationship refers to positive relationship between manager, leader member, employees and most importantly among colleagues. Peer relationship that is relation between same status people is really very important. In healthcare organization one experiences pain, mortality, inadequate number of nursing staff, insufficient knowledge to deal with emergencies and patient-work overload which collectively tends to increase job stress and psychological exhaustion leading to intention to leave work. When there is high quality workplace relationship and high quality LMX job stress is reduced to significant number and job performance is increased. Based on the above paragraph LMX and employee job stress will be lower when high quality workplace relationship is stronger, LMX and employee job performance quality work is higher when High quality workplace relationship is stronger.

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is voluntary, response would be confidential, and this survey results used only for study and research purpose. Participants participation and confidentiality was promised and maintained.

Calculated sample size was 306 with 5% margin of error, 95% confidence interval and 70% response rate 438 respondents were required to participate in study. 340 questionnaires were distributed, and 260 usable questionnaires were returned with response rate of 76.47% in physical and 100 questionnaires were shared online as google forms and 40 were filled with online response rate of 40%.

In the final responses, 223 (74.3%) were female participants, and 77 (25.7%) were male participants. Majority of the participants 144 (48%) were in age group 25 to 35 years. 189 (63%) participants were reported as married and 111 (37%) as single. Among the study respondents, 100 (33.3%) had intermediate education and 200 (66.7%) were post-graduates. Majority 153 (51%) had 11 to 20 years of experience.

Table 1: Demographic Survey

		Frequency	Percentage %
Age	Under 25	48	16%
	From 25 to 35	144	48%
	From 36 to 45	73	24%
	Over 45	35	12%
Gender	male	77	26%
	female	223	74%
Marital	single	111	37%
	married	189	63%
Education	primary	0	0%
	secondary	0	0%
	intermediate	100	33%
	post-graduate	200	67%
Experience	From 1 to 10 Years	11	4%
	From 11 to 20 Years	153	51%
	From 21 to 30 Years	91	30%
	>30 Years	45	15%

2. Measurement And
Scale *Measure*

The key variables in the study were leader member exchange (LMX), job performance (JP), job stress (JS), and high-quality workplace relationship (HQWR). Here LMX is independent variable, JS and JP are dependent variables and HQWR is playing mediating role. Relevant literature provided measurement items of all variables. Questionnaire contained 5 sections, respondents' demographic information section and variable sections containing separate items for each variable. For all variables except demographics, five-point Likert scale was employed to measure all items where 1 respond to strongly disagree and 5 meant strongly agree. Minor adjustments were made, for HQWR and JP, 1 indicates poor and 5 very good whereas for JS, 1 respond to strongly disagree and 5 indicates much better.

Variables

1. Leader Member Exchange

LMX is independent variable in our study and was assessed through five item scale (Tran, 2018). Sample items for the scale were "my working relationship with my manager is effective" and "I respect my supervisor's knowledge and competence on the job." Cronbach alpha reliability for this scale was 0.818.

2. Job Stress

JS is 1st dependent variable, and 5 item scale is employed (Tran, 2018). Sample items are "how often do you find your work stressful?" and "working with people directly puts too much pressure on me." Cronbach alpha reliability for this scale was 0.748.

3. Job Performance

JP is 2nd dependent variable, and 4 item scale is employed (Tran, 2018). Sample item is "how do you rate yourself in terms of your performance potential among coworkers?". Cronbach alpha reliability for this scale was 0.702.

4. High Quality Workplace Relationship

HQWR is mediating variable and 3 item scale is employed (Tran, 2018). Sample item is "in general, how would you describe relations at your workplace between nurse managers and nurses?". Cronbach alpha reliability for this scale was 0.69.

Table 2: Reliability Analysis

Variables	Items	Cronbach's alpha
HQWR	3	0.69
JS	5	0.748
JP	4	0.702
LMX	5	0.818

N=300, LMX= leader member exchange, JS= job stress, JP=job performance,

HQWR=high quality workplace relationship.

Control Variables

Additionally, we measured several control variables in the study, including age, gender, education, marital status, and experience. These factors are not the focus of the current research. However, the above variables were included in the measurement underneath the assumption that they might misrepresent the relationship between the antecedents and the relevant variable of interest, possibly requiring their control during the analysis.

Analysis of Variance

A one-way ANOVA performed to control variation in LMX, JS, JS and HQWR based on demographic variables used in study. Results obtained from the one-way ANOVA (see Table 3) indicates significant positive impact of gender, marital status, and education on LMX. All mentioned demographic variables have positive impact on JS, marital status, and experience have positive impact on JP in our data.

Table 3: One-Way ANOVA

	LM		JS		JP	
	X					
	F value	P value	F value	P value	F value	P value
Age	.279	.841	5.051	.002	1.615	.06
Gender	19.263	.000	57.589	.000	.384	.536
Marital status	5.235	.022	53.594	.000	26.086	.000
Education	5.618	.008	246.043	.000	.548	.460
Experience	.740	.392	9.702	.000	2.597	.053

N=300, LMX=leader member exchange, JS=job stress, JP=job performance

Analytical Procedures

Collected data was analyzed by SPSS version 26 and Microsoft Excel 360. Reliability test, Correlation analysis, One-way ANOVA and regression analysis was applied to collect data.

RESULTS

1. Descriptive Analysis and Correlations

The estimated correlations among four latent constructs are shown in Table 4. LMX has negative correlation with JS ($r = -.123$, $p < 0.05$), which supports our H1. While LMX has positive impact on JP ($r = .466$, $p < 0.001$), which provides initial support for H2. The correlation results confirmed that the model could be tested for mediation as the variables: leader member exchange, job stress and job performance are positively and significantly correlated with each other.

