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Does Leader-Member Exchange Impact on Organizational Citizenship Behaviour Readiness? Evidence from State Government Agency

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ABSTRACT

Local Government (LG) being the third-tier in Malaysian government has been identified as one of the government agencies mandated to drive economic growth and development of a district and its residents. Being one of the main service providers, LG has yet to meet the public expectations as many complaints have being filed towards its operational issues as evidenced from statistical data from Public Complaint Bureau (PCB). Thus, in responding to PCB statistics and lack in-depth research on LG, this paper aims to investigate the relationship between leader-member exchange (LMX) and Organizational Citizenship Behaviors (OCB) among LG' employees working in Southern region of Malaysia. Multiple regression analysis from a data set of 222 respondents, after factor analysis, revealed that LMX-affect respect and LMX-contribution have positive impact towards OCB while LMX-loyalty was found to be insignificant. A moderate 54% of variance in OCB has been explained. This study has provided empirical insights in supporting social exchange theory that quality LMX relationship has the ability to invoke OCB readiness. Due to LG constant interactions with the public, enhancement in dyadic relationship can help in reducing the level of complaints and towards improving the much needed operational efficiency.

Keywords: Organizational Citizenship Behavior, Local Government, Leader-Member Exchange JEL Classifications: H70, L20

1. INTRODUCTION

Local Government (LG), being the government's lowest tier, a non-profit service organization with high customer contact and dominated by Malay workforce, has become one of the most important agencies to drive the economic growth and social development of a particular district as they are managers of urban environments. The enlargement of urban areas which correlate significantly with the nation's economic growth entails an increase in the problems, needs and complexities relating to urban governance. Thus, the LG is undergoing tremendous pressure to carry through effective management due to increase in urbanization, education levels of the population and the industrialization of the nation (Zaherawati et al., 2010). Reforming the LG and transforming its valuable human capital to serve the public better are efforts precondition to provide excellent and high quality service to the stakeholders and its clients in the 21st century.

Managing urban towns and cities that are expanding daily has exerted tremendous pressure on LG as the community is becoming more aware of their rights, demanding for clearer and increased transparency in the way the LG makes decision and the implementation of development plans, more vocal in voicing their grouses over the services provided. These phenomena have caused public, from time to time, made allegations and complaints towards the LG' gross inefficiency, abuse of power, delay in approvals, corrupt practices, poor service being rendered and poor planning directly in the press, media and tougher higher ups at the state and federal levels (Siddique, 2010; Zaherawati et al., 2010). These complaints were reflected in statistics from Public Complaints Bureau where LG were among the highest number of complaints made by the public (Annual Reports Public Complaints Bureau, 2007-2014).

In order to address the complaints filed by the public and knowing vey well that majority of these LG were facing financial constraints, exhibition of Organizational Citizenship Behaviour (OCB) by the workforce is important as OCB has been identified as a low cost vehicle in promoting operational effectiveness (Organ, 1988). OCB is discretionary behaviours, not explicitly recognized by formal reward system and that in aggregate promotes the effective and efficient functioning of the organization. By inculcating OCB as part of work culture, the image of LG as the manager of urban environment in driving the social and economic growth within its locality can be beneficial to its residents and community.

Leaders are the guiding force in LG management and play pivotal roles in influencing their subordinates to perform as well as possible towards accomplishing the organizations' objectives and, even more so, in meeting the expectation of the wider public interest. Thus, effective leadership management can be established through fostering quality level of interactions between leaders and subordinates as the willingness of subordinates to perform OCB are very much depended on the quality dyadic relationship being established. It is believed that understanding the process path by which Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) relationship impact performance behaviours such as OCB are crucial in advancing leadership in an organization (Lo et al., 2006).

