

# The Moderating Effect of Leader Emotional Expressivity on the Relationship between Leader-Member Exchange and Follower Job Satisfaction

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**Abstract**—This research attempts to explain the moderating effect of the strength of leader emotional expressivity on the direct effect of leader-member exchange (LMX) on follower job satisfaction. Accordingly, quantitative data were collected through surveys from employees of service-rendering companies in Istanbul. The findings of this research have shown that the strength of leader emotional expressivity weakened the favorable effects of LMX on follower job satisfaction for high LMX leaders. In contrast, higher leader emotional expressivity compensates for low levels of LMX and increases follower job satisfaction.

**Keywords**—Emotions, follower job satisfaction, leadership, leader emotional expressivity, leader-member exchange.

## I. INTRODUCTION

LMX describes the quality of the reciprocal relationship that is formed between employees and supervisors [17]. LMX theory asserts that limitations of the supervisor's time and resources restrict the number of high-quality exchange cooperations the supervisor can establish with subordinates. Therefore, the supervisor determines a narrow group of subordinates with whom he or she shares socio-emotional resources that will result in augmented reciprocal trust, liking, and esteem. This social exchange relationship ensures that selected subordinates obtain more abundant resources from the supervisor and the supervisor acquires enhanced performance and devotion of competent employees. In contrast, low-quality relationships are restricted to the exchange of determinate contractual resources [7], [16].

Emotions are omnipresent in leader-follower interactions, originating from and also affecting them [20], [25]. Because leaders have a deep influence on the activity of organizations and their insiders [6], leader emotional expositions have solid capacity to affect how their subordinates feel, think, and act [8].

In this study, the contribution of LMX to the follower job satisfaction, as well as the moderating effect of the strength of leader emotional expressivity were analyzed.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### A. LMX and Follower Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction has been portrayed as a “pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's

job or job experiences” [18]. With respect to [6], when higher quality LMX relationships are present, job satisfaction should increase because followers make use of the physical and relational advantages of that quality relationship.

LMX researchers defend that leaders manifest diverse leadership behaviors when coping with separate subordinates (e.g. [10]). High-quality LMX employees add more to work accomplishments. Consequently, they obtain higher supervisor consideration and greater encouragement. Low-quality LMX employees, however, do not have the benefit of such advantageous behaviors and experience a more legit relationship with the supervisor (e.g. [10]).

Social Exchange Theory [2] asserts that two or more sides interact with one another, for instance in terms of esteem, dignity, companionship and consideration, expecting that the other side will collaborate correspondingly [26]. High-quality LMX employees tend to obtain greater care and help from their supervisors as reciprocity for their diligence. This sort of social exchange will eventually generate higher job satisfaction [19]. Empirical research has also validated that LMX is positively related to employee job satisfaction (e.g. [11], [12], [21], [24], [9]).

Numerous studies carried out in the Turkish health, private, educational, and services sectors pointed out a positive relationship between LMX and follower job satisfaction [1], [4], [5], [14], [27], [23].

The above discussion leads to the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1: LMX will have a positive contribution to follower job satisfaction.

### B. The Moderating Effect of the Strength of Leader Emotional Expressivity on the Direct Effect of LMX on Follower Job Satisfaction

Reference [18] defined job satisfaction as a “pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job or job experiences”. According to us, emotions are a great way to show how one appraises another's deeds. For example, if a leader shows contentedness towards a follower right after his or her action, the follower will think that this action made the leader happy. Or, vice versa, if an expression of anger by the leader follows a follower's action, the follower will think that something is wrong with what he or she has just done. On the other hand, followers of leaders who generally act neutral will not know what their leader feels about how they are doing, and therefore will not be able to get the necessary appraisal from their leaders, which is a prerequisite for job

satisfaction, according to [18]’s definition. Thus, we come up with the suggestion that in case of leaders who engage in a lower level of LMX, a stronger leader emotional expressivity will compensate for the lack of the LMX relationship and increase the perceptions of the followers as being appraised by their leaders, which will contribute positively to their job satisfaction. In contrast, for leaders who engage in a high level of LMX, a strong leader emotional expressivity will be perceived by followers as the leader is expressing an overly-possessive leadership and the leader is crossing a boundary when interacting with followers.

