

A Social Exchange Perspective through the Lens of an Individual: Relationship between LMX, Voice and Organizational Commitment in Academia

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Abstract

Supervisor and subordinate relationship play a significant role in a work place. One can measure the quality of reciprocal exchange between them through leader member exchange relationship. The main objective of current study is to check the impact of leader and member exchange (LMX) on organizational commitment at individual level. Data (N = 270) were collected from faculty members working in higher educational institutes (HEIs) from two cities of Pakistan. Utilizing Preacher and Hayes (2008) macro of mediation, the proposed mediating variable i.e. employee voice behavior, used in this study appeared to be significant. Employee voice behavior of faculty members mediated the positive association between LMX and normative and affective components of organizational commitment. Depending on social exchange theory, this study widens the research on both the variables i.e. LMX and organizational commitment relationship by declaring employee voice as the mediator. Implications and future directions are discussed.

Keywords: Quantitative, LMX, employee voice, organizational commitment.

1. Introduction

Employees' organizational commitment has gained more importance globally because of the competitive business environment, where the focus of organizations has turned towards their human resource in order to gain competitive advantage (Kleinman, Siegel, & Eckstein, 2001).

The term organizational commitment is subjective in nature and can be increased through trainings and development programs (Asrar-ul-Haq, Kuchinke, & Iqbal, 2017). Contrary to this assertion, scholars believe that such programs may or may

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not maximize commitment; therefore, other initiatives must also be taken such as rewards and recognition from supervisor, an individual-organization fit and leader member exchange relationship etc. because such schemes are good predictors of organizational commitment (Chew & Chan, 2008). For example, employees in high LMX are supposed to enjoy more support, more rewards and positive feedback from their supervisors afar from their job contracts (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). Thus employees in high LMX are more likely to feel sense of belongingness and reciprocate it by showing commitment Yousaf, Sanders, Torka, and Ardts (2011).

Leader-member exchange relationship takes place at a professional level (Uhl-Bien, Graen, & Scandura, 2000). Studies suggest that individuals that are bind in quality exchange relationship can communicate openly, understand each other's situation, have greater potential to participate in providing suggestions to organization thus, helping in its goal achievement (Hsiung, 2012). Significant research work done over the past few decades reveal that impact of LMX on workplace outcomes, especially those related to performance, plays important role in motivating employees (Martin, Guillaume, Thomas, Lee, & Epitropaki, 2016).

However, till this date, a handful of studies suggest that LMX is a positive predictor of organizational commitment (Settoon, Bennett, & Liden, 1996), particularly in HEIs settings. Therefore, further exploration of this notion is required in other organizational settings such as educational institutions i.e. universities. Because of its critical role in organizational success, employees' organizational commitment is more important in university settings, where human resource is responsible for building and educating intellects of a nation (Ahmad, Zafar, & Shahzad, 2015). As such, there is limited number of studies available in the extant literature to explore the relationship between LMX and employee commitment in a university setting.

Since, faculty members in HEIs are highly qualified people therefore, there should be firmer university policies and working conditions, that allow reciprocal commitment across all departments, which will encourage faculty members to provide suggestions and novel ideas for the betterment of HEIs. The same group also serves as part of various administrative and policy making committees, and hence, they have a greater opportunity of voice behavior. Voice of an employee considered as an essential component for the survival and performance of an organization. Departmental heads or managers require facts and figures from lower level employees because the top managers are unlikely to have all the material they require about work processes and difficulties (Detert & Burris, 2007). This study attempts to explore the role of voice behavior of faculty as an underlying mechanism (i.e. as mediator) through which LMX leads to enhanced employees' (faculty) commitment.

This study is important because extant literature suggest that faculty's commitment has a critical role in an educational institution's success or failure (Razak, Darmawan, & Keeves, 2009). In Pakistan, lack of commitment is considered among the key challenges faced by higher educational institutes (Asrar-ul-Haq, Kuchinke, & Iqbal, 2017). The same authors further argued that lack of commitment affects faculty's concentration on their jobs, which consequently affects institution's goals. A survey on Task Force on Higher Education was published by World Bank which pointed out that in Pakistan the Higher Education sector is facing various problems and amongst them the most important was the quality workforce that is, faculty members in universities (Shahzad, Rehman, & Abbas, 2010).

To this backdrop, current study attempts to contribute to the current literature by investigating the relation between LMX and faculty's organizational commitment in the perspective of social exchange theory. This study also explores the novel mediating role of faculty voice behavior between LMX and faculty's commitment. Finally, the study setting i.e. evidence from Pakistani HEIs also brings an added contribution because such studies are seldom conducted in Pakistan in general and in HEIs of Pakistan in particular.