As noted by Podsakoff et al. (2000) OCB measurement has received comparatively limited attention in other cultural context, this study attempts to achieve its objective and close the gap by providing some insight on LMX-OCB relationship by determining the impact of LMX dimensions namely affect, respect, loyalty and contribution towards OCB readiness among LG' employees working in Southern region of Malaysia. Furthermore, this study shall provide empirical evidence on the influence of dyadic relationship towards OCB exhibition since LG is an organization that marked by typical Malaysian work culture of power distance, relationship-oriented, dominated by Malays with strong belief in Islamic principles and values (Asma, 1996; Hofstede and Hofstede, 2004; Ansari et al., 2004).

By recognizing the importance of dyadic exchanges in Malaysian work culture focusing specifically on LG can contribute further knowledge pertaining to cross cultural aspects of OCB. Moreover, it shall give information and understanding on the impact of LMX towards OCB in Malay culture, which has shaped the complexity of cultural norms in workplace settings in contrast to culturally heterogeneous western societies. Thus, with this understanding, efforts can be focused to encourage the development of quality LMX relationships that would result in favourable outcomes to individuals (leader and subordinate), the LG and the community they served. Hence, the objective of this study is to determine the impact of LMX towards OCB among the LG' employees working in Southern Region of Malaysia.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES

2.1. LG

The Malaysian government consists of three levels namely, the federal government being the center government; the state government being the second level government and lastly the LG being the lowest level of government. LG is further separated into three levels of hierarchy namely city council, municipal council and district council. LG is under the jurisdiction of the state government and the power of decision-making is transferred to the LG to manage and administer in its respective area. LG is bestowed with the power to collect taxes and to create laws and rules as well as granting licenses and permits for any trade in its province in accordance with LG Act 1976. Moreover, it has the responsibility to safeguard public health and sanitation, environmental protection and building controls, social and economic development and general maintenance functions of urban infrastructure within its jurisdiction in accordance with Town and Country Planning Act 1976 and Street, Drainage and Building Act 1976 (Hazaman and Kalianan, 2008).

Three categories of workforce exist in a LG. Professional and Administrative group which comprises of Mayor, Secretary and Head of Department as they are involved directly in the administrative, strategic town planning and decision making purposes. Support I staff or middle level management is responsible for implementing strategies and policies and those who are responsible in overseeing the manner in which the operational staff discharging their duties. Since LG' nature of service is labour intensive, majority of the staff falls under Support II where they are involved in day-to-day operations where their tasks are more towards executing the tasks assigned rather than giving out instructions.

2.2. Organizational Citizenship Behaviour

Working behaviours which are beyond those specified under the formal job prescriptions and not directly and explicitly measured and rewarded are termed as OCB. Exhibiting citizenship behaviour is vital since employees willingly go beyond their formal job responsibilities and freely give their time and energy to succeed at the assigned job. Moreover, it enables an organization to allocate scare resources efficiently by simplifying maintenance functions and freeing up resources for productivity (Borman and Motowidlo, 1997).

Borman (2004) delineates four motives for OCB to be an important construct that will continue to be scrutinized in the future. Employees are expected to exhibit OCB, to a certain degree, (i) due to increased global competition in the current market, (ii) increased teamwork and inter-dependability among employees, (iii) increase in merging and downsizing activities that require employees to adapt to the new work environment, and (iv) expanding service industry that mainly focuses on customer service and client satisfaction.

Five dimensions of OCB are defined by Organ (1988) are (i) altruism (helping others), (ii) conscientiousness (norm compliance), (iii) sportsmanship (not complaining about trivial matters), (iv) civic virtue (keeping up with governance of the organization), and (v) courtesy (consulting others before taking action).