In sum, we expect that leader emotional expressivity (LEE) will compensate for the negative implications of a low level of LMX by encouraging follower job satisfaction. If a leader engages in a low level of LMX relationship, and if this leader demonstrates a high level of LEE, then this high level of LEE will compensate for the lack of LMX by increasing follower job satisfaction. On the other hand, if a leader already demonstrates a high level of LMX, in this case, a high level of emotional expressivity by the same leader will be perceived by the followers of this leader as intimidating and they will feel that their leader is crossing a boundary when interacting with them. Therefore, followers’ job satisfaction will again increase, however less strongly as compared to strong-LMX leaders who demonstrate a lower level of emotional expressivity. Namely, if leaders engaging in a high level of LMX relationship with their followers demonstrate a lower level of emotional expressivity, then there will be a more positive relationship between LMX and follower job satisfaction, in comparison to leaders who demonstrate a higher level of emotional expressivity. In other words, if a high-LMX leader does not express a very high level of emotional expressivity, then follower job satisfaction will increase more strongly with increasing LMX. Thus, we propose the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 2: The direct effect of LMX on follower job satisfaction will be moderated by LEE, in such a way that the relationship between LMX and follower job satisfaction is more positive for those employees whose leaders are lower on LEE as compared to those whose leaders are higher on LEE.

### III. METHODOLOGY

#### A. Research Design

The aim of this study is to test the contribution of LMX to follower job satisfaction. In addition, this study aims to test the moderating effect of the strength of LEE on the direct effect of LMX on follower job satisfaction.

The model depicting the hypothetical relationships is presented in Fig. 1.

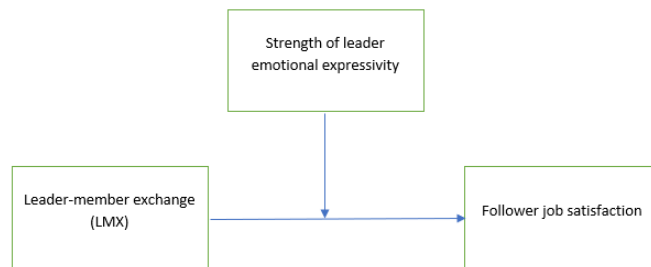


Fig. 1 Conceptual model of the study

An employee survey was undertaken in order to test the contribution of LMX to follower job satisfaction and finding out the moderating effect of the strength of LEE on the relationship between LMX and follower job satisfaction. The participants were asked to rate their perception of the LMX and emotional expressivity of their actual leaders, and then they were asked to rate their own actual level of job satisfaction. LMX Scale by [22] and Emotional Expressivity Scale by [15] were utilized for the participants to rate their actual leaders. For the ratings of follower job satisfaction, the items of the job satisfaction scale by [3], shortened to a five-item scale by [13], was used. The questions were read to the participants and their answers were recorded on a tablet PC.

#### B. Sample

A total of 258 employees working in the services departments from 32 firms were contacted. The average age of the employees is 28.64, ranging from 18 to 62. 94 (36.4%) of the contacted employees are female. 42 (16.3%) of the contacted employees attended only elementary school, 160 (62%) are high school graduates, 54 (20.9%) attended university, and 2 (0.8%) completed higher education. The average working years add up to 8.20, ranging from 1 to 40. The average tenure is 3.69 years, ranging from a minimum of 1 to a maximum of 20 years. 90 (34.9%) of the total of 258 respondents are from the retail industry, 49 (19%) work in the food industry, 48 (18.6%) come from the textile industry, 17 (6.6%) work in the IT sector, 12 (4.7%) are from the electronics industry, 10 (3.9%) work in the financial industry, 8 (3.1%) come from the construction industry, another 8 (3.1%) work in the paper industry, and again another 8 (3.1%) are hired in the agricultural industry, 6 (2.3%) deal with trade, and lastly 2 (0.8%) are employed in customer services.

