

## **Interpersonal Justice, Leader-Member Exchange, and Employee Negative Behaviors: A Proposed Model and Empirical Test**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The complexity of superior-subordinate relationships in organizations is an essential concern among scholars and practitioners, according to the leader-member exchange (LMX) theory. This theory explains that superiors develop different levels of relationship with their subordinates. The current study aims to develop a leader-member relationship model based on the LMX views in predicting negative subordinate behaviors, namely social loafing (SL) and deviant behavior. Through a self-administered survey, the data were collected from 271 respondents who work in various industries in Indonesia. The obtained data were analyzed using the SEM method on Partial Least Square (PLS) software. The results showed that LMX affects organizational deviance (OD), supervisor-directed deviance (SD), and SL. LMX also played a significant role in mediating the effect of interpersonal justice (IJ) on OD, supervisor-directed deviance, and SL. These findings provide practical implications that allow leaders to manage their leader-employee relationship quality and avoid negative behaviors in the workplace.

*JEL Classification: M540, J530*

*Keywords: interpersonal justice, leader-member exchange, organizational deviance, supervisor-directed deviance, social loafing*

## I. INTRODUCTION

The supervisor-subordinate relationship is a dynamic relationship that impacts subordinates' attitudes and behaviors in the workplace and has captured the interest of organizational researchers and practitioners. Leader-member exchange (LMX) theory has provided a primary explanation for the complexity of supervisor-subordinate relationships. According to the LMX theory, supervisors establish varying degrees of relationship with their subordinates (Graen and Uhl-Bien, 1995), with high-quality LMX identified by mutual trust and respect resulting in a reciprocal relationship of influence between leaders and subordinates. Low-quality LMX, on the other hand, is characterized by formal employment contracts that generate downward influence from the supervisors on subordinates and created distance between the two (Qu et al., 2015). The primary stream of LMX research focuses on the high-quality LMX relationship and the positive effect of such conditions (Kim et al., 2013). While in practice, low-quality LMX also holds a vital role in organizations due to its destructive consequences on employees and the organization. Therefore, the current study aims to examine the negative aspects of LMX by analyzing its negative outcomes in the workplace by taking into consideration the role of interpersonal justice (IJ).

The differing qualities of interactions with subordinates imply that leaders have a critical role in developing these relationships. According to Scott et al. (2014), leaders are critical in ensuring equitable treatment, particularly in interactional justice. Leaders often lack direct control over distributive and procedural justice in the organization but tend to be free to select how they treat employees with respect and honesty, demonstrating interactional justice (Scott et al., 2009). Rockstuhl et al. (2012) have demonstrated a strong correlation between interactional justice and LMX. It means that low-quality LMX can emerge from employees' perceived inequality that can impair social exchange quality between organizations, employers, and employees, resulting in low LMX quality (El Akremi et al., 2010). These circumstances may affect the negative norm of reciprocity, which encourages employees to revolt, even by making deviances (El Akrami et al., 2010).

Deviant behavior is subordinates' behavior that disturbs the organization and its members as a whole (Fox and Spector, 1999; Harris and Ogbonna, 2009). These deviant habits include tardiness at work, taking longer breaks than necessary, disregarding supervisors' directives, and publicly humiliating their supervisors (Ferris et al., 2009). As a result, deviant behavior has significant adverse effects, including low morale, unhappiness, and substandard service (Mount et al., 2006). Kim et al. (2013) argued that the low-quality LMX relationship might significantly contribute to subordinates' aberrant behavior. Low-quality LMX results in employees feeling less support from superiors in completing work, which may result in feelings of pessimism, pressure, inefficiency, and frustration, and in turn, stimulate employees to respond by confronting the source of injustice (El Akrami et al., 2010).

Aside from deviant behavior, another undesirable behavior that can emerge as the consequence of low-quality LMX is social loafing (SL), defined as individuals' inclination to reduce their efforts in group tasks rather than in their individual tasks (Lam and Campbell, 2021). Individuals purposefully minimize their effort, time, and quality of work, mainly when individual outputs are difficult to identify and individuals expect other team members to perform well. Thus, SL is inextricably linked to the nature of

collective tasks, in which individuals' work is combined with that of others in the group. SL can be a practical approach for employees to express their dissatisfaction with their organizations' low-quality relationships, as they are unwilling to do their best in their job for the benefit of the organizations (Thompson et al., 2018).

Low LMX quality can be affected by employees' perceived injustice when interacting with their leaders. Previous research has also demonstrated that leaders play a critical role in ensuring fair treatment, especially regarding interactional justice (Scott et al., 2014). Furthermore, interactional justice has also been strongly correlated with LMX (Rockstuhl et al., 2012), with LMX quality serving as the primary underlying mechanism relating interactional justice with employee outcomes. Leaders' interaction with their subordinates will increasingly vary in a high-power distance condition. According to Hofstede et al. (2010), power distance is "the extent to which the less powerful members of institutions and organizations within a country expect and accept that power is distributed unequally".