2.3. Relation between LMX and OCB

This dyadic relationship between leaders and their subordinates is the focal point of leadership process which fortified through a series of work-related exchanges. It posits that leaders do not use the same leadership style or set of behaviours with all members or subordinates; instead leaders develop separate interpersonal exchange relationships with each subordinate over time, forming the in-group and the out-group relationships. The out-group or low quality LMX relationship is categorized as exchanges explicitly centered on the fulfilment of the employment contract. Conversely, the in-group or high-quality LMX relationship is categorized as exchanges which have mutual respect, high trust and share formal/informal rewards that extend beyond what is required under the employment contract. Leaders have strong influence on subordinate's willingness to engage in OCB and towards relationship bonding, thus, the relationship establishment has been suggested to be one of the most important associations for employees (Manzoni and Barsoux, 2002).

Grounding on social exchange theory (Blau, 1964), many empirical findings have affirmed the positive associations between LMX and OCB on work units and organizational success, thus, making LMX as one of the most powerful predictors of OCB (Podsakoff et al., 2000; Hackett et al., 2003; Lo et al., 2006). However, findings by Teoh et al. (2013) found that LMX relationship have shown insignificant association in a study among bankers in Malaysia and a study by Barnett (2011) among Jamaican public sector organization where insignificant association was noted where the study pointed out distrust, suspicion of motives and felt of being exploited and doubts about management's concern for workers have block the motivation efforts to exhibit OCB.

Malaysia cultural system has been acknowledged to be high on power distance (Hofstede and Hofstede, 2004) where Ansari et al. (2004) have found that leading Malaysian organizations are like leading.

Organizations are like leading hierarchical relationships because Malaysian workers have strong preference for respect and hierarchy. Hence, it is clear that power distance orientation of Malaysian subordinates would have implications on LMX-OCB relationship in a closed service organization like LG, thus, the following hypotheses are proposed.

- H₁: Affect dimension of LMX is positively related to employees' OCB
- $\rm H_2:$ Loyalty dimension of LMX is positively related to employees' $\rm OCB$
- H₃: Contribution dimension of LMX is positively related to employees' OCB
- H₄: Respect dimension of LMX is positively related to employees' OCB.

Based on the discussion of the literature, the theoretical model that guides the present study is presented in Figure 1.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Study Setting and Sampling

The sample population is the workforce working in LG located in Johor, Melaka and Negeri Sembian (Southern region of Malaysia). Stratified random sampling is used in selecting sample population where this technique is considered appropriate where there are various departments with different job functions existed in a LG while functions between LG are almost similar in nature. The LG are initially categorized into types: City council, municipal council and district council. Seven LG are selected which are Majlis Bandaraya Melaka (city council), Majlis Perbandaran Nilai, Negeri Sembilan and Majlis Perbandaran Muar, Johor (municipal council), Majlis Daerah Tampin and Majlis Daerah Kuala Pilah (both from Negeri Sembilan), Majlis Daerah Mersing and Majlis Daerah Pontian (both from Johor).

Utilising Krejcie and Morgan (1970) sample size table, a sample size required for this study is 285 respondents. Since the number of professional and administrative group is much smaller compared to Supports I and II group, as indicated in Table 1, a disproportionate stratified random sampling procedure is considered appropriate. This sampling design is adopted since the public complaints are more towards deficiency in operational matters which is much related to Supports I and II categories. Furthermore, this sampling design is more efficient than simple random sampling design because each important segment of the population is better represented, and more valuable and differentiated information is obtained with respect to each group (Sekaran and Bougie, 2010).

Data was collected through survey questionnaires as this method provided certain advantages such as convenience, accessibility and minimal costs (Malhorta, 2007). 350 questionnaires were distributed to these LG in order to increase the response rate with 240 of them were returned. After data screening and

Figure 1: Conceptual framework of the relationship between leadermember exchange and organizational citizenship behaviors

Leader-member exchange • Affect	Organizational citizenship
LoyaltyContribution	behaviour
 Respect 	

Table 1: Sample population for LG in Southern Region of Malaysia

Service Group/Local	P and A	Support I	Support II	Total
Government name				
Majlis Bandaraya Melaka	30	60	188	278
Majlis Perbandaran Muar	19	45	96	160
Majlis Perbandaran Nilai	17	42	111	170
Majlis Daerah Kuala Pilah	7	25	88	120
Majlis Daerah Tampin	7	23	100	130
Majlis Daerah Pontian	6	25	87	118
Majlis Daerah Mersing	6	23	88	117
Total	92	243	2758	1093

LG: Local Governments, P and A: Professional and Administrative staff

normality tests undertaken, 222 sets were found useable for data analysis.