Table 4: Descriptive Analysis and Correlations

	Mean	S.D	1	2	3
n					
LMX	3.8600	.67690	1		
HQWR	3.6122	.79177	.367**	1	
JS	3.1687	.70636	-.123*	-.204**	1
JP	3.8908	.60616	.466**	.463**	.056

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

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

N=300, LMX= leader member exchange, JS= job stress, JP=job performance, HQWR=high quality workplace relationship.

2. Regression Analysis

Multiple regression analysis was used to test the main effects as well as mediation effects of variables. The results obtained from the regression analysis are presented in Table 5. The results indicate that LMX has strong negative effect on JS ($\beta = -.229$, $p < 0.05$), thus H1 is supported. Regression analysis further indicates that LMX has strong positive effect on JP ($\beta = .307$, $p < 0.05$), thus H2 is supported. The test of mediation supported that LMX statistically influences HQWR, which in turn has negative significant influence on the JS ($\beta = -.0347$, $p < 0.05$), thus H3 is supported. Similarly, the test of mediation supported that LMX statistically influences HQWR, which in turn has strong positive effect on the JP ($\beta = .1256$, $p < 0.05$), thus H4 is supported.

Table 5: Regression Analysis

Direct effects						
	β	se	t	p	LL CI	UL CI
LMX→JS	-.229	.058	-3.918	.0001	-.3437	-.1139

LMX→JP	.307	.0487	6.317	.0000	.2116	.4031
Indirect effects						
	β	Boot SE	Boot LCI	Boot ULCI		
LMX→HQWR→JS	-.0347	.0248	-.0810	.0177		
LMX→HQWR→JP	.1256	.0283	.0761	.1879		

N=300, LMX= leader member exchange, JS= job stress, JP=job performance, HQWR=high quality workplace relationship.

DISCUSSION

LMX theory specifies that the leader tends to create different relationships with followers which are reciprocal and can strengthen the relationship between leader and follower. The socio-emotional exchange is defined as high LMX, while financial trades is defined as low quality LMX (Dulebohn, 2012). Based on the relationship followers should receive important resources from their leaders (Tran, 2020). LMX was indicated to be positively and significantly related to workplace relationship quality, employee commitment, and performance appraisal. And this significance is result of mutual trust, commitment, respect, and high performance (Tran, 2018).

This study explores the direct effect of LMX on JS and JP and effect of LMX on JS and

JP through mediating role of HQWR. The results are consistent with previous studies. High LMX has significant effect on nurses' commitment, job performance while poor LMX is significantly related to high turnover intention (Han & Jekel, 2011); (Sepdiningtyas, Gadjah, Budi, Universitas, & Mada, 2017). Our study showed that LMX has positive significant relation with job performance which is supporting our hypothesis made.

Similarly, HQWR plays significant mediating role between LMX and JP. High LMX and HQWR means workplace with high peer-peer relationship, high employee-leader relationship and high employee-organization relationship established on trust, responsibility, commitment and all these factors tend to positively effect job performance (Tran, 2018).

High LMX has significant negative relation with job stress. High-quality workplace relationship was negatively and significantly related to job stress, which is highly consistent with previous studies. Similarly, HQWR has significant negative mediating role between LMX and JS. This is implied by the fact that, within positive workplace

relationships, nurses are powered by instrumental resources and emotional support from supervisors and peers, which results in a lower level of reported stress. Moreover, the findings revealed that high-quality workplace relationships were considered as a significant driver of social impact. This is because a positive workplace relationship quality creates an understanding for the nurses of what they are doing and their awareness of the difference they are making in society. (Tran, 2018); (Dutton & Heaphy, 2003).

IMPLICATIONS

Theoretical Implications

The study contributes to the literature as it establishes a significant positive relationship between LMX and JP and negative impact of LMX on JS through significant mediating role of HQWR. The research has implications for human resource managers in healthcare or any professional organization.

Practical Implications

The findings of this study will provide valuable evidence and implications for healthcare management with regards to the importance of enhancing interpersonal interactions i.e., HQWR and performance ratings. Adequate attention must be paid to prioritize leader interaction with the subordinates / employees to establish healthy, high quality, responsible, committed working environment with high job performance, less job stress and lower intention to quit or leave.

LIMITATIONS

Since sample size was small and study was conducted in 4 healthcare centers, so it can't be generalized to whole population. Present research is based on self-report measures, the limitations of social desirability bias and common method bias are inherent. However, sufficient care is taken to minimize these limitations. Another obvious limitation is that a larger-scale study across several countries should be conducted to eliminate the possible effects of the disparity between countries on the quality of healthcare services.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Further studies may be conducted by increasing variables of job performance and job commitment to develop better understanding between these 2 variables. In addition, considering generalizability of the findings, future research should examine other potential job performance drivers and any positive outcomes of coworker relationships in nurse performance and nurses' working attitudes among various hospital sizes and characteristics. There is a dynamic demographic shift in workplace based on Sex and gender. More women are entering formal workforce in office settings mainly being explored for team leader and LMX. Women in working age group are typically fra-

ght with their own set of social and biological limitations. This aspect has not been discussed and explored in any of the studies. Further study would like to explore and investigate the factors affecting females at workplace in South Asia with typically disadvantaged educational and sociocultural background as compared to men in their contemporaries.

CONCLUSION

Empirical studies have revealed that high quality of LMX enhances organizational commitment, job satisfaction, organizational citizenship behavior, creative behavior, and employee performance. Leaders create trust and confidence among the followers, which makes them perform better. Current research has also established this relationship, direct positive impact of LMX on JP and negative impact of LMX on JS through mediating role of HQWR.

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