2. Conceptual Framework and Hypothesis

2.1. Social exchange theory and leader member exchange

Social exchange can be defined as an open ended transaction string where exchange partner receives benefits as a result of mutual contributions (Kamdar & Van Dyne, 2007). The main ingredient of this exchange is mutual trust and an obliged behavior (Liu, Loi, & Ngo, 2018). It is a broad concept envisaged by various others scientific disciplines that is anthropology, management and social psychology (Cropanzano, Anthony, Daniels, & Hall, 2017). In the light of social exchange theory, individuals consider the pros and cons of deliberate actions while engaging in exchange relationships (Allen & Meyer, 1990; Blau, 1964; Meyer & Allen, 1997; Shahzad, Rehman, & Abbas, 2010; Tsui & Cheng, 1999). The exchange relationship evolves gradually from low level of trust to a high level of trust, gratitude and mutual obligations (Blau, 1964). Actions in a social exchange relationships are reciprocated and cannot be calculated in terms of value, this aspect differentiates such relationships from economic exchanges (Blau, 1964).

The main feature of social exchange is its multi-foci perspective, which states that supervisor is engaged in different relationships with different foci (Hansen, Alge, Brown, Jackson, & Dunford, 2013; Lavelle, Rupp, & Brockner, 2007). In a workplace, relationships can be examined as individually, with coworkers, a team and finally with

the leader. It is argued that there can be three types of exchange relationship that is LMX, TMX and CWX (Omlion-Hodges, Ptacek, & Zerilli, 2016). LMX is the dyadic relationship between leader and a member, where CWX is the relationship among co-workers reporting to same supervisor and TMX is the exchange relationship among team members. The current study chose to focus on individual level attitude and behavior that is LMX and the relation of this exchange relationship in organization at individual level outcomes particularly organizational commitment at individual level.

Exchange Relationship which focuses mainly on quality relation between an individual and immediate supervisor is termed as “Leader-member exchange (LMX)”. In due course, this exchange relation develops from its mainframe transactional to mutual exchange relationships (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). LMX goes through a three stage process for development and can be termed as three stages of socialization i.e. role making, role taking and reutilization. Parties involved in exchange relationship cultivate not only value of relationship, it also benefits the individual member in a way that it will increase an individual’s decision making power, impact and autonomy, subject to mutual acceptance (Graen & Scandura, 1987). The main facet of exchange relationship is on quality exchange. Parties in a leader member exchange relationship follow the norm of reciprocity (Dansereau Jr, Graen, & Haga, 1975). Thus the current study focuses on an exchange relationship through the lens of an individual.

2.2. Leader member exchange “LMX” and organizational commitment

The notion of Leader member exchange (LMX) is based on the assumption that leaders build relationships of various qualities with their subordinates (G. Graen & Cashman, 1975). A meta-analysis done by Dulebohn, Bommer, Liden, Brouer, and Ferris (2012) revealed a strong relationship between high quality LMX and commitment to organization. Recent studies (Banks et al., 2014; Casimir, Ngee Keith, Yuan Wang, & Ooi, 2014; Omlion-Hodges, Ptacek, & Zerilli, 2016) revealed the positive relationship of LMX with organizational commitment.

Similarly, a meta-analysis conducted by Gerstner and Day (1997) on approximately 85 studies demonstrates that employee perceive LMX as a leader’s assessment of employee commitment to organization. Organizational commitment was explained by Mathieu and Zajac (1990) as a link between an individual and organization. Meyer and Allen (1997) suggest three types of commitment that is normative, affective and continuance commitment. Although it is interesting to know whether individuals reciprocate LMX, which reflects an exchange relation with supervisors by stimulating their bond with their immediate supervisor particularly by showing an emotional attachment or affective commitment (Meyer & Allen, 1991) can be highlighted as a loyalty and trust which is the main tenets of social exchange. Past researches depicts

that employees shape up their views according to the actions of their supervisors although (Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch, & Topolnytsky, 2002) stated that besides other factors, one can improve employee commitment by enhancing leader member exchange relations, since individuals view their supervisors as agents working on the behalf of organizations . Yukl (2002) argued that employees in a high quality exchange relation with their leaders are more committed to perform their administrative duties. Likewise, Ansari (2007) found that LMX has positive effect on commitment.