3.2. Research Instruments

The instruments used in this study were adapted from established instruments with proven reliability and validity. Since they were worded in English, translation to Malay language was carried out as the respondents are predominantly Malay with majority from Support I and Support II categories and not that eloquent in English. The research instrument was divided into three parts: (i) Demographic information, (ii) 22-item of OCB construct adapted from Podsakoff et al. (1990), and (iii) 12-item of LMX construct adapted from Liden and Maslyn (1998) with four dimensions - affect, respect, contribution and loyalty. Additional four items were included arising from focus group discussion, making it a 16-item construct. The respondents were requested to mark their agreements on each items based on a five-point Likert scales ranging from (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree.

Prior to full scale survey, pilot testing has been conducted with 59 employees from one LG agency in Terengganu. These respondents were considered the target group in terms of job description and structure and these criteria should be similar to the actual survey being conducted. Findings indicated that the survey instrument was reliable with Cronbach's α values exceeding the 0.7 benchmark which indicated high consistency of the instrument employed in this study (Sekaran and Bougie, 2010).

4. FINDINGS

4.1. Profiling of Respondents

As shown in Table 2, out of 222 respondents, female dominated the sample with 56.8% compared to male counterpart of 43.2%; with all of them were Malays. 87.4% of the respondents were from the support staff category which is typical of a LG organizational structure. 59.9% of the respondents have attained education level up to certificate while the balance 40.1% respondents were university graduates holding diploma, degree and master certificates. In commensurate with their attained level of education. most of them (61.3%) earned a monthly income bracket of below RM2500. Profiling shows that a new batch of employees are being recruited where 44.6% of the respondents have worked for <5 years while 18.9% of them have been in employment for a period exceeding 16 years. In terms of their immediate supervisors, most of them have a male supervisor (63.5%) and almost majority of them (41.9%) have worked with the current supervisor for <5 years which gave an indication that job rotation was being practiced to enhance the workforce multitasking and working experience.

4.2. Factor Analysis

A principal component analysis with varimax rotation was conducted to determine meaningful factors of LMX and OCB. Factor analysis on OCB produced one factor with eigenvalue of 8.56 explaining a total variance of 39.93%. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy stood at 0.88and significant Barlett's Test (Chi-square = 2601.03, P < 0.001). Four items were

Table 2: Demographic profile of respondents

Table 2: Demographic profile of respondents					
Items	Frequency n=222 (%)				
State					
Johor	112 (50.5)				
Melaka	41 (18.5)				
Negeri Sembilan	69 (31.0)				
Local Government Name					
MajlisBandaraya Melaka	41 (18.5)				
MajlisPerbandaran Muar	63 (28.3)				
MajlisPerbandaranNilai	33 (14.9)				
Majlis Daerah Kuala Pilah	17(7.7)				
Majlis Daerah Tampin	19 (8.6)				
Majlis Daerah Pontian	20 (9.0)				
Majlis Daerah Mersing	29 (13.0)				
Gender					
Male	96 (43.2)				
Female	126 (56.8)				
Service category					
Support II	128 (57.7)				
Support I	66 (29.7)				
Professional and Administrative	28 (12.6)				
Education qualification	20 (12:0)				
Higher school certificate and below	110 (49.5)				
Certificate	23 (10.4)				
Diploma	9 (22.1)				
Bachelor's Degree and above	40 (18.0)				
Monthly income	10 (10.0)				
Below RM2500	136 (61.3)				
RM2501-RM3500	60 (27.0)				
RM3501-RM4500	16 (7.2)				
RM4501-RM5500	8 (3.6)				
Above RM5501	2 (0.9)				
Years of service	2 (0.9)				
<5 years	99 (44.6)				
5-10 years	49 (22.1)				
11-15 years	32 (14.4)				
16-20 years	14 (6.3)				
>21 years	28 (12.6)				
Gender of current supervisor	26 (12:0)				
Male	141 (62 5)				
Female	141 (63.5)				
	81 (36.5)				
Years of service with current supervisor	03(410)				
<5 years	93 (41.9) 63 (28.4)				
5-10 years	63 (28.4) 24 (10.8)				
11-15 years	24 (10.8)				
16-20 years	24 (10.8)				
>21 years	18 (8.1)				

