

Makale Türü: Araştırma Makalesi

Examining the Relationship Leader-Member Exchange and Organizational Commitment: A Study in Sports Organizations

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to examine the relationships between leader-member exchange (LMX) and organizational commitment (OC) by focusing on sports organizations. Employees working at the sports organizations of the various provinces in the western part of Turkey participated in this study. One-dimensional LMX scale and three-dimensional OC scale were used as data collection tools. For the analysis of the data, descriptive statistics, reliability analysis, correlation, and regression analyzes were performed. Analysis results showed that LMX had a significant and positive effect on OC. When the effects of LMX on the sub-dimensions of OC were examined, it was observed that only affective commitment and normative commitment were affected by LMX. These results emphasized that LMX quality was important in creating an OC of employees in organizations.

Keywords: Leader-member exchange, organizational commitment, employee, sport organizations

Lider-Üye Etkileşimi ve Örgütsel Bağlılık İlişkisi: Spor Kurumları Çalışanları Üzerinde Bir İnceleme

ÖZ

Bu çalışmada, spor kurumlarına odaklanılarak, lider-üye etkileşimi ve örgütsel bağlılık arasındaki ilişkilerin incelenmesi amaçlanmıştır. Çalışmaya Türkiye'nin batısında bulunan çeşitli illerdeki spor kurumlarında görev yapan çalışanlar katılmıştır. Veri toplama aracı olarak tek boyutlu Lider-Üye Etkileşim ölçeği ve üç boyutlu Örgütsel Bağlılık ölçeği kullanılmıştır. Veriler üzerinde tanımlayıcı istatistikler, güvenilirlik analizi, korelasyon ve regresyon analizleri yapılmıştır. Analiz sonuçları, lider-üye etkileşiminin örgütsel bağlılık üzerinde anlamlı ve pozitif bir etkisi olduğunu göstermiştir. Örgütsel bağlılığın alt boyutları üzerindeki etkiler incelendiğinde, lider-üye etkileşiminden duygusal bağlılığın ve normatif bağlılığın etkilendiği görülmüştür. Bu sonuçlar, lider-üye etkileşim kalitesinin işletmelerdeki çalışanların örgütsel bağlılığını artırmada önemli olduğunu ortaya çıkarmıştır.

Anahtar kelimeler: Lider-üye etkileşimi, örgütsel bağlılık, çalışan, spor kurumları

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Introduction

Nowadays, organizations are trying to develop more managerial strategies in order to maintain their existence and development (Heracleous, 2000). One of these efforts is to manage human resources in the best way and to increase their productivity. In this context, it is clear that maintaining healthy relations between employees in the work environment will increase the productivity of employees and indirectly increase the performance of the organizations (Pirzada et al., 2013).

In order to be more effective and achieve strategic goals, organizations need positive attitudes and behaviors from their employees, whether they are in a managerial position or not. For instance, organizational citizenship behavior (Duyan, 2021), organizational justice (Tolukan & Akyel, 2019), work engagement (Alsheikh, 2020), etc. phenomena such as these are issues that should be observed in organizations. On the other hand, negative cases such as mobbing are among the issues that should not be experienced in organizations (Yildiz, 2016). All these issues directly affect the productivity of the employees and indirectly affect the productivity of the organizations (Yildiz, 2017).

The literature emphasizes that LMX and OC issues are important factors affecting both employees and organizations (Srivastava & Dhar, 2016). When the literature is examined, although there are studies that reveal the relationships between both issues in various sectors, there is no research done on the employees of sports organizations. Therefore, this study aimed to examine the effect of LMX on the OC of the employees of sports organizations. Thus, the results obtained from sports organizations will contribute to the literature. In this context, in this study, firstly, the concepts were explained through literature, then the method and findings of the study were revealed, and finally, the discussion and conclusion were given.

Literature Review

Leader-member exchange

LMX is a theory that focuses on the work relationship between the leader and the employees (subordinates/members) in the workplace. This theory argues that leaders in organizations cannot approach all their subordinates with the same leadership style because their time, power, and resources are limited (Bauer & Green, 1996; Wayne, Liden, & Sparrowe, 1994). Therefore, resource limitations force leaders to develop relationships of different nature as a result of their mutual interactions with their subordinates (Schriesheim, Castro, & Cogliser, 1999; Van Breukelen, Schyns, & Le Blanc, 2006). Briefly, this theory tries to describe how leaders use their power and resources while developing different relationships with subordinates (Deluga & Perry, 1994).