Among the three components of commitment, affective component of commitment shows mind set of desires, normative component is mind set of an obligation and continuance component is a mindset of cause avoidance. However all the three components of commitment reflects the commitment of employee to organization still Meyer and Allen (1997) states that one of the major reasons behind drawing a line among three components is on the belief that they can respond differently for on the job behavior. Certainly, research in this domain has revealed that affective component of commitment has more strong relation with OCB and job performance followed by normative component and then continuance component. In fact CC has found to be unrelated or a negative relation for this behavior (Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch, & Topolnytsky, 2002). Similar trend has been found with wellbeing (Meyer& Maltin, 2010). Such differences in the commitment components can have potential implications. Moreover, considering the correlation among three components of commitment, it has been noted that relationship of normative commitment with continuance is less and they have emerged separately in organizational setting (Dunham, Grube, & Castaneda, 1994; Hackett, Bycio, & Hausdorf, 1994; Meyer, Allen, & Smith, 1993). Furthermore, the correlation ($\rho=.18$) is modest between these and their correlations with their antecedents and outcomes are also different (Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch, & Topolnytsky, 2002). Similarly, with other foci, differences are also found for NC and CC. On the other hand, if we look at the relationship between NC and AC, studies showed a positive relationship with other antecedents and other foci (Allen & Meyer, 1990; Dunham, Grube, & Castaneda, 1994; Hackett, Bycio, & Hausdorf, 1994; Ko, Price, & Mueller, 1997). These studies concluded that NC and AC items are separate factors but they are showing high correlation. Likewise, correlations patterns of AC and NC with other variables are quite similar (Allen & Meyer, 1996; Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch, & Topolnytsky, 2002). Because of the strong correlations, the focus of this study is limited to affective and normative commitment only.

Keeping in view the above mentioned studies, it is argued that because faculty are members of various administrative committees also which are usually headed by the Vice Chancellors of HEIs, therefore, they build a close working relationship during this process. We suggest that because of this close interaction; LMX will be

high which will consequently trigger faculty's enhanced commitment to his organization by investing their time and energies for the good of the organization. They will feel obliged to reciprocate such behavior as suggested by the social exchange theory (Balu, 1964) in return of leader's encouragement and considering their suggestions at the time of decision making. Resultantly, their sense of ownership and self-identity and meaningfulness at work will also increase which will further lead to enhanced commitment (Farooq, Payaud, Merunka, & Valette-Florence, 2014)

An attachment which is on the basis of feelings, identification and shared values is affective commitment and such individuals stay with organization because they want to be. To this backdrop, a study conducted by (Dvir, Kass, & Shamir, 2004) showed a positive relationship between commitment and leadership. Similarly, a positive relationship has been examined between affective element of commitment and transformational leadership in another study (Felfe, Yan, & Six, 2008).

An ethical component of organizational commitment can be termed as normative commitment. It can be explained as a moral obligation of an individual towards an organization. Employees showing normative commitment to organization will remain with organization as ethically, they will consider themselves obliged to do so. Such employees also consider it as their responsibility to cater stakeholders in the business. Therefore:

H1: LMX will relate positively to the affective organizational commitment.

H2: LMX will relate positively to the normative organizational commitment.

2.2. Leader member exchange and voice

The focus of academia and practitioners has been recently shifted towards employee voice behavior (Farndale, Van Ruiten, Kelliher, & Hope-Hailey, 2011). Studies suggest that voice plays a significant role for organizations because it allows individuals to share their ideas which consequently increases organizational growth opportunities (Janssen & Gao, 2015). Most of the work related to voice behavior of an employee is based on social exchange perspective suggesting that an environment of mutual exchange will give employees the opportunity to speak up (Ng & Feldman, 2012).

Extant studies on voice behavior argued that it can help organizations improve their performance by contributing their ideas and suggestions on one hand, while identifying problem with existing policies and raising grievances against the same on the other hand (McCabe & Lewin, 1992). In this study, the focus is on the contributing side of voice where faculty can play their positive role by offering unique solutions to the challenges and experience to make informed decision and strategy

making. Prior studies found that voice behavior can be enhanced through various initiatives. For example, in two field studies, Kamdar and Van Dyne (2007) found that the quality of the leader-subordinate relationship was positively associated with voice behaviors, especially when the employee perceived that voice was in-role (rather than extra-role) behavior which further lead to positive outcomes. Work by Ng and Feldman (2008) examined the relationship between employee voice and an individual's special preferences at work. Likewise, Detert and Burris (2007) found that leaders with the qualities of individual considerations and inspirational motivation enhanced their followers' perceived psychological safety in speaking up. In similar lines, Burris, Detert and Chiaburu (2008) found that positive relational quality in the form of the leader-member exchange relationship is positively associated with the employee feeling of psychological attachment with the organization which increases voice.

Likewise, in order to improve the operations of an organization the role of employee suggestions, viewpoints and actions cannot be denied (Liu, Zhu & Yang, 2010). Previous studies has showed that willingness of an employee towards problem solving and making suggestions enhances the quality of managerial decision making and organizational functioning (Morris, 2000) increases organizational adaptability and provides development opportunities (Dutton & Ashford,1993). There are lot of many other factors affecting employee willingness to take part in voicing. Although, among other organizational contextual factors role of leader is remarkable (Detert & Burris, 2007). Particularly in a collectivist culture, where leaders are the figureheads and contribute in shaping employee behaviors.