Indonesia is one of the countries in Asia with a high-power distance between superiors and subordinates. The high-power distance culture is indicated by obedience, conformity, authority, supervision, social hierarchy, and inequality (Reisinger and Turner, 1997). Further, Reisinger and Turner (1997) argued that leader and member relationships depend on formal regulation and hierarchical job relationships in such a culture. According to Hofstede et al. (2010), Indonesia's Power Distance Index is at 78, which reflects a high index in which leaders and members assume that they are not equal because the hierarchical system is based on this inequality. In this condition, superiors have privileges and are expected to initiate relationships with their members. This high-power distance leads to a diverse LMX quality, including low-quality LMX.

This study aims to develop the LMX model with interactional justice as a predictor and its ability to affect employees' negative behavior in the form of deviant behavior and SL. The fundamental assumption is that employees' perceptions of injustice will reduce the quality of the social exchange relationship between leaders and subordinates, resulting in deviant behavior and SL. Researchers have begun investigating adverse work-related outcomes as negative reciprocity that emerges from unfairness and poor relationship quality. According to the negative reciprocity norm, employees who believe they are being mistreated may respond by participating in deviant behavior (Colbert et al., 2004). Previous research has investigated negative reciprocity in workplace deviance due to the reciprocal relationship between leaders and subordinates, but few studies have linked this negative reciprocity with a framework that connected the organizational justice dimensions and deviance through the social exchange (El Akrami et al., 2010). The current study provides a theoretical contribution to the literature by developing the LMX model as a connecting mechanism of leaders' behaviors and negative employee outcomes after considering IJ as its potential antecedent.

The remainder of the paper was prepared in a coherent structure. Firstly, we reviewed IJ, LMX, deviant behavior, and SL literature. The results were then used to develop the research hypotheses by explaining the relationship between IJ, LMX, deviant behavior, and SL. Secondly, we explained the methodology employed in this study. Thirdly, we discussed the research findings based on data analysis results, and finally, we discussed the practical and theoretical implications of the findings

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Leadership concepts and strategies are not set in stone. Thus, the relationship between leaders and subordinates will continue to capture scholars' and practitioners' interests. The relationship dynamics between superiors and subordinates strongly predict attitudes and behavior in the organizational environment. According to Boies and Howell (2006), LMX serves as an effective way to understand hierarchical relationships in an organization. A meta-analysis examining the predictors and effects of LMX (Dulebohn et al., 2012) found that LMX is determined by various variables, of which leader behavior is the most important antecedent. Furthermore, Dulebohn et al. (2012) explained that LMX is associated with many organizational attitudes and behaviors variables, so LMX becomes the center of organizational function.

### A. Interpersonal Justice (IJ)

IJ is a subset of organizational justice that incorporates human or social components and is concerned with the treatment and behavior of employees, supervisors, and co-workers, as well as how information is communicated (Randeree and Malik, 2008; Chou, 2009). IJ is concerned with how employees are treated daily, with a particular emphasis on whether supervisors and managers treat one another and more junior employees with dignity and respect (Engstrom, 2017). Being treated with respect by supervisors is considered fair treatment, as it shows that employees are an essential organizational resource. On the contrary, being treated with hostility or disrespect by supervisors is considered unfair because it humiliates subordinates, which leads to the feeling of being excluded from the group (Vogel et al., 2015). As a result, employees' views of IJ are strongly affected by their interpersonal interactions with supervisors.

Referring to the concept of fairness, when employees are treated unfairly interpersonally, they will feel only a slight obligation to reciprocate in favor of the supervisor. Previous research findings corroborate this argument. For instance, when supervisors mistreat their employees, these employees tend to decrease their engagement in prosocial behavior and tend to be aggressive (Burton and Hoobler, 2011; Rafferty and Restubog, 2011). Perceived IJ reflects subordinates' assessments of their supervisor's treatment, which indicates that they will continue to be treated fairly as group members (Cropanzano et al., 2001). Chory-Assad (2002) defined IJ as the feeling of being treated fairly, with dignity and respect, which plays a vital role in affecting employee behaviors (Holtz and Harold, 2013). The fairness heuristic theory extends the authority relational model by positing that behavioral norm shape fairness perceptions (Vogel et al., 2015). Employees will consider accepted standards of behavior to connect and adapt to their surroundings thoroughly and primarily to determine their leader's acceptable behavior toward them (van den Bos, 2001).