dropped as they have factor loadings of <0.5 (Hair et al., 2010), leaving only 18 items.

As for LMX, three significant factors emerged with total eigenvalues of 11.52 explaining a total variance of 72%. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy stood at 0.92 and significant Barlett's Test (Chi-square = 2890.32, P < 0.001). All16 items were retained as they have factor loading of >0.5 (Hair et al., 2010) and these factors were renamed as LMX-affect respect, LMX-loyalty and LMX-contribution. These findings could perhaps attribute to Malaysian organizations which are hierarchical and relationshiporientationin nature (Asma, 1996; Ansari et al., 2004). Affect and respect can be considered as representatives of non-work factors and indicated the level of respect a member has for his/her supervisor arising from the affection that the member felt for his/her leader. Consequently, the earlier hypotheses were revised to as follows:

- H₁: LMX-affect respect is positively related to employees' OCB
- H₂: Loyalty dimension of LMX is positively related to employees' OCB
- H₃: Contribution dimension of LMX is positively related to employees' OCB.

4.3. Descriptive Analysis

As reflected in Table 3, the mean scores were above their respective midpoints based on five-point scale, indicating that the respondents perceived moderate agreements on these variables. Cronbach α values for these variables were well above the minimum acceptable reliability of 0.7 (Sekaran and Bougie, 2010) indicating good internal consistency. Correlation among variables were noted to have significant relationships among each other, thus, initial support has been established that LMX was positively associated with OCB.

4.4. Multiple Regression Analysis

As indicated in Table 4, the model was considered good with F (3,218) = 87.03, P < 0.001 with adjusted R² at 0.54 indicating that a moderate 54% of variance in OCB has been explained (Rumsey, 2009). It was further noted that LMX-AffectRespect (β = 0.37, P < 0.001) and LMX-Contribution (β = 0.45, P < 0.001) were positively related and significant to OCB, thus H₁ and H₃ were supported. However, H₂ was rejected since LMX-loyalty has failed to contribute significant impact towards OCB.

5. DISCUSSION

Findings from this study have supported the social exchange theory (Blau, 1964) that quality dyadic relationship can exert significant influence in OCB readiness among LG' employees. As put forward by Lo et al. (2006), the central premise of OCB theory is that LMX is partially an expression of subordinates gratitude and reciprocity for positive work-related behaviors originating from a high-quality relationship with one's supervisors. Murphy et al. (2003) further affirmed the applicability of social exchange theory in LMX relationship where individuals who engaged in

Table 3: Descriptive statistics, Cronbach's α and zero-order correlations

Variable	Mean±SD	Reliability (a)	1	2	3	4
LMX affect	$3.97{\pm}0.66$	0.94	1.00			
respect						
LMX loyalty	3.60 ± 0.66	0.85	0.64**	1.00		
LMX	3.87 ± 0.60	0.82	0.74**	0.53**	1.00	
contribution						
OCB	3.95 ± 0.50	0.93	0.67**	0.43**	0.70**	1.00

**P<0.01, LMX: Leader-member exchange, OCB: Organizational citizenship behaviors, SD: Standard deviation

Table 4: Regression Results between LMX and OCB

DV	IV	β	F value	Adjusted R ²
OCB	LMX-affect respect LMX-loyalty	0.37*** 0.04		
	LMX-loyalty LMX-contribution	0.45***	87.03***	0.54

***P<0.001, LMX: Leader-member exchange, OCB: organizational citizenship behaviors

high-quality relationship would behave in such a way that their exchange partner would also get the benefits.