In line with these studies, it is argued that leaders ensure a conducive and supportive environment for the subordinates and consequently enhance their employees' level of satisfaction. A high quality LMX is one such effort from the leaders to offer an environment where employees are treated fairly, have an effective reward system in place and offer opportunities for training and development etc. (Khan, Ahmad & Ilyas, 2018). Resultantly, employees (faculty) feel obligated to reciprocate similar behavior in sharing their knowledge and experience for the good of the organization i.e. voice behavior. Therefore, the following hypothesis is assumed:

H3: LMX will relate positively to the employee (faculty) voice behavior of an Individual.

2.3. Leader member exchange, voice and organizational commitment

Utilizing the social exchange theory (Blau, 1964), we argue that HEIs' leaders will create opportunities for faculty to share their opinions for the good of the institution by putting them in various policy making committees as a gesture of valuing

their input. Such gestures will create a positive working environment which will also enhance their relationship with the leaders i.e. enhancing LMX. Resultantly, faculty members will feel obliged to reciprocate the same behavior by sharing their knowledge and experiences for the good of the institution, offer unique solutions to the problems in hand and play sincere role in formulating effective strategies etc. all lead to enhanced voice behavior. Resultantly, faculty will participate actively in achieving goals and objectives of organization (Mowday, Steers, & Porter, 2013) thus faculty will value an organization by showing a sense of membership towards the same.

Moreover, Social exchange theory advocates argued that behavior and attitude of an employee depends mainly upon the extent to which they are treated as an inclusive member of an organization and vice versa (Scott & Reet, 2013). Furthermore, (Gu, Tang, & Jiang, 2015) suggested that an environment which supports exchange relationship allows its members to take part in giving suggestions. By engaging in voice behavior employees contribute by giving their output to others and expects the same in return from others in organization.

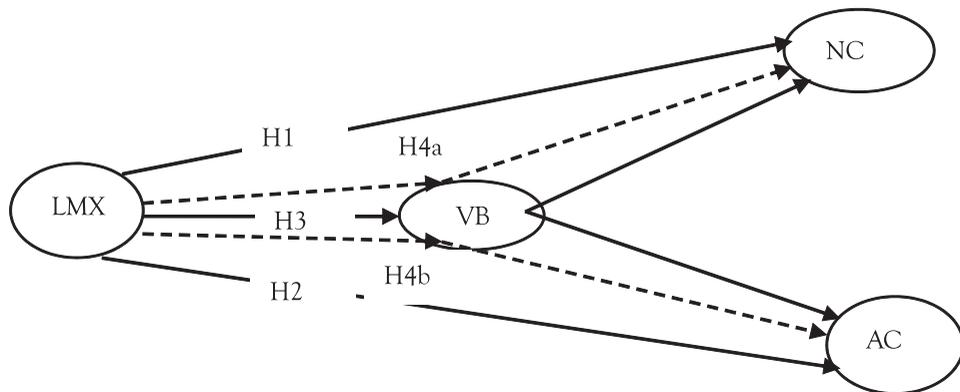
With reference to social penetration theory, it is suggested that employees feel a sense of appreciation when they find opportunities to exhibit voice, and show willingness to participate in other relevant activities (Le-Pine, 1998). Therefore, Greene (2006) suggested that the more the employees will feel their voice is being valued by others they will participate more to develop and maintain their relationship. Consistent with this school of thought, voice is not just about expressing ideas and giving suggestions it also reflects the willingness of employees to strengthen their exchange relationship. In conclusion, the degree to which employees will find room for making suggestions there will be strong exchange relationship. Thus, the current study expected that voice might play a role of mediator between LMX and commitment.

In support of this argument, a study conducted by Hsiung (2012) showed that there is a positive relationship between LMX and voice behavior of an employee. This way it can be concluded that the more strong an exchange relation between a leader and an individual, the more enhanced will be the voice behavior. Such opportunities for voice are considered important predictors of enhanced employee commitment (Purcell, Kinnie, Hutchinson, Rayton, & Swart, 2003). Studies suggest that the feeling among employees (faculty in this case) that they can potentially alter organizational decision making through their input will trigger them to align their personal goals and objectives with the organization's (Farndale, Van Ruiten, Kelliher, & Hope-Hailey, 2011; Price, Lavelle, Henley, Cocchiara, & Buchanan, 2006). Since the organizational and individual goals will be aligned therefore, faculty's commitment will be enhanced under such circumstances (Korsgaard & Roberson, 1995). Therefore we propose that:

H4a: Employee voice behavior will mediate the association between LMX and emotional organizational commitment.

