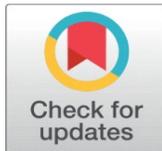


# THE LATENT ROLE OF LEADER-MEMBER EXCHANGE IN SIGHTING THE IMPACT OF WORKPLACE LONELINESS ON JOB SATISFACTION

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## ABSTRACT

The aim of this study was to determine the impact of feeling of loneliness in the workplace on job satisfaction of employees in the mediating effect of leader-member exchange. To conduct the study data was collected through a survey questionnaire from a sample of 150 nurses working in Delhi and NCR of India. It was found that workplace loneliness negatively effects both job satisfaction and leader member exchange, while leader-member exchange is found to play a mediating role in the relationship between workplace loneliness and job satisfaction. To identify the mediating role of LMX the hierarchical regression analysis was carried out on SPSS 21 software.

**Keywords:** Workplace Loneliness, Job Satisfaction, Leader-Member Exchange

## 1. INTRODUCTION

One of the important functions of today's organisations is to promote healthy communication between managers and employees. Improper communication could be the reason that the employees in the organisation feel themselves socially detached and emotionally alone, especially the employees who are rarely social. Workplace Loneliness is caused due to lack of social interaction and reflects the quality of interpersonal communication (Wright et al., 2006). This feeling of loneliness in organisations may also affect the level of satisfaction of employees pertaining to their work, organisation and environment.

Job satisfaction, is an important variable which could be measured by employee's expectations from his job and his attitude towards his work. Workplace loneliness expresses the state of being alone in organisations and is caused by the individual's social environment. It can be said that loneliness may have a negative effect on work satisfaction of employees. At this point, one question becomes important, "How is the leader-member interaction can make an impact?". Leader-member interaction involves leaders and followers, both parties can access many benefits from an effective interaction (Graen and Uhl-Bien, 1995).

The aim of this study is to determine the mediating role of leader-member interaction in its effect on workplace loneliness and life satisfaction of employees. For this purpose, the workplace loneliness, work satisfaction and the concept of leader-member interaction examined theoretically, then from the theoretical framework hypotheses were established and the relationships and interactions between these concepts were examined. The study will contribute to workplace loneliness, a new concept in the field of behavior thought.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **1) Workplace Loneliness**

As a social being, every individual need to establish meaningful and healthy relationships with other individuals. However, individualized societies, organisations and increasing complex relationships can lead individuals to loneliness. This loneliness could be being alone in life or feeling the loneliness in a certain organisation of which a person is a member.

Loneliness is an emotional state that one feels as a result of a lack of a person's social relations (Wright, et al. 2006). Loneliness in a broader sense is the inability of an individual to adapt to his environment. This situation declines the social relations, increases the feeling of stress along with many negative emotions.

The concept of loneliness from an organisational perspective differs from the concept of loneliness in normal lives of people. In organisational loneliness, state of being alone means lack of social communication, the individuals could feel more social loneliness than emotional feeling of being lonely. The concept of organisational loneliness is defined as a social deficiency or absence of desired interpersonal relations arising from the organisation due to lack of good social environment (Wright et al. 2006).

Wright et al. (2006) from an organisational perspective, express that loneliness consists of two dimensions emotional loneliness and social loneliness. Emotional loneliness refers to the nature of the relationships with colleagues in the organisation such as deprivation, exclusion and disconnection, it is the dimension that contains negative feelings. The second-dimension social loneliness expresses the quantity of social relationships at workplace like day-to-day communication with coworkers, sharing of thoughts and socializing with them. It is the dimension that includes activities such as being together.

### **2) Leader-Member Exchange**

Vertical Dyad Linkage Leader-Member interaction model is based on a theory that deals with the individual dyadic relationships formed between leaders and their subordinates which is also known as Leadership-Member Exchange (LMX) theory (Dienesch and Liden, 1986). The basic principle of interaction between leaders and followers develops relationships of different quality and determines the quality of leader-follower attitudes and behaviors. Leader-member interaction model arises from the leader's position, explains how he uses his strength in developing business relations with different audiences. Those who feel alone in the working environment cannot maintain interaction with the leader. is it? Workplace loneliness negatively affects leader-member interaction, does it affect it? The answer to these questions will be investigated. In the literature, no more studies have been found in which these two concepts are combined together. This research study is trying to fill the gap in this is aspect. Based on the reviewed literature, the hypothesis is as follows:

H1: Workplace loneliness negatively affects leader-member interaction.