Humble individuals treat others equally, are less likely to take advantage of others, and show more fairness and self-control (Chancellor and Lyubomirsky, 2013). When leaders express their humble attitude, employees perceive their leaders' respect and care for them. Further, it will lead to employees' IJ perceptions (Wu et al., 2012); when employees see their leader as trustworthy, they become involved in more positive behavior and avoid negative behavior (Sousa-Lima et al., 2013).

IJ reflects the supervisor's interpersonal treatment of their employees (Loi et al.,

2009), which is associated with the organization's social relationships and how they should be built. The IJ perceived by the employees determines their behaviors, which might influence the organization in many ways (Reb et al., 2019). On the contrary, perceived interpersonal injustice will exhaust employees, which leads to job burnout (Lee and Ashforth, 1996). Leaders' unfair treatment of their followers may also reduce employees' dignity and self-worth, causing emotional exhaustion (Elfenbein, 2007).

### **B. Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) Theory**

LMX reflects the quality of the relationship between the leader and their subordinates (Chernyak-Hai and Tziner, 2014). Based on the LMX perspective, supervisor controls limited resources that they should distribute among their subordinates. Thus, allowing them to cultivate a limited and specific relationship with a particular group member (Graen and Uhl-Bien, 1995). LMX also refers to the quality of the leaders-subordinates relationship, indicating mutual trust, esteem, and faithfulness between leaders and subordinates. LMX was developed based on the social exchange theory, emphasizing reciprocity, trust, and fairness between leaders and subordinates (Lebrón et al., 2018). Thus, a leader's relationships with subordinates are built on shared beliefs, attitudes, behaviors, and personalities (Seo et al., 2018).

The theory also posits that leaders are constrained in allocating their resources and time; thus, they allocate their resources and positions differently among their subordinates (Qu et al., 2015). As a result, leaders frequently build and sustain unique or particularistic exchanges with their subordinates, ranging in quality from poor to excellent. In low-quality LMX, the exchange between leader and subordinates is in the form of a 'contract,' with subordinates fulfilling the responsibilities delegated to them by the contract. In high-quality LMX, the leader and subordinates share the same goals and demonstrate concern and support for each other (Pan and Lin, 2016).

The LMX theory is a social exchange theory that presupposes that a leader's relationship with subordinates varies. According to social exchange theory, social behavior results from an exchange, and responsibilities develop when an individual supports other in exchange for the expectation of receiving favors in the future (Blau, 1964). Organizational scholars have used social exchange theory and the reciprocity principle to develop underlying mechanisms for motivating employee behavior (Usman et al., 2019). Due to the leader's distinct nature and unique relationship with each subordinate, subordinates might have varying levels of access to the leader's resources, knowledge, and guidance (Ballinger et al., 2010; Herman and Mitchell, 2010). Supervisors develop social exchange relationships with in-group employees, indicated by mutual trust, assistance, and bondage. However, out-group members have low-quality relationships indicated by transactional relationships based on the contract (Erdogan and Bauer, 2014). It has been found that LMX positively affects team potency (Sui et al., 2016). Another study underlined the quality of a leader-member relationship and found that followers had a significant role in the team process (Le Blanc and González-Romá, 2012), with high-quality team LMX had a critical role in increasing team performance (Liden et al., 2006).

If followers perceive the high quality of LMX, this will develop employees' positive attitudes and behaviors (Scandura et al., 1986). Concerning perceived fair treatment, low-quality LMX may reduce employees' motivation to strive for professional

achievement and to work hard to prove themselves (Ionescu and Iliescu, 2021). Thus, LMX quality is perceived as a result of the directed behaviors and attitudes toward organizations (Levinson, 1965). When employees feel that they get assistance, trust, and various benefits associated with a high-quality LMX, they tend to reciprocate with positive attitudes and outcomes (Gouldner, 1960). LMX theory shows that the relationship quality between leaders and subordinates is associated with employees' outcomes. Henson and Beehr (2018) found a significant relationship between performance and LMX measured by subordinates and supervisors. Han and Jekel (2011) identified that the low quality of LMX and the dissatisfaction with management are two top reasons why people leave their jobs. Employees with high-quality LMX show greater responsibility toward the organization and contribute more work-related outcomes (Chernyak-Hai and Tziner, 2014).

### C. Deviance Behavior

Robinson and Bennett (1995) define workplace deviance as voluntary behavior that violates significant organizational norms and, in doing so, threatens the well-being of the organization, its members, or both. Shoss et al. (2016) defined deviant behavior as an intentional negative attitude that harms organizational norms and practices. Deviant behavior is considered as behavior contrasting the organizational norms, namely behavior within the organization that is detrimental to other individuals (Huang et al., 2015). Deviance in the workplace is a widespread phenomenon that is detrimental to organizations (Zhao et al., 2013). It is vital to identify the potential causes of deviant behaviors, considering their harm in the workplace for organizations (Gatling et al., 2017).