H4b: Employee voice behavior of an individual will mediate the association between LMX and Normative organizational commitment.

2.5. Framework of current study



Notes: LMX = Leader-Member Exchange, VB = Voice Behavior, AC = Affective Commitment, NC = Normative Commitment Figure 1.

3. Methodology

3.1. Sample

A quantitative methodology was adopted in this cross-sectional study to test the proposed hypotheses. This technique is suitable for empirical testing of the causal relationships. Furthermore, through this technique, data can be collected from a large sample size compared to other techniques such as interviews (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). In line with the previous studies (i.e. Ahmad & Zafar, 2018) etc. a convenient sampling technique was adopted to collect the data for this empirical study. The reason for the adoption of this technique was the busy schedule of target population and their unavailability at times. Similarly, since we were not testing the impacts of demographic variables on the outcomes in this study and as such faculty in Pakistani HEIs carries similar characteristics such as educational background etc. therefore, convenience sampling technique was considered appropriate. The target population was the faculty members of higher educational institutions in two cities of Pakistan

i.e. Islamabad and Rawalpindi. At the moment, there are more than 10 universities in these two cities with more than 200 faculty members in each university.

There are 18 public and 7 private sector universities in Islamabad and Rawalpindi recognized by the HEC. This information is collected from official website of HEC

Table 1: No. of Universities operating in Rawalpindi & Islamabad

	Private Sector	Public Sector	Total
Islamabad	6	17	23
Rawalpindi	1	1	2
Total	7	18	25

and tabulated below in table 1.

Data were collected through a self-administered survey form. Faculty members were approached by the first author personally and asked their volunteer participation. Those who agreed were handed the survey form in hard copy. The author gave the respondents 1 week after which time, the filled forms were collected back. A total of 500 questionnaires were dispersed, amongst which, 270 responded actively. Out of the total respondents, 44.4% were male whereas 55.6% were female. As far as their education is concerned, 27.4 % of the respondents were Masters qualified, 72.2% were above Masters and the rest of 0.4 % respondents had a qualification of graduation.

3.1. Measures

Affective Commitment at Individual level was measured by the using 6 items castoff an improved version by (Bentein, Stinglhamber, & Vandenberghe, 2002). A sample item from this scale was “I respect my supervisor” and Cronbach alpha was recorded as .76. Normative Commitment at Individual level was measured by the using 4 items used a modified French version of (Stinglhamber, Bentein, & Van denberghe, 2002). Sample item is “I feel I have a moral obligation to continue working with my supervisor” and Cronbach alpha value was recorded as .87. LMX is measured by using 7-item scale of Scandura and Graen (1984) recommended by Graen and Uhl-Bien (1995). A sample item is “My direct supervisor gives surety for me (he has my back) when that is necessary”. Cronbach alpha value for this scale was .93. Employee voice behavior was measured by using 8-item scale by Van dyne and Lepine(1998). A sample item was “I develop and make recommendations to the supervisor concerning issues that affect our organization” and cronbach alpha was .95.

4. Results

4.1. Descriptive statistics and correlations

Descriptive statistics along with correlation is in Table 1 below. The correlation

consequences of variables displays significant positive correlation between LMX and Affective commitment ($r = .795$), LMX also an important positive correlation with normative commitment ($r = .686$), speaking up has a significant positive correlation with affective and normative commitment at individual level having values ($r = .73$, $r = .66$).

Table 2: Correlation & Statistics

		Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1	Gender			–	-.12					
2	Designation		(.458)	0.12	–					
3	Education		(1.19)	-0.13	-.069	–				
4	LMX	5.00	(1.41)	.008	-.064	.180	–			
5	Affective Commitment	5.37	(1.23)	.083	.041	.171	.795	–		
6	Normative Commitment	4.86	(1.13)	.012	.007	.050	.686	.764	–	
7	Voice	5.13	(1.23)	.053	.001	.223	.747	.736	.668	–

** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$.alpha (α) reliability in parenthesis

Table 2 depicted that LMX has highly significant correlation was found between LMX and ACIL (i.e. $r = 0.79$, $p < 0.01$). A highly significant correlation between LMX and NCIL (i.e. $r = 0.68$, $p < 0.01$). The relation of LMX with mediators is also found highly significant i.e LMX and voice (i.e. $r = .74$, $p < 0.01$).

4.2. Reliability and validity tests

Several reliability and validity tests were performed on the four factor model (i.e. LMX, affective commitment, normative commitment and employee voice behavior) utilizing AMOS 18 to assess the adequacy of measures used. All the factors loaded well on their prescribed items and were well above the minimum value of .50 ranging from .63 to .97. This suggests that convergent validity was achieved. Similarly, the values of average variance extracted (AVE) and composite reliability (CR) were also well above the threshold values of .5 and .7 suggesting that convergent and discriminant validity were also achieved (Hair et al. 2010). Table 3 can be referred to for the sample items' factor loadings and other results.

