

The Influence of Leader-Member Exchange Quality on the Exhibition of Organizational Citizenship Behavior: A Systematic Literature Review

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Abstract

This article aims to analyze and synthesize the influence of leader-member exchange (LMX) relationship quality on the exhibition of organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) using a systematic literature review and integrative analysis approach. Within the theoretical framework of social psychology and social exchange theory, the study examined academic articles and research papers published between 2016 and 2026 to ensure contemporary relevance. The methodology involves a systematic screening and content analysis of selected peer-reviewed sources.

The findings, categorized by research objectives, demonstrate that high-quality LMX significantly engenders perceived organizational support (POS) and trust in leadership. These elements function as critical mediating mechanisms that lead to the manifestation of OCB across multiple dimensions, including altruism, sportsmanship, and conscientiousness. The conclusion underscores the imperative for leaders to cultivate and sustain exchange relationships characterized by mutual trust and respect. Such relationships enhance psychological commitment and drive extra-role behaviors, which are essential for organizational success and sustainability in the context of a smart ageing society.

Keywords: Leader-Member Exchange (LMX), Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB), Trust in Leadership, Perceived Organizational Support (POS), Systematic Review

Introduction

Over the past decade, organizations worldwide have confronted increasingly intense waves of challenges within rapidly evolving and unpredictable contexts, commonly described by the acronym (Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, and Ambiguity). This state of volatility and uncertainty has rendered business operations and human resource management extraordinarily complex. Organizations aspiring to survive and achieve sustainable growth can no longer rely solely on in-role performance as stipulated in employment contracts. The VUCA era demands that employees exercise initiative, demonstrate flexibility, and remain prepared to assist colleagues and the organization in unforeseen circumstances. Consequently, organizations necessarily depend upon the exhibition of Organizational Citizenship Behavior, which refers to behaviors that transcend formal job requirements yet contribute to overall organizational effectiveness (Organ, 1988). functions as social "lubricant" that facilitates smoother and more efficient organizational functioning amidst tension and confusion. These behaviors encompass assisting coworkers, voluntarily participating in organizational activities, or offering constructive suggestions for organizational development without direct compensation. Within crisis situations and uncertain, the most significant limitation of traditional management approaches lies in reliance upon bureaucratic control and hierarchical command structures, which typically fail to adapt sufficiently to rapid changes. Organizations cannot develop manuals encompassing all novel problems emerging daily. It is precisely at this juncture that Leader-Member Exchange quality assumes a critical role as the organization's 'flexibility mechanism. theory demonstrates that when leaders establish high-quality relationships founded upon trust and reciprocity rather than merely contractual obligations, employees develop psychological safety. This security serves as the key that unlocks employees' willingness to make immediate decisions in addressing emergent problems and exhibit helping behaviors toward colleagues without awaiting directives. These proactive behaviors constitute the most essential elements enabling organizations to navigate the volatility of the VUCA era. Within this context where OCB has become essential, Leader-Member Exchange quality has gained recognition as one of the most significant causal variables in predicting employee behavior (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). proposes a conceptualization distinct from traditional

leadership perspectives by demonstrating that leaders do not establish uniform relationships with all followers but rather create differentiated relationships with individual subordinates. These variations exert profound impacts upon employees' work-related attitudes and behaviors.

LMX theory categorizes leader-member relationships into two principal types:

In-Group (High-Quality LMX) This relationship develops from exchanges that transcend contractual obligations (social exchange). Members of this group receive greater trust, support, information, and opportunities for decision-making participation from leaders. Leaders invest in these relationships and expect members to reciprocate through dedication, loyalty, and exhibition of behaviors exceeding role requirements, such as OCB. And Out-Group (Low-Quality LMX) This relationship is founded upon contractual exchange (economic exchange). Members of this group receive treatment strictly according to prescribed rules and duties. Communication remains limited to formal work matters, and they receive less trust and fewer opportunities compared to the In-Group. This differentiation in LMX quality holds profound significance for OCB emergence. Employees maintaining high-quality LMX relationships typically experience obligation to reciprocate toward leaders and the organization through citizenship behavior exhibition, as they perceive that the organization and leaders have provided care and support exceeding contractual stipulations. Numerous studies thus confirm that LMX relationship quality constitutes a robust predictor of OCB, serving as a critical mechanism enabling organizations to cultivate human resources willing to dedicate themselves to the organization beyond assigned duties—a vital attribute that VUCA-era organizations require to maintain competitive capability and adaptive agility. Understanding the mechanisms through which LMX relationships influence OCB exhibition therefore represents a crucial issue in contemporary management. This research aims to explore and analyze the causal relationship between LMX and OCB comprehensively, providing empirical evidence for developing practical approaches whereby organizational leaders can establish quality relationships with employees, ultimately leading to enhanced overall organizational effectiveness.