### **3) Leader-Member Interaction's Effect on Satisfaction**

Leader-member interaction between leaders and their followers which develop relationships from which both parties can access many benefits refers to the effective leadership process that occurs between the leader and the members (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). The harmonious relationships formed can be reflected through positivity among employees and increase job satisfaction. Leader-member interaction has a positive effect on job satisfaction. (Harris et al., 2009; Volmer et al., 2011; Cheung and Wu, 2012; Monahan, 2013; Cekmecelioglu and Ülker, 2014; Loi et al. 2014). In the light of this literature the established hypothesis is as follows:

H2: Leader-member interaction positively affects job satisfaction.

**4) Effect of Workplace Loneliness on Job Satisfaction**

Job satisfaction is expressed as reaction of employees' feelings about their job and its importance began to be understood in the 1930s-40s. Job satisfaction is defined as feeling of employee satisfaction with their job, how much he likes his job and working conditions. In other words, "the concept of job satisfaction can also be explained as job conditions (the job itself, a personal assessment of management's attitude) or results from work (wages, job security).

The most obvious consequences of loneliness at work are decrease in employee productivity and level job satisfaction. It may increase level of stress, may cause low organisational commitment, social relationship problems and may lead to employees' intention to leave the organisation (Kaymaz et al., 2014). Wright (2005) found that workplace loneliness found to be negatively related to job satisfaction. The hypothesis established in the light of this literature is as follows:

H3: Workplace loneliness negatively affects job satisfaction.

**5) Leader-Member Exchange in its Intermediary Role between Workplace Loneliness and Job Satisfaction**

Wright et al. (2006) from an organisational perspective defined loneliness as lack of interpersonal and social relationships at workplace and inadequacy of the environmental factors. In leader-member interaction, the leader develops close relationships with its employees, share information, resources, etc. with them, as a result they go to the way of using all that more efficiently. In the literature, very limited research has been found examining the relationship between workplace loneliness and leader-member interaction. Neither sufficient evidence was found examining mediating role of leader-member interaction while studying relationship between workplace loneliness and job satisfaction. The results of this study are expected to fill the research gap in this regard. In the light of this information the hypothesis is as follows:

H4: Leader-member interaction undertakes mediator role in effect of workplace loneliness on job satisfaction.

**3. METHOD OF THE RESEARCH**

**1) Sample of the Research**

The universe of the research constitutes nurses working in Delhi and National Capital Region of India. The sample size taken was 150. 65.4% (100) of the research sample are female, the average age is 34.92 and the ages range from 22 to 55. 76.5% (117) of the participants are married.

**2) Data Collection Tool**

The questionnaire is used as data collection tool in the research which consists of four parts. In the first part, "Workplace Loneliness Scale"; In the second part "Leader-Member Interaction Scale" and the third part contain "Job Satisfaction Scale" The fourth part is about the demographics of the participants. A 5-point Likert scale was used in all.

Workplace Loneliness Scale developed by Wright et al. (2006), Leader-Member Interaction scale developed by Scandura and Graen (1984) and Job Satisfaction Scale developed by Brayfield and Rothe (1951) were used in the study.

**4. FINDINGS**

Correlation coefficients with the mean and standard deviations of the findings related to the variables in the study are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Mean, Standard Deviation and Correlation Values of the Variables

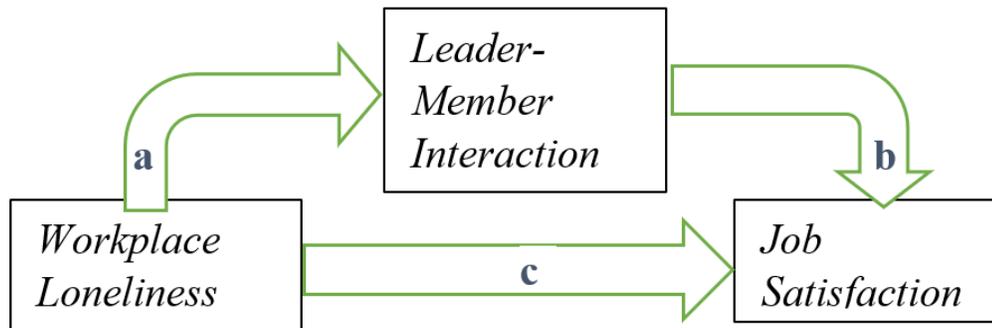
1.	2. Ort.	3. SS.	4. 1	5. 2	6. 3
7. Workplace Loneliness	8. 2.30	9. .60	10. (.865)	11.	12.
13. Leader-Member Interaction	14. 3.15	15. 1.04	16. - .301**	17. (.953)	18.
19. Job satisfaction	20. 3.48	21. .68	22. - .313**	23. .435**	24. (.702)

\*p<0.05, \*\*p<0.01, The values in parentheses are the Cronbach Alpha Coefficients of the scales.