Table 3: Results for reliability and validity tests

Variable	SFL	Alpha(a)*	CR*	AVE*
Leader Member Exchange		.93	.94	.72
Sample item:				
My direct supervisor gives surety for me (he has my back) when that is necessary	.96			
Affective Commitment Individual Level		.76	.94	.74
Sample item:				
I respect my supervisor.	.63			
Normative Commitment Individual Level		.87	.85	.59
Sample item:				
I feel I have a moral obligation to continue working with my supervisor.	.87			
Employee Voice Behavior		.95	.95	.71
Sample item:	.97			
I develop and make recommendations to the supervisor concerning issues that affect our organization.				

Notes: SFL = Standard Factor Loading, CR = Composite Reliability, AVE = Average Variance Extracted

4.3. Hypotheses testing

This study adopted the Preacher and Hayes, (2008) macro of mediation employing bootstrapping technique to test our direct and indirect hypotheses. Previous researches argue that the bootstrapping technique is the most powerful in controlling the effects of type 1 error (MacKinnon, Lockwood, Hoffman, West, & Sheets, 2002). A recommended 5000 bootstrap sample was selected to run the test. Results (see tables below) of the same are given below.

4.3.1 Results of hypotheses

The Table 4 below has two model relations. The first relation shows relationship between LMX and AC. The variance in dependent variable predicted by independent variable is explained through the value of R^2 . For this model relation it has seen that 63% variation in ACIL is explained by LMX. The significance of model is checked through PValue and for this relation $p = .000$ which is less than 0.05. A positive direct relationship is hypothesized between leader member exchange and affective commitment at individual level in H1. The results support this hypothesis i.e. $\beta = .69$, $p < 0.05$. This means that a one unit increase in LMX will bring .69 unit changes in AC. This

supports the H1 which state the impact of LMX on AC. The second relation shows relationship between LMX and Employee Voice behavior. The variance in dependent variable predicted by independent variable is explained through the value of R^2 . For this model relation it has seen that 55% variation in EVB is explained by LMX. The significance of model is checked through P-Value and for this relation $p = .000$ which is less than 0.05. The results support this hypothesis i.e. $\beta = .65$, $p < 0.05$. *This means that a one unit increase in VB will bring .65-unit changes in AC.* The third relation shows the impact of LMX and Employee Voice behavior on AC. The variance in dependent variable predicted by independent variable is explained through the value of R^2 . For this model relation it has seen that 67% variation in AC is explained by LMX and VB. The significance of model is checked through P-Value and for this relation $p = .000$ which is less than 0.05. The beta co-efficient $\beta = .48$, $p < 0.05$ shows positive and significant impact of LMX on AC. *This means that a one unit increase in LMX will bring .48 unit changes in AC and the beta coefficient $\beta = .32$, $p < 0.05$ shows positive and significant impact of EVB on AC. This means that a one unit increase in ST will bring .32 unit changes in AC.* Direct effect of LMX on AC in the presence of mediator VB is shown in table 4. The coefficient value $\beta = .48$, $p < 0.05$ shows positive and significant impact of LMX on AC. The upper limit of bootstrap is ULCI = .576 and lower limit of bootstrap is LLCI = .396 Indirect effect of LMX on AC through mediator VB is shown in table 4. The coefficient value $\beta = .21$ shows positive and significant impact of LMX on ACIL through VB. The upper limit of bootstrap is ULCI = .127 and lower limit of bootstrap is LLCI = .308, The table 4 shows the p-value for the indirect effect. The coefficient value $\beta = .21$, $p < 0.05$ shows positive and significant impact of LMX on AC through mediator VB. In other words Voice behavior mediates between LMX and AC.

The Table 4 below has model 2 showing the first relation shows relationship between LMX and NC. The variance in dependent variable predicted by independent variable is explained through the value of R^2 . For this model relation it has seen that 47% variation in NC is explained by LMX. The significance of model is checked through P-Value and for this relation $p = .000$ which is less than 0.05. A positive direct relationship is hypothesized between leader member exchange and normative commitment at individual level in H2. The results support this hypothesis i.e. $\beta = .68$, $p < 0.05$. *This means that a one unit increase in LMX will bring .68 unit changes in NC.* The second relation in model 2 shows relationship between LMX and Employee voice behavior. The variance in dependent variable predicted by independent variable is explained through the value of R^2 . For this model relation it has seen that 55% variation in VB is explained by LMX. The significance of model is checked through P-Value and for this relation $p = .000$ which is less than 0.05. The results support this hypothesis i.e. $\beta = .65$, $p < 0.05$. *This means that a one unit increase in ST will bring .65 unit changes in NC.* The third relation shows the impact of LMX and VB on NC. The variance