#### C. Hypothesis Testing

Regression analysis has been undertaken in order to test the contribution of LMX to follower job satisfaction. For each regression analysis, two models have been created. The first model tests the effect of control variables on the dependent variable, and the second model tests the effect of the independent variables on the dependent variable, in addition to the effect of the control variables on the dependent variable.

For the measurement of the contribution of LMX on follower job satisfaction, the multiple regression models are expressed as:

- Model 1: Follower job satisfaction =  $\beta_0 + \beta_1 \cdot (\text{Age}) +$

$$\beta_2*(Gender) + \beta_3*(Tenure) + \varepsilon$$

- Model 2: Follower job satisfaction =  $\beta_0 + \beta_1*(Age) + \beta_2*(Gender) + \beta_3*(Tenure) + \beta_4*(LMX) + \varepsilon$

In these models; age, gender, and tenure are control

variables.

Tables I and II show the results of the multiple regression analysis regarding follower job satisfaction.

TABLE I  
MODEL SUMMARY OF THE MULTIPLE REGRESSION ANALYSIS FOR THE CONTRIBUTION OF LMX TO FOLLOWER JOB SATISFACTION

Model Summary										
Model	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adj. R <sup>2</sup>	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics					Durbin-Watson
					$\Delta R^2$	$\Delta F$	df1	df2	Sig. $\Delta F$	
1	.12	.01	.00	.98	.01	1.21	3	254	.31	
2	.82	.68	.67	.56	.66	520.76	1	253	.00	2.10

TABLE II  
REGRESSION COEFFICIENTS FOR THE CONTRIBUTION OF LMX TO FOLLOWER JOB SATISFACTION

Model	Ind. Variables	Unstd. Coefficients		Std. Coeff.	t	Sig.
		$\beta$	Std. Error	$\beta$		
1	(Constant)	4.01	.34		11.73	.00
	Age	.00	.01	.00	-.00	1.00
	Gender	-.07	.13	-.03	-.51	.61
	Tenure	-.03	.03	-.11	-1.30	.19
2	(Constant)	.21	.26		.82	.42
	Age	.01	.01	.06	1.20	.23
	Gender	-.04	.07	-.02	-.50	.62
	Tenure	-.01	.01	-.02	-.50	.62
	LMX	.89	.04	.83	22.82	.00

According to Table I and Table II, LMX ( $\beta = 0.83$ ,  $t = 22.82$ ,  $p < .05$ ) significantly predicts job satisfaction. This model explains 67% of the variance ( $p < .05$ ). Thus, the hypothesis H1 (LMX will have a positive contribution to follower job satisfaction) is supported.

For the moderation analysis, two models have been created. Along with the control variables, the independent variables of the regression are independent variable, moderator, and the interaction between independent variable and moderator. The

first model tests the effect of the control variables on the dependent variable, and the second model tests the effect of the independent variable, the moderator, and the interaction between independent variable and moderator on the dependent variable, in addition to the effect of the control variables on the dependent variable.

The multiple regression models for the moderating effect of LEE on the relationship between LMX and follower job satisfaction are demonstrated as follows:

- Model 1: Follower job satisfaction =  $\beta_0 + \beta_1*(Age) + \beta_2*(Gender) + \beta_3*(Tenure) + \varepsilon$
- Model 2: Follower job satisfaction =  $\beta_0 + \beta_1*(Age) + \beta_2*(Gender) + \beta_3*(Tenure) + \beta_4*(ZLMX) + \beta_5*(ZLEE) + \varepsilon$
- Model 3: Follower job satisfaction =  $\beta_0 + \beta_1*(Age) + \beta_2*(Gender) + \beta_3*(Tenure) + \beta_4*(ZLMX) + \beta_5*(ZLEE) + \beta_6*(ZLMX * ZLEE) + \varepsilon$

In these models; age, gender, and tenure are control variables.

Tables III and IV demonstrate the moderating effect of LEE on the relationship between LMX and follower job satisfaction.