Deviant behavior typically manifests as contempt for people or the organization as a whole (Yam et al., 2017). Workplace deviance generally encompasses theft, property damage, tardiness, taking unscheduled breaks, ignoring the supervisor's directions, and publicly humiliating the leader (Ferris et al., 2009). Deviant behavior is usually carried out by those who do not support the good of the organizations (e.g., resistance to change, absenteeism) (Agboola and Salawu, 2011). Employees may not be compliant with the rules and procedures, not because they have a personal interest, but because they do not understand the rules and procedures in the organization, which seem unclear to them (Park and Jung, 2003). There are many forms of deviant behavior, from minor ones such as spreading rumors and embarrassing co-workers, to serious misconduct, including theft and sabotage (Singh, 2019).

Robinson and Bennet (1995) distinguished two types of workplace deviance: interpersonal and organizational. Interpersonal deviance is defined as deviant behavior that is detrimental to individuals in the workplace and is not directed at a specific individual. It might involve members of the organization, including colleagues and other individuals. Organizational deviance is a type of deviance that grows more significant when the leader abuses their personnel or when the leader lacks leadership support (Thau et al., 2009). Interpersonal deviance is defined as behaviors that are damaging to others, namely verbal abuse, aggression, and spreading rumors. OD refers to actions against the organization, such as equipment sabotage, resource theft, and resource waste (Erkutlu and Chafra, 2013). It is often defined as deviant behavior that is detrimental to the organization (Bennett and Robinson, 2000).

Bowling and Gruys (2010) estimated that workplace deviance causes billions of dollars in losses to industry and emerging economies, with the phenomenon increasing in recent years. Extant research suggests that deviant behavior decreases an organization's productivity and performance, damages their reputation (Jaakson et al., 2018), decreases employee performance, and increases turnover (Tuna et al., 2016). Workplace deviance reflects the organization's norms and expectations, which could harm its well-being and stakeholders (Bennett et al., 2018). According to He et al. (2021), employees' negative cognition is often a cost of willpower and motivation, and the costs incurred due to OD are staggering (Marasi et al., 2016). Additionally, workplace disobedience has a slew of undesirable consequences, the prices of which are not always foreseeable (Erkutlu and Chafra, 2013). These aberrant behaviors are inextricably linked to the relationship between employees and their supervisors and risk the organization's success (Lebrón et al., 2018). According to Lian et al. (2014), OD is associated with ineffective supervision and has been highlighted as an aspect that is fundamentally influenced by leadership. Individuals with reservations about their leaders are more prone to engage in OD (Mount et al., 2006). In this scenario, OD takes the form of an attempt to address issues that elicit an emotional response within the organization (Spector and Fox, 2005).

OD, also known as counter-normative behavior, is initiated by the employee and is aimed at the employer (Bennett and Robinson, 2003) that extracts a significant human cost: employee performance, morale, and well-being are all impacted by such deviant behaviors (Robinson and Greenberg, 1998). Followers react to a leader's low ethical behavior with workplace deviance (Tepper, 2007), which is consistent with the reciprocity norms. Employees will reciprocate healthy leader behavior by demonstrating higher trust and commitment and poor leader treatment by exhibiting narcissistic, abusive, or despotic behaviors because they feel not valued and respected by their organizations. Thus, they engage in OD to get even with poor treatment (Lian et al., 2012). In summary, OD is influenced by the leader's traits, behaviors, and attitudes (Berry et al., 2007).

Workplace deviance represents voluntary and intentional actions that violate organizational norms and harm organizational functioning (Robinson and Bennett, 1995; Bennett and Robinson, 2000). Workplace deviant behavior is an occupational crime that may vary along a continuum of severity, from minor acts, such as spreading rumors and embarrassing co-workers, to severe acts, such as theft and sabotage (Kwok et al., 2005), which pose severe consequences for individuals and organizations. The financial estimates suggest that deviance costs organizations billions of dollars annually (Coffman, 2003). The prevalence and costs of employee's deviant behaviors warrant research efforts to understand why, when, and how employees engage in deviant behaviors (Liao et al., 2004), as it creates several problems for organizations (Dunlop and Lee, 2004; Pletzer et al., 2018).

#### **D. Social Loafing (SL)**

SL is defined as decreased motivation and effort when individuals collaborate rather than work independently (Karau and William, 1993). SL is a workplace phenomenon that occurs when employees reduce their efforts when working as part of a group and fully contribute when working individually (Chang et al., 2020). SL is caused by the lack of reasonable and appropriate institutional arrangements, resulting in injustice, lack of

identity, and inefficient organizational performance (Chen and Cheng, 2018). According to Lamp and Campbell (2021), SL can be explained as a free-rider effect, in which an individual makes less effort because they perceive others in a group to pick up the slack. It can also be explained as a sucker effect, in which an individual makes less effort in a group because they presume some teammates would be unmotivated to complete their work. Social loafers deliberately limit their work's effort, time, and quality, mainly when individual outputs are difficult to measure and expect their colleagues to perform well (Karau and William, 1993). SL diminishes group performance in contrast to individual performance (Ying et al., 2014). It is considered more concerning because it can be happened in every workplace and is considered misconduct (Khan et al., 2020).