As seen in Table 1, There are significant correlation between the research variables. In the light of the information obtained as a result of the analysis, the workplace loneliness was significant and negatively correlated with other variables. Apart from this finding, the effect of leader-member interaction in work job satisfaction, a significant and positive relationship has been determined. Among workplace loneliness and leader-member interaction, workplace loneliness and job satisfaction and leader-member interaction and job satisfaction, it was determined that there is a one-way relationship, on the cross-axis Cronbach Alpha reliability, coefficients of the scales are within reliable limits (shown in in parentheses). The multicollinearity between independent variables is within the scope of the analysis. (Tolerance > .2; VIF <10) (Tolerance =.910; VIF:1.099).

To study the mediating role of Leader-member interaction on workplace loneliness and job satisfaction, hierarchical regression analyzes were performed with the SPSS 21 package program to determine whether it affects the variables of satisfaction or not. Results of pathways a, b, c and for effect are given in Model 1.

Figure 1. Research Model 1



Model 1: The Mediating Role of Leader-Member Exchange in the Interaction Between Workplace Loneliness-Job Satisfaction

When Model 1 is examined, for the “a” path,  $\beta$  coefficient is found to be -0.301 at significance level 0.000, therefore H1 hypothesis is accepted (F=15.000; R2=0.090; Adjusted R2=.084). For path “b”  $\beta$  coefficient is 0.435 at significance level 0.000, therefore H2 hypothesis is accepted (F=35.143; R2=.189; Adjusted R2=.183). For path “c”  $\beta$  coefficient was found to be -0.313 and significance level 0.000, H3 hypothesis is accepted (F=16.455; R2=.098; Adjusted R2=.092). In the light of this information, it is seen that three conditions of Baron and Kenny (1986) are fulfilled. To determine the mediating effect, when the independent and intermediary variable are included together in the model, it was examined whether the effect of the pathway decreased or not. When this was examined, the standardized  $\beta$  coefficient value was found to be (-0.201; p=0.008) (F=21.844; R2=.226; Adjusted R2=.215), but effect of workplace loneliness on job satisfaction disappears completely i.e., with the introduction of leader-member interaction the effect does not appear to have risen. It is possible to say that it plays a partial mediation role. In this case, hypothesis H4 was also accepted. The mediation effect of the model is examined statistically by Sobel Test to check the significance. As a result of the calculation of the Sobel test the mediation effect was statistically significant (z=-3.044, p=0.002) was found.

## 5. CONCLUSION

When the research results are examined, it is seen that workplace loneliness thought to have a negative impact on leader-member interaction and job satisfaction. The findings obtained are in parallel with the information in the literature (Wright, 2005). According to the result of the H1 hypothesis, if the loneliness in the workplace is felt, it is possible to say that the level of leader-member interaction will be low. Findings obtained from the H2 and H3 hypothesis are in line with the information in the literature. (Harris, et al., 2009). According to the results of the research analysis, if the leader-member are having a high level of interaction, it is possible to say that the job satisfaction would also be high. The relation between workplace loneliness and job satisfaction is also in line with the reviewed literature. Workplace loneliness is found to be negatively affecting job satisfaction. H4 which is based on the mediating role of leader-member interaction, is also accepted. As a result of the regression analysis, the mediating role of leader-member interaction between workplace loneliness and job satisfaction, it was determined that the effect was partially mediated.

Loneliness felt by employees in organisations will create negative consequences for the employee. However, if the leader creates between himself and his followers a positive relationship, it may make the employee's negative emotions positive and may affect the direction of relationship.

A limitation of this study is time and financial resources and comparatively small locale of the study. It is possible to investigate study the model in wide locale. In terms of the sample unit of the study constraint is that the data was collected from one kind of employees working in hospitals. Because of these constraints, it is not possible to generalise the results. The larger samples of the research could provide generalisable results.

## **CONFLICT OF INTERESTS**

None.

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

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