According to the LMX theory, the relationships between leader and subordinates alternate between high quality and low quality (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). As a result of these relations, groups called in-group and out-group are formed. The in-group includes employees whom leaders deem important in running the work. In the out-group, there are employees who perform formal tasks within the framework of the employment contract. Leaders provide support and resources to in-group employees beyond the employment contract. In contrast, employees in the in-group respond to their leaders with more performance. The interaction between the leader and the employees in the out-group is relatively weak. Situations such as low commitment and low organizational citizenship behavior can be observed in these employees (Kauppila, 2016).

The high quality of LMX provides a number of benefits to organizations. As a result of high-quality relationships, more job satisfaction and more extra-role behaviors are seen in employees, which contribute positively to the overall performance of organizations (Lo, Mohamad, Ramayah, & Chai, 2015).

Organizational commitment

OC is defined as the degree of loyalty of an employee to the goals and values of the organization (Currivan, 1999). There are types of commitment in OC that include affective, continuance, and normative dimensions, and these are the most widely accepted in the literature. *Affective commitment* refers to the emotional closeness and identification of employees with their organization. Employees internalize the values, goals, and objectives of the organization. They strive to achieve the goals of the organization and desire to remain a part of the organization by their own choices. *Continuance commitment* refers to not accepting the high cost of leaving the organization. Employees continue to work in the organization as a necessity. In *normative commitment*, employees believe that they should not leave the organization with a sense of moral duty and responsibility. With this belief, they feel connected to the organization. (Allen & Meyer, 1990; Meyer & Allen, 1991).

OC has various benefits for organizations. Employees with OC exhibit higher job performance and productivity. Thus, organizations increase service quality and provide more profitability in today's competitive environment (Phipps, Prieto, & Ndinguri, 2013).

Relationships between leader-member exchange and organizational commitment

Studies dealing with LMX and OC issues separately are quite common in the literature. There are also studies conducted in various sectors on the relationships between both variables. For instance, Eisenberger et al. (2010) on social workers, Lo et al. (2010) on manufacturing workers, Lee (2005) on professionals including engineers and scientists working in the R&D department of manufacturing firms, Keskes et al. (2018) conducted research on senior executives of various organizations. According to the results of all these studies, there is a consensus that LMX has a significant and positive effect on OC. On the other hand, there is no research from the sports sector to determine the relationships between LMX and OC. Therefore, the following hypotheses have been developed in order to reveal the relationships between LMX and OC:

- H₁*. Leader-member exchange has a positive effect on affective commitment.
- H₂*. Leader-member exchange has a positive effect on continuance commitment.
- H₃*. Leader-member exchange has a positive effect on normative commitment.
- H₄*. Leader-member exchange has a positive effect on organizational commitment.

Method

Research model

The conceptual model of this study conducted to examine the effects of LMX on OC in sports organizations is illustrated in Figure 1. In this model, LMX is the independent variable, OC and its sub-dimensions (affective commitment, continuance commitment, and normative commitment) are the dependent variables.

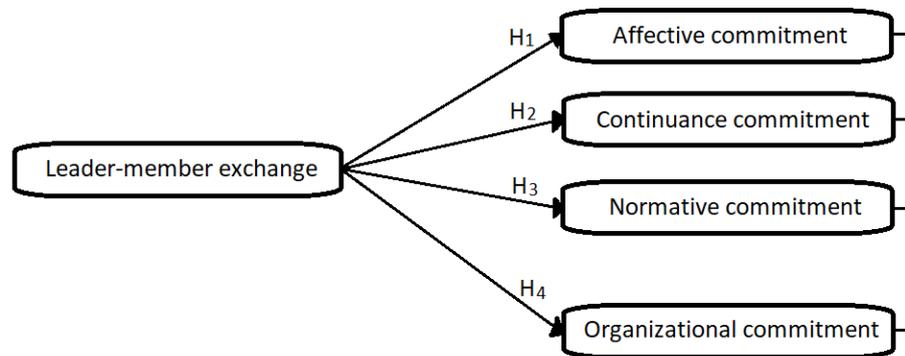


Figure 1. The effect of leader-member exchange on organizational commitment

Sample size and procedure

Employees working at the Youth and Sports Directorate of the various provinces in the west of Turkey participated in this study. The data were collected by simple random sampling using an electronic communication tool on the internet. First, employees were invited to research. Then, scale forms were sent to employees who accepted the invitation. The returned 178 forms were found suitable for statistical analysis.