If other group members cannot feel the decrease in the individual effort, and if it is not appraised negatively, then SL is hardly considered to occur within the group. Thus, it is less likely to significantly impact overall group well-being and performance (Erkoc et al., 2018). SL begins to affect group outcomes when other group members feel or perceive that they are being taken advantage of by some members who are too dependent on other group members to get their share of work done, while the loafer is believed to unfairly enjoy and/or share the group's results as well as another hard worker (Fakolade et al., 2015).

Aggarwal and O'Brien (2008) defined SL as a pattern of behavior in which group members perceive individual work in group settings as an inability to contribute to work equally. This phenomenon generally comes from different motivational factors, individual differences, and situational circumstances (Perry et al., 2013). SL is indeed a type of lax behavior (neglect) in the workplace (Lee and Varon, 2020) that diminishes group members' motivation and productivity if they are aware that their co-workers are not performing their duties properly (Dick et al., 2009). As a result, group members would grow disgruntled with the unfair share of labor caused by social reluctance (Tsai and Chi 2008).

According to Schippers (2014), SL is a human illness that negatively affects employees, social institutions, and society. It inflicts a severe danger to work for groups, as organizations increasingly rely on the group and teamwork to coordinate activities and expect team members to contribute fully to the group's collective potential (Awee et al., 2022). Sanyal and Hisam (2018) argued that when individuals work alone, it enables them to succeed in tasks that require high concentration and focus. The major disadvantage of working in teams is SL, which results in a reduction in motivation or efficiency by an individual when working together compared to when working alone (Rich et al., 2014).

As individual-level antecedents of SL, motivational factors are generally mentioned (Chang et al., 2020), in addition to managers' behaviors, task interdependency, task visibility, and justice perceptions of members (Yildiz and Elibol, 2021). Preventing SL is necessary to achieve the expected efficiency from group work (Himmetoğlu et al., 2022) because even though teamwork is highly valued, the likelihood of SL in group settings cannot be overlooked (Zhu, 2013). SL is a general phenomenon whereby people do less work in a group task while they use their full potential when assigned an individual task. It has been described as an anti-organizational behavior, which



significantly reduces the whole organization's profitability and competitiveness (Davoudi et al., 2012).

### **E. Interpersonal Justice (IJ) and Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) Theory**

LMX is regarded as a proxy for interpersonal trust (Dirks and Ferrin, 2002). Research has shown that employees' perception of justice facilitates the development of high-quality LMX (Cropanzano and Byrne, 2000; Cohen-Charash and Spector, 2001). IJ is particularly important for forming high-quality LMX because trust, respect, and mutual obligation inherent in high-quality exchanges develop through a continuous series of satisfactory interactions between leaders and subordinates (Uhl-Bien et al., 2000). IJ refers to the degree to which superiors or supervisors treat their subordinates respectfully, appreciating their existence (Holtz and Harold, 2013; Wang et al., 2019). Othman et al. (2010) define dysfunctional LMX as a condition where others perceive the high quality of exchange between a leader and certain members in the workgroup as unequal. Disrespect is considered unfair because ignoring subordinates causes feelings of exclusion (Rai and Agarwal, 2021). The notion is that employees with a positive IJ perception of their leaders are more likely to build high-quality relationships with them (Cropanzano et al., 2002). Low-quality leader-member relations attenuate the effects of fair procedures and dignified interpersonal interactions (Piccolo et al., 2008).

Differences in LMX quality harm justice norms because it is difficult to reconcile the inconsistent findings regarding the effects of LMX differentiation on group outcomes (Henderson et al., 2009). Brotheridge and Grandey (2017) stated that excellent-quality LMX members and poor-quality LMX members could demonstrate strain in working together as a unit. High LMX relationships extend above the formal job duty where the intent primarily focuses on increased subordinate ability and motivation to fulfill work behaviors (Martin et al., 2016). Interpersonal and informational inequities influence employee behavior, i.e., leads to deviant behavior directed at supervisors (De Clercq et al., 2019). Thus, we hypothesize that:

*H1: IJ has a positive relationship with LMX*

### **F. LMX Theory and Organizational Deviance (OD)**

Employees in high-quality LMX relationships experience less role conflict, have lower turnover intentions, have higher objective job performance, and receive better performance ratings from their supervisors (Arshadi et al., 2012). Employees in low-quality exchange relationships were envious of their peers who had high-quality exchange relationships with their supervisors, were more likely to be dissatisfied with their jobs, and had a higher propensity to quit (Hsiung and Bolino, 2018). Hitlan and Noel (2009) demonstrated a positive relationship between exclusion by supervisors and OD.