in dependent variable predicted by independent variable is explained through the value of R2. For this model relation it has been seen that 52% variation in NC is explained by LMX and VB. The significance of model is checked through P-Value and for this relation $p = .000$ which is less than 0.05. The beta co-efficient $\beta = .34$, $p < 0.05$ shows positive and significant impact of LMX on NC. This means that a one unit increase in LMX will bring .34 unit changes in NC and the beta coefficient $\beta = .32$, $p < 0.05$ shows positive and significant impact of VB on NC. This means that a one unit increase in ST will bring .32 unit changes in NC. Direct effect of LMX on NC in the presence of mediator VB is shown in table 4. The coefficient value $\beta = .34$, $p < 0.05$ shows positive and significant impact of LMX on NC. The upper limit of bootstrap is ULCI = .442 and lower limit of bootstrap is LLCI = .24. Indirect effect of LMX on NC through mediator VB is shown in table 4. The coefficient value $\beta = .21$ shows positive and significant impact of LMX on NC through VB. The upper limit of bootstrap is ULCI = .312 and lower limit of bootstrap is LLCI = .124, The table 4 shows the p-value for the indirect effect. The coefficient value $\beta = .21$, $p < 0.05$ shows positive and significant impact of LMX on NC through mediator VB. In other words Employee voice behavior mediates between LMX and NC.

Table 4: Regression Analysis Results (both Direct & Indirect)

Models	IV and DV	Mediator(s)	DATA (Point estimates)	BOOT	SE	Bias corrected Conf. Interval (CI)	
						Lower	Upper
Model 1	LMX → AC	EVB (Indirect)	.13**	.126	.05	.04	.24
		Direct effect of LMX on AC	.56**	-	.06	-	-
		Direct effect of LMX on EVB	.56**	-	.58	-	-
R2			.63**				
Adj R2			.62**				
Model 2	LMX → NC	EVB (Indirect)	.11**	.112	.04	.04	.21
		Direct effect of LMX on NC	.32**	-	.06	-	-

		Direct effect of LMX on EVB	.56**	-	.58	-	-
R2			.41**				
Adj R2			.40**				

Note: Bias corrected at 5000 bootstrap sample

** $p < 0.01$, LMX = Leader-Member Exchange, AC = Affective Commitment, NC = Normative Commitment, EVB = Employee Voice Behavior

5. Discussion and Implications

Faculty is the backbone for an educational institution. The effectiveness of higher educational institutions depends upon the skill level, efforts and commitment of its teachers. The emphasis of the current study was to the impact of LMX on employees' organizational commitment in HEIs with voice behavior as mediator between the two. Similar studies have been seldom conducted in developing countries with a particular focus on HEIs and their faculty's commitment.

Utilizing the social exchange theory, our findings suggest that high quality LMX leads to enhanced affective and normative commitment of faculty members. This finding is in line with the previous studies where researchers found positive relationship between LMX and employees' organizational commitment (Mottaz, 1988). Therefore, one can vouch that LMX is a strong predictor of organizational commitment in HEIs also. When individuals and organization have common goals and strong interpersonal relationships between leaders and employees, it will improve their organizational commitment (Vancouver & Schmitt, 1991). This study's findings are also in line with previous studies carried out in other sectors and cultures. For example, a work by Joo (2010) in Korean context from trade sector, found a positive association between leader's support and employees' organizational commitment.

The current study also provides a frame work for testing faculty's commitment in the education sector of Pakistan particularly, in HEIs. Likewise, this study tested two types of organizational commitments at individual level. The proposed hypotheses of the study were supported by data. We found significant direct impact of LMX on the affective and normative commitment. The findings of current study are also in line with social exchange theory (Blau, 1964) and the norms of reciprocity which postulate that when individuals find a support from their supervisor, they reciprocate the same in the form of commitment. Therefore, we empirically proved and documented that the quality of LMX between leaders i.e. immediate supervisor or head of departments in universities and faculty members through social exchange at work will have a positive

influence on affective and normative commitment of faculty members.