Research Objectives

1. To synthesize the theoretical framework linking Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) with Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB) based on Social Exchange Theory.
2. To analyze the mediating mechanisms, specifically Perceived Organizational Support (POS) and Trust in Leadership, that connect high-quality LMX to OCB.
3. To propose strategic recommendations for executives to enhance LMX quality as a driver for promoting OCB within organizations.

Scope of the Study

This study encompasses conceptual analysis and synthesis of empirical research findings published in leading international and national academic journal databases, including Web of Science, Scopus, PsycINFO, and Thai-Journal Citation Index (TCI).

Document selection focuses upon articles published in high-quality journals such as the Journal of Applied Psychology, The Leadership Quarterly, and Academy of Management Journal, covering the past 20 years. Primary search keywords include Leader-Member Exchange (LMX), Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB), with related secondary terms including Leadership, Behavior, and Organization, to obtain comprehensive data aligned with research objectives.

Literature Review and Conceptual Framework

Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) Theory

LMX focuses upon dyadic relationships between leaders and followers that develop over time. High-quality LMX is characterized by higher reciprocity, mutual trust, respect, and affective commitment, with these exchanges typically exceeding contractual stipulations (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995).

Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB)

OCB is categorized into multiple dimensions. Organ (1997) identified five dimensions of organizational citizenship behavior, as presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Dimensions of Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB) and Relationships with LMX

OCB Dimension	Definition	Behavioral Examples	LMX (In-Group) Linkage
1. Altruism	Assisting coworkers in specific tasks voluntarily, beyond job description requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mentoring newcomers • Assisting colleagues with computer problems • Sharing workload with busy colleagues 	In-Group members receive kindness from leaders and reciprocate this kindness toward coworkers (Reciprocity)
2. Sportsmanship	Accepting imperfect environmental conditions or inconveniences without complaining or expressing dissatisfaction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refraining from complaints regarding slow equipment • Accepting constructive criticism • Avoiding organizational disparagement 	Trust in leaders enables members to reduce suspicion and overlook minor problems for larger objectives
3. Conscientiousness	Performing work exceeding minimum standards, demonstrating high responsibility even without supervision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arriving early/staying late to complete tasks • Not utilizing work time for personal matters • Maintaining organizational property diligently 	Members must preserve the trustworthiness bestowed by leaders, thus demonstrating dedication to avoid disappointing leadership
4. Courtesy	Actions preventing problems for others or providing advance notification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informing colleagues before submitting modified work files • Consulting team members before decisions • Avoiding disturbing others 	Related to interactional justice: when leaders show respect, members learn to respect and consider others following this example

OCB Dimension	Definition	Behavioral Examples	LMX (In-Group) Linkage
5. Civic Virtue	Participating responsibly in organizational life and maintaining organizational image comprehensively	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participating in company volunteer activities • Following organizational announcements/news • Suggesting work improvement methods 	In-Group members feel they are "part of" the team, thus willingly protecting and developing their home (organization)

Source: Summarized and adapted from Organ (1988) and Podsakoff et al. (2000)

Linking Mechanism: Social Exchange Theory

Social Exchange Theory (SET) (Blau, 1964) provides the foundational explanation for this connection. When employees perceive that their leaders (or organization) provide support, resources, trust, and equitable treatment (socioemotional exchange), employees experience obligation to reciprocate through positive behaviors, including OCB exhibition—behaviors that cannot be mandated.