LMX was found to be one of the most effective, scientific, and practical approaches to understanding the relationship between leaders (supervisors) and members (subordinates) in the workplace (Cropanzano et al., 2017). LMX is a thriving organizational approach that leads to rapid organizational success (Khan and Malik, 2017). LMX quality is an essential factor that can increase or decrease subordinate deviant behavior (Martin et al., 2016). The LMX approach involves developing and

assessing the quality of the reciprocal relationship between leader and follower, and followers are an active component of this reciprocal relationship (Gregersen et al., 2016). Employees who perceive unfair treatment in their relationships with superiors tend to engage in deviant behavior toward their superiors, such as gossip, violence, or co-worker theft (Rai and Agarwal, 2020).

An essential contention is that employees often model and look up to their supervisors for normative and appropriate behaviors (Mawritz et al., 2012). However, supervisors may exhibit deviant behaviors in their daily work, such as abusing subordinates (Park et al., 2020). Thus, exposing employees to adverse examples from their supervisors. Lugosi's (2019) review pointed out that studies on antecedents of deviant behavior had mainly adopted perspectives of organizational processes and individual values and encouraged future studies to embrace a social learning perspective to uncover drivers of deviant behavior. Therefore, the hypothesis is formulated as follows:

*H2: LMX has a negative relationship with OD*

*H3: LMX has a negative relationship with SD*

*H4: LMX mediates the relationship between IJ and OD*

*H5: LMX mediates the relationship between IJ and SD*

### **G. Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) Theory and Social Loafing (SL)**

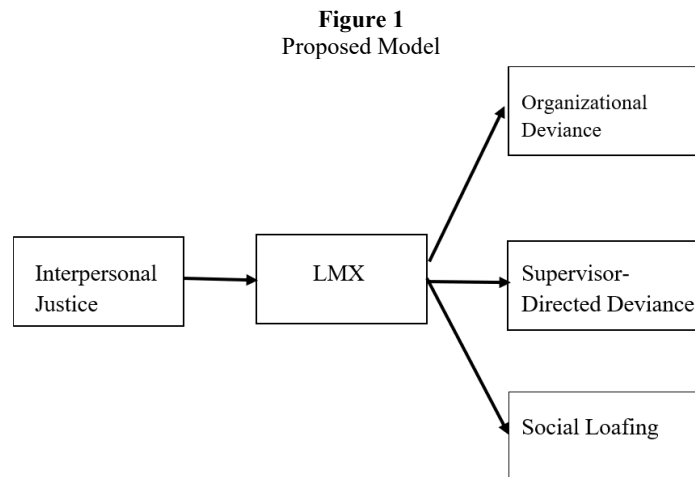
The trust between individuals creates broad role definitions, confidence in others, free exchange of information, and suppression of personal needs, which leads to behaviors that benefit the other party (Jones and George, 1998). Gerstner and Day (2016) observed that LMX is an association-based, dyadic theory of leadership that posits that leadership resides in the quality of the exchange relationship between leaders and their followers. Similarly, individuals in a high-quality exchange with their leader may attempt to reciprocate their leader by not engaging in SL. Employees may seek to withhold effort through individual reluctance because they believe that other members will complete the task or fear being perceived as suckers (sucker effect). Thus, they became nervous that some team members could take advantage of their excessive efforts (Yunjeong Chang and Brickman, 2018). SL influences the workplace extensively. Its most common outcomes are a decrease in cohesiveness, a delay in task delivery, dissatisfaction with other members, withholding potential, and the emergence of deviant employee profiles (Byun et al., 2020).

Due to SL risks, workplace organizations tend to rely on teams to complete tasks (Mathieu et al., 2017). LMX is a social exchange process that reflects the quality of exchange relationships between leaders and employees (Gu et al., 2015). Supervisor expediency leads to higher employee unethical tolerance for employees with higher LMX relationships (Greenbaum et al., 2018). SL is an ethical issue based on the morals of individuals, as it impacts not only the free rider's achievements but also the entire team's work cycle and, therefore, the prospects of companies (Mihelič and Culiberg, 2019). Thus, we hypothesize that:

*H6: LMX has a negative relationship with SL*

*H7: LMX mediates the relationship between IJ and SL*

Figure 1 shows the proposed model.