We also found support for our third hypothesis from our data where we tested the impact of LMX on employees' voice. This finding is also in line with the past studies whom tested the impact of LMX on employee voice (Botero & Van Dyne, 2009). When employees engage in voice behavior, it suggests that such behavior comes as a support from organization which consequently leads to more organizational commitment (Wayne, Shore, & Liden, 1997). Furthermore, we also found support for the hypotheses of mediation. It is argued that faculty members in HEIs, whom have more say in decision making, will have enhanced LMX and voice. In high quality exchange relationship, commitment exhibits by individuals in such environment (Whitener, 2001). This finding is also in line with the previous studies conducted in other settings (Farndale, Van Ruiten, Kelliher, & Hope-Hailey, 2011). In similar lines, Armenakis and Harris (2002) reported that voice shapes behavior of individuals in organization hence, dwelling a positive environment which allows employees to speak up. By carrying evidence from diverse universities in Pakistan, we have also filled this key gap which is surely an additional contribution to the social exchange theory in general and to the extant literature on organizational commitment and LMX in particular.

Finally, our findings contribute to the leadership literature and practically for organizations, it was found that a quality relationship between a leader and a subordinate will foster a positive attachment of an employee with his or her employee which in turn will improve organizational commitment as leader play a role of an agent of their organization (Son, 2015). Practioners and Researchers have also shown interest in Leader member exchange and its relationship with attitudinal outcomes (Dulebohn, 2017). This study adds to the literature by highlighting the relationship between LMX and affective and normative component of commitment. Based on data from faculty members from universities, LMX was found to predict an individual's affective and normative commitment. We hope the finding of this study will encourage future research on LMX and its relation to a wide range of employee perceptual outcomes.

5.1. Implications for academic administrators

With the help of this study, we attempted to highlight the importance of high quality LMX among faculty members and their respective supervisors. As the findings suggest, managers in HEIs must pay keen attention to the quality of this relationship in order for the institution to operate smoothly that will lead to further positive outcomes. Likewise, for experts, these results prove the importance of emerging supervisor-subordinate relationships. Experts should not neglect the position of supervisor-subordinate relations and the necessity for high-quality social exchanges also. The findings also have policy implications as to how can they enhance faculty's

commitment in order to improve their teaching's effectiveness, enhanced professional performance, and reduce the turnover of skilled faculty members. Academic managers must ensure that faculty members have also the opportunity to express their feelings openly and that their involvement in decision making is a key to enhanced commitment. Such policies must be made which facilitates this process. HEIs must also keep in mind that the voice of faculty members should not be taken in negative connotations because if faculty feels free to share their minds openly, they will feel that organizations value their input. This way, their positive dispositions about the organizations will also be enhanced that would lead to improvements in performance (Ahmad, & Shahzad, 2015). Moreover, a leader can enhance the professional ability of faculty member and this can be developed through a quality exchange relationship which should be initiated by leader by sharing ideas, exchanging information, seeking creativity and welcoming suggestions from subordinates. Professional ability development program will allow employee to engage in voice behavior. This will bring confidence in an individual to exchange openly with his leader and he/she will voice positively, thus it will lead him/her to be attaching emotionally to his leader and he/she will find it an obligation to stay with his/her leader. When he/she feels a privilege while connecting to their leader all because of the leaders ability to involve in open exchange, a member will engage in voice and will strive to strengthen his/her exchange relationship with leader (HOD) by showing commitment.

5.2. Limitations and future research

Several limitations must be kept in mind before interpreting the results of this study. First, this study is cross sectional in nature therefore, in future, a longitudinal study will further improve the findings and its validity. Secondly, the focus of study was confined to a single mediator i.e. voice behavior of faculty members in HEIs. Future research may also take other variables such as lateral voice that is speaking out as mediator between the variables under study. Thirdly, generalizability might be a limitation as the target population was the HEIs in Pakistan only. This can be eliminated by conducting similar study in different context and in other sectors and cultures in a comparative study for furthering its generalizability.

6. Conclusion

This empirical study employed a quantitative technique to test the impact of LMX on faculty's commitment in HEIs of Pakistan. The study explored the novel mediating role of voice behavior as an underlying mechanism between the LMX and employee (faculty) commitment. The results suggest that LMX has a positive role in enhancing voice behavior, affective commitment and normative commitment of faculty members. Furthermore, the partial mediating role of voice behavior of faculty was also

found between LMX and affective commitment and between LMX and normative commitment. Utilizing the social exchange theory, several discussion points and implications have been underlined as a result of this study. It is observed at the outset that organizations are becoming more concerned about committed workforce in order to gain competitive advantage. Thus it is more important to understand the factors leading towards a competitive and committed workforce. There are several factors contributing towards commitment (Joo,2010). Among them, LMX plays a significant role and this study glimpse light on the relationship between LMX and organizational commitment. The significant contribution of this study lies in that it integrates leadership research and organizational commitment. The emergence of knowledge based economy and war of talent among firms has made it vital to improve organizational commitment through supportive leadership and a learning culture. Therefore HRD professionals and Managers in organizations can assist their subordinates to compete and win the race of competitive advantage through a positive exchange relationship.

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