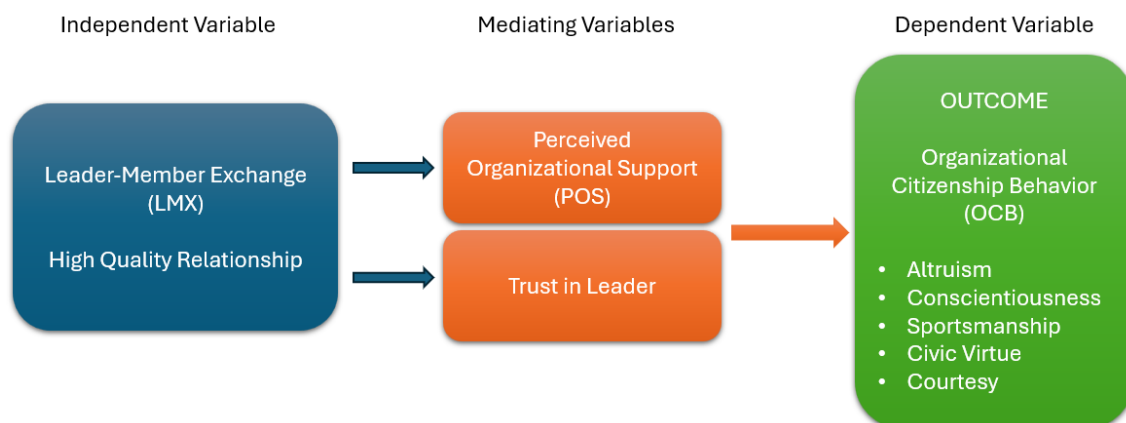


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

[Conceptual framework diagram illustrating the relationships between LMX, mediating variables (Trust in Leader, POS, Procedural Justice, Interactional Justice), and OCB dimensions]

Research Methodology

This study employs a documentary research design using a systematic literature review approach. The methodology focuses on identifying, evaluating, and synthesizing scholarly evidence regarding the relationship between Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) and Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB).

The search strategy involved systematic queries across academic databases, including Scopus, ScienceDirect, and ThaiJO, using keywords such as "LMX," "OCB," and "Social Exchange Theory." The inclusion criteria were limited to peer-reviewed articles and scholarly research published between 2016 and 2026 to ensure contemporary relevance within the context of a smart ageing society. Following a rigorous screening process based on content alignment and theoretical contribution, a total of 9 high-quality articles were selected for final synthesis through content analysis and integrative modeling.

The Role of Perceived Organizational Support (POS)

High-quality LMX is frequently interpreted as a primary signal of organizational support, conveyed through leaders acting as organizational agents. Eisenberger et al. (2002) emphasized that employees experiencing high-quality LMX perceive that the organization inherently values their contributions and cares about their well-being (Perceived Care and Value). This psychological perception functions as a catalyst, stimulating employees to reciprocate with loyalty and extra-role efforts. This reciprocation is specifically manifested through OCB-O (Organizational Citizenship Behavior directed toward the Organization), which is vital for long-term organizational stability.

LMX and Trust in Leadership

Extensive literature confirms that high-quality LMX serves as a principal predictor of trust in leadership (Dirks & Ferrin, 2002). Within the framework of social exchange, trust-based relationships create a sense of psychological safety for followers. This security encourages them to exhibit potentially risky yet beneficial behaviors, such as expressing critical opinions for organizational improvement (Civic Virtue) or exerting additional effort to assist colleagues (Altruism). The synthesis indicates that trust is a critical bridge that converts the quality of the leader-follower relationship into tangible organizational citizenship actions.

Procedural Justice

Within the LMX context, distributive justice may differ between In-Group and Out-Group members. However, procedural justice—referring to transparency and equality in decision-making processes (Colquitt et al., 2001)—is typically perceived positively within high-LMX groups, fostering feelings of shared ownership and willingness to comply with organizational rules and normative behaviors (Conscientiousness).

Interactional Justice: Affective Linking Variable

Beyond trust and support, research reveals that LMX quality directly affects members' perceptions of interactional justice. Specifically, in high-quality relationships, leaders not only provide resources but also bestow "dignified treatment" through respectful communication (Interpersonal Justice) and straightforward explanations for various decisions (Informational Justice).

When employees perceive that leaders respect and value them as individuals rather than merely as working mechanisms, they develop emotional attachment and desire to maintain that relationship. This motivation translates into action through organizational citizenship behavior (OCB), particularly in the dimensions of courtesy and altruism, as reciprocation for the kindness and respect received from leaders.

Summary of New Knowledge Derived from Synthesis

This integrative analysis not only confirms the positive influence between LMX and OCB but also yields significant new academic insights regarding the operation of more complex "psychological mechanisms," as follows:

1. **Discovery of Justice-Related Linking Variables:** This study extends existing understanding by demonstrating that LMX significantly affects OCB through interactional justice. That is, when leaders show respect and communicate sincerely (High LMX), employees develop perceptions of interpersonal fairness—a subtle psychological mechanism distinct from structural or distributive justice—which serves as a primary stimulus for willingness to reciprocate through OCB.

2. **Network of Collaborating Mediating Variables:** Leader-member relationships do not operate in isolation but rather exert influence through an interconnected network

of sentiments, including trust in leadership, perceived organizational support, and interactional justice, which collectively transform quality relationships into psychological contracts that employees maintain toward the organization.