### III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### A. Sample and Procedure

This research is a cross-sectional study conducted through a survey by collecting data from respondents using a questionnaire. The survey was conducted online on employees working in various industrial sectors in Indonesia. The snowball sampling technique was employed to obtain data from respondents in the various regions of Indonesia (Eddleston et al., 2006). The online survey link uses a secure website that allows anonymous submission of respondents' responses. The snowball sampling technique applied in the current study referred to Parker et al. (2019) method in which sample selection started with a group of people as the initial contacts that meet the research criteria. The initial contacts were invited to participate in the study. They were asked to recommend their contacts who met the criteria and who they thought would agree to participate in the study upon their agreement. These steps were repeated to the current participants and the following participants they suggested.

Further, Parker et al. (2019) explained that snowball sampling allows researchers to utilize their social network to build initial contact and generate data collection momentum in this social network. In this case, the researcher contacted and approached the initial contacts known by the researcher, who was asked to complete the survey and forwarded the survey link to their colleagues from the same company. This method was applied to ensure that potential respondents meet the research criteria. The collected responses were subjected to further scrutiny to guarantee the data quality. Out of 348 respondents who filled out the questionnaire, only 271 responses were deemed complete and met the quality limit. The existing 77 responses were deemed incomplete and were excluded from further analysis, generating a response rate of 77.87%.

The respondents were primarily men (54%) than women (46%) and were mostly around 21-25 years old (59%), 26-30 years old (18%), 31-35 years old (7%), and 36-40 years old (4%). Six percent of respondents were over 40 years and under 20 years old. In

terms of education level, the majority of respondents have a bachelor's degree (51%), high school (28%), associate degree (17%), and master's degree (4%). Most of the respondents have worked for 1-5 years (73%), 6-10 years (13%), and 11-15 years (6%), with a small percentage of 4% have worked less than one year, and 4% have worked longer than 15 years. Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of respondents.

## B. Measures

### 1. Interpersonal Justice (IJ)

IJ was measured using a questionnaire developed by Colquitt (2001) consisting of four question items. Respondents' responses were measured using a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The Cronbach's Alpha for this measurement is 0.87.

### 2. Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) Theory

The LMX in this study was measured using a questionnaire adapted from Kim et al. (2013), which consisted of seven question items. Respondents' responses were assessed based on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The Cronbach's Alpha score for this measurement is 0.83.

### 3. Organizational Deviance (OD) Behavior

OD Behavior was measured using a questionnaire adapted from Bennett and Robinson (2000) consisting of 11 question items. Respondents' responses were evaluated based on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (never) to 5 (always), with Cronbach's Alpha for the measures of 0.79.

**Table 1**  
Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

	Demographic Characteristic	Percentage
Gender	Male	54
	Female	46
Age (years)	< 20	6
	21 – 25	59
	26 – 30	18
	31 – 35	7
	36 – 40	4
	> 40	6
Education	High School	28
	Associate Degree	17
	Bachelor	51
	Master Degree	4
Job Tenure (years)	< 1	4
	1 – 5	73
	6 – 10	13
	11 – 15	6
	> 15	4

#### 4. Supervisor-Directed Deviance (SD) Behavior

SD Behavior is measured using a questionnaire adapted from Mitchell and Ambrose (2007), consisting of nine question items. Respondents' responses were measured based on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (never) to 5 (always). The Cronbach's Alpha for the developed instrument is = 0.89.

#### 5. Social Loafing (SL)

This study adopted a questionnaire developed by George (1992), consisting of 10 question items to measure SL. Respondents' responses were based on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), with Cronbach's Alpha score for the instrument of 0.91.

### C. Results

The collected data were analyzed using PLS technique. The analysis method was adopted to develop a theoretical exploration that explains variations in dependent variables (Hair et al., 2017). In PLS, data is analyzed by conducting measurement evaluations and structural model evaluations.

### D. Measurement Evaluation (Outer Model)

The measurement evaluation was applied to measure the validity and reliability of variable indicators, the coefficient of determination, and the path coefficient for the equation model. The validity analysis aims to determine whether the instrument and the measurement process correctly show a concept's measurement (Sekaran and Bougie, 2017). An indicator is valid if the loading factor is  $> 0.7$ . Table 2 shows the results of the convergent validity test, in which 28 indicators are valid.

The convergent validity analysis was followed by the discriminant validity test, which shows the extent to which a construct differs from other constructs according to empirical standards (Hair et al., 2017). Thus, discriminant validity implies that the construct is unique and captures phenomena not represented by other constructs in the model. Table 3 shows that latent constructs with indicators in bold have higher values than other indicators with lower values, with the cross-loading value of each construct higher than  $> 0.7$ , meaning that the construct has adequate discriminant validity.

