

Organizational Citizenship Behavior of Information System Personnel: The Influence of Leader-Member Exchange

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ABSTRACT

Leader-member exchange (LMX) represents the quality of interaction between leaders and members of a work unit, such as the information system function within an organization. LMX is expected to improve organizational citizenship behavior, beneficial behaviors not explicitly rewarded, but prior research has failed to establish this link satisfactorily. To determine the influence of LMX in the IS environment, a model is developed based on the background in the IS and management literature that considers LMX an important contributor to job satisfaction and organizational commitment. In turn, organizational commitment influences both work quality and organizational citizenship behaviors in a beneficial way. The model is confirmed with a sample of IS professionals in Taiwan. The results show that effective communication and coordination is crucial between leaders and subordinates at levels within the organization not previously considered.

Keywords: Employee Commitment, IS Personnel, Leadership, Organizational Citizenship Behavior, Social Exchange

INTRODUCTION

Information System (IS) leadership is distinctive because of an expectation to combine IS technical skills with an in-depth understanding of functions (Karahanna & Watson, 2006). This characteristic spans all levels within an organization from the operational to the stra-

tegic. However, leadership studies in the field tend to focus on the chief information officers' leadership traits as related to specific constructs, processes, structures, and mechanisms that underlie unique IS concerns and organizational benefits of effective leadership of the IS function (Sobol & Klein, 2009). Equally crucial to the success of an organization is the leadership of IS personnel at the operational and development level, where a quality relationship with IS

DOI: 10.4018/irmj.2011100105

employees influences the driving engine of IS success (Faraj & Sambamurthy, 2006).

It is well established that higher individual performance is generated by the unique skills required of IS personnel and the organizational support provided them (Tesch, Jiang, & Klein, 2003). However, studies of performance do not address the issue of behaviors that promote a more productive work environment. Organizational citizenship behaviors (OCB) reflect positive influences in the environment such as altruism, courtesy, virtue, conscientiousness and sportsmanship (Organ, 1998). These traits are crucial in the success of organizations, perhaps as much so as individual contributions of performance. Yet, IS workers exhibit significantly lower OCBs, along with many other significant differences (Joseph, Ng, Koh, & Ang, 2007; Moore & Love, 2005). What IS leaders do to improve these behaviors for IS personnel without detracting from individual job performance is important to address.

Drawing from employee studies in other disciplines, organizational commitment is a strong indicator of performance and work behavior (Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch, & Topolnytsky, 2002). Thus, building commitment should have a positive impact on the work and behavior of IS personnel. In particular, consistent support has been found for a positive association between Leader-Member Exchanges (LMX) and organizational commitment, where LMX represents the level and quality of interaction between leaders and employees in a work unit (Wayne, Shore, & Liden, 1997). Likewise, studies find an indirect effect of LMX to commitment through satisfaction (Settoon, Bennett, & Liden, 1996). Creating satisfaction is often viewed as matching the specific interests of employees, which are thought to differ for IS personnel, such as elevated needs for challenges, autonomy, and competent supervision (Beecham, Baddoo, Hall, Robinson, & Sharp, 2008). Unfortunately, no study has determined whether these relationships hold collectively, or where the employees exhibit significantly different traits from the remainder of the employee population or within the IS context. This is

crucial because different desires of relationship development by different groups of employees will alter the relationships between LMX and subsequent attitudes (Cogliser, Schriesheim, Scandura, & Gardner, 2009). Will a relationship among LMX, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment hold for IS personnel?

BACKGROUND

Leader-member exchange (LMX) is a relationship-based approach to study leadership (Sherony & Green, 2002). The central premise behind LMX is that, within work units, unique and different types of relationships develop between leaders and subordinates. These relationships are characterized by degrees of physical or mental effort, material resources, information, and/or emotional support exchanged between these two parties. This contrasts greatly with domination methods that appear in the IS literature (Hussain & Cornelius, 2009). LMX is portrayed as one type of exchange that is part of a larger network of social exchanges, which include LMX, co-worker exchange, team-member-exchange, network exchange, and organization-member exchange. In this fashion, LMX represents a set of social approaches rather than a particular style category of leadership (Neufeld, Dong, & Higgins, 2007). Blau (1964) suggests that the basis of any exchange relationship can be described in terms of either social or economic principles and larger relational contexts surround and affect all dyadic exchanges where each exchange is based on a trust that gestures of goodwill will be reciprocated.

Further, lower quality LMX, labelled out-group exchanges involve exchanges basic to the employment contract. High-quality LMX relationships, in-group exchanges, involve mutual exchanges that go beyond those fundamental to the employment contract or those specified in formal job descriptions. In-group exchanges imply preferential treatment from management leaders - such as receiving higher amounts of information, mutual respect and trust, greater

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