3. Differential Effects Specificity: LMX quality exerts particularly pronounced influence upon affective-driven OCB dimensions, namely altruism and courtesy, reflecting that social attachment within the In-Group directly affects interpersonal caring more than regulatory strictness.

4. New Perspective on Human Capital Investment: Strategically, LMX creation should be viewed as "social capital investment" yielding returns in the form of proactive employee behaviors—intangible yet highly valuable assets that cannot be created through financial compensation alone.

Results and Findings

The systematic review of the selected literature reveals several key findings aligned with the research objectives:

1. Theoretical Framework of LMX and OCB (Objective 1) The synthesis confirms that Social Exchange Theory (SET) remains the primary framework for understanding the LMX-OCB relationship. High-quality LMX, characterized by mutual trust, respect, and obligation, transcends formal job descriptions. When leaders provide emotional and professional resources, followers feel a psychological debt that they repay through extra-role behaviors or Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB).

2. Mediating Mechanisms: POS and Trust (Objective 2) The analysis identifies two critical mediators: Perceived Organizational Support (POS): Followers in high-quality LMX relationships view their leader as an agent of the organization. Consequently, the support received from the leader is perceived as support from the organization itself, fostering a desire to contribute to organizational goals (OCB-O). Trust in Leadership: Trust acts as a psychological safety mechanism. When employees trust their leaders, they are more willing to engage in altruistic acts and "Civic Virtue" (offering constructive suggestions), as they do not fear negative repercussions.

3. Strategic Approaches for Enhancing LMX (Objective 3) The review suggests that to promote OCB, executives must move beyond transactional management. Strategic

approaches include implementing mentorship programs, encouraging open communication, and fostering a culture of "Perceived Care and Value." These strategies are particularly vital in the context of a smart ageing society, where intergenerational collaboration depends heavily on the quality of exchange between leaders and members.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this systematic review provides compelling evidence that the quality of Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) is a fundamental driver of Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB). Based on the synthesis of selected scholarly literature, it is evident that high-quality LMX does not merely influence OCB in isolation but operates through a complex interplay of psychological mechanisms. The integration of Social Exchange Theory suggests that when leaders provide high-quality exchange, followers feel a sense of indebtedness, which they reciprocate through extra-role behaviors (Organ, 1997). Specifically, this review highlights that Trust in Leadership acts as a critical safety net, allowing employees to engage in altruistic acts and "Civic Virtue" without fear of vulnerability (Dirks & Ferrin, 2002). Furthermore, the role of Perceived Organizational Support (POS) as a mediator underscores that followers view their leader's support as a direct reflection of the organization's care, thereby fostering long-term loyalty and commitment (Eisenberger et al., 2002). While this review is grounded in 9 high-quality sources, the findings offer a robust conceptual framework for executives. To sustain organizational success in a smart ageing society, leaders must transition from transactional supervision to relationship-based leadership that prioritizes mutual trust and respect. Future research is encouraged to conduct empirical validations across diverse industrial sectors in Thailand to further strengthen these theoretical linkages.

Practical Recommendations

1. Leadership Training

Organizations should establish leadership development programs emphasizing the creation and maintenance of high-quality LMX relationships, particularly training in interactional communication skills and conflict management. Relationship assessment

should be conducted regularly at the dyadic level to identify problematic relationships and provide necessary support.

Example Activities:

- "Weekly Check-in" Beyond Work Matters: Leaders should allocate time for one-on-one conversations of at least 15-30 minutes weekly, dedicating the initial 50% to inquiring about personal concerns, anxieties, or life goals, demonstrating sincerity and building trust before discussing work matters.

- Collaborative Job Crafting: Provide opportunities for team members to participate in designing work methods or modifying job scope to align with their strengths. This activity cultivates ownership feelings and perceived organizational support, stimulating enhanced conscientiousness.

2. Trust Culture Development

Organizations should cultivate cultures emphasizing transparency, fairness, and risk acceptance (psychological safety) to enable OCB flourishing.

Example Activities Stimulating Civic Consciousness (Fostering OCB & Altruism):

- Culture of Appreciation: Encourage "Kudos Card" writing or verbal colleague appreciation in team meetings to transform helping behaviors (Altruism) into accepted and celebrated team norms.

- Buddy System Program: Establish mentorship or work partnerships to create natural mutual assistance systems, reducing isolation and building strong social ties.

Study Limitations

Although this study provides comprehensive overview, certain limitations warrant acknowledgment. First, this documentary research may lack depth obtainable through interviews or direct behavioral observation in specific contexts. Second, this article primarily focuses upon dyadic relationships between leaders and members, potentially not encompassing group-level factors or organizational culture that may indirectly impact OCB.

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