Measurement instruments

In this study, the LMX-7 scale developed by Scandura and Graen (1984) was used to measure LMX quality. The statements were answered with a 5-point Likert scale (for example, “How well do you feel that your immediate supervisor recognizes your potential?”, in the range of “1 = Not at all, 5 = Fully”). Meyer and Allen’s three-component model (Allen & Meyer, 1990; Meyer & Allen, 1991) was used to measure the OC of employees. The measurement instrument in this model consists of 18 items and 3 sub-dimensions (affective commitment, continuance commitment, and normative commitment), (Meyer, Allen, & Smith, 1993). The statements were answered with a 5-point Likert scale (“1 = Never, 5 = Always”).

Statistical analysis

First, descriptive and reliability analyzes of the scales were conducted. Cronbach’s alpha coefficient was calculated for reliability. Correlation analysis was used to determine the direction and strength of the relationship between variables, and hierarchical regression analysis was used to determine the role of independent variables on the dependent variable.

Analysis and Results

Sample characteristics

The majority of the participants were male (64%) and married (69.7%). Most of the participants were between 31 and 45 years old (64%) and had an undergraduate degree (64%) and permanent status (56.2%). 80.8% of the employees had between “1 and 10 years” working time (Table 1).

Table 1. Sample characteristics

Variables		f	%
Gender	Male	114	64.0
	Female	64	36.0
Marital status	Single	54	30.3
	Married	124	69.7
Age	Less than 25	8	4.5
	26–30	42	23.6
	31–45	114	64.0
	46–50	12	6.7
	More than 51	2	1.1
Educational degree	Middle-school	4	2.2
	Lycee	20	11.2
	Undergraduate	114	64.0
Employment Status	Master's	40	22.5
	Fixed-term contract	78	43.8
Tenure (year)	Permanent	100	56.2
	1–5	72	40.4
	6–10	72	40.4
	11–15	22	12.4
	16–20	6	3.4
	21–25	2	1.1
	26–30	4	2.2

Test for reliability

The reliability analysis using Cronbach's alpha coefficient indicated a high-reliability score of 0.878 for the LMX, and 0.891 for the OC (affective commitment = 0.947; continuance commitment = 0.777; normative commitment = 0.814). These values indicated that all scales were highly reliable.

Correlation analysis

As a result of the correlation analysis, a significant and positive relationship was found between LMX and OC ($r = 0.450$; $p < 0.01$). Similarly, LMX was observed to be significantly and positively associated with both affective commitment ($r = 0.524$; $p < 0.01$) and normative commitment ($r = 0.509$; $p < 0.01$). These relationships were moderate. On the other hand, no significant relationship was found between LMX and the continuance commitment (Table 3).

Table 3. Correlation analysis results of the variables

Variables	M	1	2	3	4	5
1. Gender		1				
2. Marital status		.138	1			
3. Age		.121	.342**	1		
4. Educational degree		.138	.031	.161*	1	
5. Employment status		-.141	.353**	.455**	-.083	1
6. Tenure		.019	.198**	.590**	-.024	.525**
7. Leader-member exchange	3.35	-.002	-.130	-.144	-.054	.071
8. Affective commitment	3.85	-.126	-.054	-.105	-.061	.151*
9. Continuance commitment	3.27	-.164*	-.133	-.355**	-.015	-.118
10. Normative commitment	3.20	-.123	-.246**	-.237**	-.180*	.000
11. Organizational commitment	3.44	-.177*	-.179*	-.291**	-.107	.023

**Correlations are significant at $p < 0.01$; *Correlations are significant at $p < 0.05$

Table 3. Correlation analysis results of the variables (continue)

Variables	M	6	7	8	9	10
1. Gender						
2. Marital status						
3. Age						
4. Educational degree						
5. Employment status						
6. Tenure		1				
7. Leader-member exchange	3.35	-.042	1			
8. Affective commitment	3.85	.050	.524**	1		
9. Continuance commitment	3.27	-.141	-.006	.125	1	
10. Normative commitment	3.20	-.079	.509**	.693**	.404**	1
11. Organizational commitment	3.44	-.066	.450**	.802**	.633**	.896**