TABLE III  
MODEL SUMMARY OF THE MULTIPLE REGRESSION ANALYSIS FOR THE MODERATION OF LEE ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LMX AND FOLLOWER JOB SATISFACTION

Model Summary										
Model	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adj. R <sup>2</sup>	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics					Durbin-Watson
					$\Delta R^2$	$\Delta F$	df1	df2	Sig. $\Delta F$	
1	.12	.01	.00	.98	.01	1.21	3	254	.31	
2	.83	.69	.68	.55	.67	267.74	3	251	.00	2.07
3	.83	.69	.68	.55	.00	3.19	1	251	.08	

TABLE IV  
REGRESSION COEFFICIENTS FOR THE MODERATION OF LEE ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LMX AND FOLLOWER JOB SATISFACTION

Model	Ind. Variables	Unstd. Coefficients		Std. Coeff.	t	Sig.
		$\beta$	Std. Error	$\beta$		
1	(Constant)	4.01	.34		11.73	.00
	Age	.00	.01	.00	-.00	1.00
	Gender	-.07	.13	-.03	-.51	.61
	Tenure	-.03	.03	-.11	-1.30	.19
2	(Constant)	.47	.32		1.46	.15
	Age	.01	.01	.06	1.26	.21
	Gender	-.01	.07	-.01	-.18	.86
	Tenure	-.01	.01	-.03	-.68	.50
	ZLMX	.70	.08	.65	8.91	.00
3	ZLEE	.14	.05	.15	2.84	.00
	(Constant)	3.67	.20		18.65	.00

Age	.01	.01	.06	1.26	.21
Gender	-.01	.07	-.01	-.18	.86
Tenure	-.01	.01	-.03	-.68	.50
ZLMX	.64	.07	.65	8.91	.00
ZLEE	.14	.05	.15	2.84	.00
ZLMX*ZLEE	-.09	.05	-.10	-1.79	.08

According to Table III and Table IV, LEE ( $\beta = -0.10$ ,  $t = -1.79$ ,  $p > .05$ ) does not moderate the relationship between LMX (LMX) and follower job satisfaction. While LEE has a positive contribution ( $\beta = .15$ ,  $t = 2.84$ ,  $p < .05$ ) to the dependent variable of follower job satisfaction, the interaction of LEE with LMX is insignificant, meaning that there is no moderating effect of LEE on the relationship between LMX

and follower job satisfaction. The model explains 69% of the variance ( $p < .05$ ) in the dependent variable. Therefore, H2 is not supported.

#### IV. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

As hypothesized and found in H1, followers of leaders with a high level of LMX relationships enjoy a higher level of job satisfaction. Job satisfaction is defined by [18] as a “pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one’s job or job experiences”. The positive relationship between high LMX leaders and their followers should contribute to the followers’ positive job experiences.

Contrary to expectations in H2, LEE does not moderate the direct effect of LMX on follower job satisfaction, although LEE has a significant positive contribution to follower job satisfaction. We assumed that the strength of the emotional expressivity of the leaders would contribute to their followers’ sense of being appraised by their leader, which is the core of [18]’s definition of job satisfaction, therefore, we expected that high emotional expressivity would compensate for low levels of LMX. From the findings of the hypothesis testing, we see that the strength of LEE does not have a significant effect on the relationship between LMX and follower job satisfaction, although higher LEE itself still increases the outcome variable.

#### V. DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This study does not explain the reason why the strength of LEE weakened the contribution of LMX to follower job satisfaction for leaders who engage in a high level of LMX relationship with their followers. Therefore, we suggest that follower characteristics such as individualism or egalitarianism values can be studied in future research in order to be able to interpret the moderation of LEE better. We think that follower characteristics, which were beyond the scope of this research, can play a role in the negative moderating effect of LEE on the relationship between LMX and follower job satisfaction. For example, followers, if they share an egalitarian point of view, might more strongly regard the highly emotionally expressive leader as crossing a boundary and become intimidated by that leader.

#### ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Nevra Baker thanks Prof. Hayat Kabasakal and Prof. Hakan Özçelik for their guidance and support.

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