Three distinct LMX dimensions (LMX-affect respect, LMXloyalty and LMX-contribution) established from factor analysis, as opposed to original four dimensions, is a reflection of Malaysian society that is both hierarchical and relationship-oriented (Asma, 1996; Ansari et al., 2004). Through multiple regression analysis, LMX-contribution emerged as the strongest predictor ($\beta = 0.45$, P < 0.001) to OCB since contribution is measured on the effort and investment contributed explicitly and implicitly by both subordinates and supervisor towards the operational efficiency, thus, making contribution the most important factor that will lead to higher performance of OCB (Dienesch and Liden, 1986; Lo et al., 2006).

LMX-affect respect materialized as the second strongest predictor ($\beta = 0.37$, P < 0.001) to OCB as direct interactions with supervisors through caring attitude and considerate where supervisors observed and listened to their subordinates would increase the subordinates' respect and affect towards their supervisors and would lead to an increment in subordinates' OCB (Findley et al., 2000). The affection and respect that the subordinates showed the dominance of Malaysian culture of collectivism that has shaped the workplace culture that maintain harmonious relationship is more important than conducting a task (Asma, 1996; Hofstede and Hofstede, 2004).

LMX-loyalty was found to be insignificant to OCB which this finding could be due to loyalty element has yet to be matured in the dyadic relationship as majority of them (41.9%) were under the supervision of <5 years due to job rotation exercise and arising from new employment (44.6%). This result was in line with the finding reported by Rashidah et al. (2014) on LG employees working in east coast region of Malaysia where short dyadic tenure of <5 years could be contributing factor for the insignificant association. As suggested by Liden and Maslyn (1998), loyaty is more incline towards personal relationship and developed over the years, thus, with the short dyadic tenure noted in this study, loyalty towards the dyad can be considered at immature and fragile stage.

6. CONCLUSION

The objective of this study has been met where LMX is an important element in promoting favourable relationship between leaders and subordinates which in turn motivates subordinates to perform one of the most important work outcomes, OCB. The three distinct factors that emerged for LMX signified the typical Malaysian work culture of power distance, preserving harmonious relationship and relationship-oriented where LMX-affect respect was the dominant factor in influencing OCB followed by LMX-Contribution. 54% variance in OCB has been explained by LMX provided enough evidence that quality dyadic relationship should not be ignored due to its significant impact towards elevating OCB among LG' employees in Southern region of Malaysia.

This study gave strong signal to the management of LG that maintaining quality relationship between subordinates and

leaders would help the employees in experiencing favorable work outcomes and induce them towards exhibiting OCB. With a better knowledge on the nature of quality exchanges, the management would be able to formulate necessary steps in making OCB as a platform to improve operational issue and to impart OCB as part of working culture. By understanding the mechanism of quality exchanges shall contribute towards reducing the public complaints which in turn will made LG as an important engine of growth economically and socially for a particular district. Another important contribution that arose from this study is that management should invest time, effort and commitment to elevate their employees' OCB level through fostering quality dyadic relationship since OCB has been identified as a low cost vehicle in promoting overall organizational effectiveness.

Since the scope of study is limited to Southern region of Malaysia, it is suggested that future studies to include LG located throughout Malaysia so that these findings can be generalized. Furthermore, it is recommended that future studies should explore the mediating effect like job satisfaction or organizational commitment on LMX and OCB relationship in order to have a deeper understanding of OCB readiness. This study can be used as a reference point for future OCB researches on other government sectors especially those agencies that have constant contact with the public so as to increase the ability to generalize these findings.

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