**Correlations are significant at $p < 0.01$; *Correlations are significant at $p < 0.05$

Hierarchical regression analysis

According to the hierarchical regression results, LMX significantly and positively affected affective commitment ($\beta = 0.514$), normative commitment ($\beta = 0.479$), and OC ($\beta = 0.410$) ($p < 0.01$). On the other hand, LMX had no impact on the continuance commitment. According to these results, hypotheses 1, 3, and 4 were accepted and hypothesis 2 was rejected. Among the demographic variables, only the “age” variable continued to have an impact on the continuance commitment, normative commitment, and OC in Model 2, where LMX also came into play as an independent variable (Table 4).

Table 4. Hierarchical regression analysis between leader-member exchange and organizational commitment

Independent variables ↓	Dependent variable							
	Affective commitment		Continuance commitment		Normative commitment		Organizational commitment	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2
	Beta	Beta	Beta	Beta	Beta	Beta	Beta	Beta
1. Age	-.199*	-.109	-.432**	-.443**	-.255**	-.170*	-.374**	-.302**
2. Educational degree	-.025	-.012	.057	.056	-.137	-.125	-.043	-.033
3. Tenure	.167	.136	.115	.118	.068	.039	.154	.129
4. Leader-member exchange	-	.514**	-	-.062	-	.479**	-	.410**
R^2	.031	.288	.136	.140	.080	.303	.103	.267
Adjusted R^2	.014	.272	.121	.120	.064	.287	.088	.250
F	1.841	17.511	9.140	7.033	5.015	18.831	6.683	15.765

Note: Standardized beta values were used, ** $p < 0.001$; * $p < 0.05$

Discussion and Conclusion

In the literature, there are many studies conducted separately on LMX and OC in the context of sports organizations (Belli & Ekici, 2012; Gullu & Kocak, 2016; Yıldız, 2011; Yıldız, 2018). In this study, the links between LMX and OC, which have not been investigated before, were examined by focusing on the employees of sports organizations. The results of the study showed that LMX had a significant and positive impact on affective commitment, normative commitment, and OC. Only the continuance commitment, one of the sub-dimensions of OC, was unaffected by LMX. Similarly, Wang et al. (2010) found significant relationships only in the dimensions of affective commitment ($r = 0.590$) and normative commitment ($r = 0.360$) in their research on workers working in various industries. On the contrary, no correlation was observed between the continuance commitment and LMX, confirming the result in our study. These results reveal that LMX quality has no role in the continuation of employees in the organization.

In our study, only the “age” variable among the demographic variables continued to have an impact on the continuance commitment, normative commitment, and OC in Model 2, in which LMX also came into play as an independent variable. This result shows that OC increases as the age of the employees decreases, and this situation is not affected by LMX in any way. In the literature, there are many studies conducted in various sectors examining the relationships between LMX and OC. Many examples of these studies can be given. Ahmed et al. (2013) found a significant and positive relationship between LMX and OC in their study on state legislative chambers employees ($r = 0.420$). Similarly, Garg and Dhar (2014) observed a significant and positive relationship between LMX and OC in their research on hotel employees ($r = 0.462$). Kang, Stewart, and Kim (2011) also found a significant and positive relationship between LMX and OC in their research in the manufacturing, service, and informatics sectors ($r = 0.330$). Hsieh (2012) found that LMX significantly and positively affected OC in his research on bank employees ($\beta = 0.692$). In all these studies on employees in various sectors, it is seen that there is a consensus that there are important relationships between LMX and OC.

As a result, this study conducted in the context of the sports sector shows that LMX is effective on OC. This result emphasizes that managers should take LMX into consideration. Based on the fact that organizations will achieve their strategic goals with the high performance of their employees, it can be suggested that managers increase the quality of LMX in the work environment. In this context, managers should make efforts to increase the number of employees in the in-group. Although resources are limited, managers can create extra time for their employees by sacrificing their own time and find external support to increase reward resources. Thus, it can enable more employees to benefit from resources, as a result, organizations can have more employees with high performance with extra-role behavior.

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