Table 3 summarizes the results of composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha analysis. Reliability indicates the extent to which the measurement is without bias (error) and therefore ensures consistency of measurement over time at various points on the instrument (Sekaran and Bougie, 2017). Cronbach's Alpha shows the extent of reliability or trustworthiness of an instrument. According to Hair et al. (2017), the composite reliability value must be higher than 0.70. Based on Table 4, all constructs have a composite reliability value of more than 0.7 and Cronbach's alpha score higher than 0.6. Thus, all constructs have good reliability.

**Table 2**  
Convergent Validity

	LMX	SL	IJ	OD	SD
LMX1	0.834				
LMX2	0.846				
LMX4	0.742				
LMX7	0.823				
IJ1			0.874		
IJ2			0.903		
IJ3			0.912		
IJ4			0.759		
OD3				0.709	
OD5				0.867	
OD6				0.805	
OD8				0.745	
SD3					0.836
SD4					0.779
SD5					0.729
SD6					0.737
SD7					0.801
SD8					0.798
SD9					0.826
SL1		0.735			
SL10		0.762			
SL2		0.766			
SL4		0.715			
SL5		0.727			
SL6		0.803			
SL7		0.748			
SL8		0.815			
SL9		0.782			

### E. Structural Model Evaluation (Inner Model)

The inner or structural model describes the relationship between latent variables based on substantive theory. There are several tests used for structural model evaluation, including: **Goodness of Fit**

Measurement of model adjustment on PLS can be tested by calculating the Goodness of Fit (GoF) value. GoF reflects the suitability of the data with an overall model. According to Fornell and Larcker (1981), the model adjustment is considered good if the GoF value is  $\geq 0.36$ . Table 5 shows the results of the GoF test.

GoF value can be calculated as follows:

$$GoF = \sqrt{(AVE \times R^2)} = \sqrt{(0.644 \times 0.255)} = 0.40 \quad (1)$$

The GoF value of 0.40 is included in the large GoF category. Thus, this research model has a good fit value.

**Table 3**  
Discriminant Validity

	<b>A</b>	<b>CL</b>	<b>IJ</b>	<b>OD</b>	<b>SD</b>
LMX1	<b>0.834</b>	-0.308	0.579	-0.392	-0.447
LMX2	<b>0.846</b>	-0.307	0.565	-0.366	-0.352
LMX4	<b>0.742</b>	-0.299	0.562	-0.255	-0.267
LMX7	<b>0.823</b>	-0.305	0.570	-0.406	-0.360
IJ1	0.583	-0.274	<b>0.874</b>	-0.317	-0.349
IJ2	0.687	-0.328	<b>0.903</b>	-0.414	-0.387
IJ3	0.644	-0.360	<b>0.912</b>	-0.339	-0.390
IJ4	0.478	-0.256	<b>0.759</b>	-0.232	-0.305
OD3	-0.245	0.447	-0.230	<b>0.709</b>	0.464
OD5	-0.461	0.500	-0.394	<b>0.867</b>	0.553
OD6	-0.346	0.510	-0.245	<b>0.805</b>	0.558
OD8	-0.263	0.565	-0.301	<b>0.745</b>	0.512
SD3	-0.389	0.556	-0.360	0.540	<b>0.836</b>
SD4	-0.287	0.490	-0.245	0.518	<b>0.779</b>
SD5	-0.369	0.482	-0.332	0.529	<b>0.729</b>
SD6	-0.331	0.487	-0.311	0.498	<b>0.737</b>
SD7	-0.289	0.543	-0.274	0.508	<b>0.801</b>
SD8	-0.405	0.621	-0.402	0.543	<b>0.798</b>
SD9	-0.339	0.636	-0.332	0.518	<b>0.826</b>
SL1	-0.314	<b>0.735</b>	-0.321	0.518	0.522
SL10	-0.255	<b>0.762</b>	-0.251	0.474	0.504
SL2	-0.242	<b>0.766</b>	-0.222	0.454	0.521
SL4	-0.241	<b>0.715</b>	-0.251	0.375	0.423
SL5	-0.293	<b>0.727</b>	-0.280	0.499	0.506
SL6	-0.342	<b>0.803</b>	-0.317	0.512	0.567
SL7	-0.311	<b>0.748</b>	-0.283	0.484	0.611
SL8	-0.289	<b>0.815</b>	-0.236	0.502	0.555
SL9	-0.246	<b>0.782</b>	-0.248	0.507	0.531

**Table 4**  
Composite Reliability and Cronbach's Alpha

	<b>Cronbach's Alpha</b>	<b>rho A</b>	<b>Composite Reliability</b>	<b>AVE</b>
LMX	0.827	0.833	0.886	0.660
SL	0.910	0.914	0.926	0.581
IJ	0.886	0.904	0.922	0.747
OD	0.794	0.851	0.864	0.614
SD	0.898	0.903	0.919	0.620

**Table 5**  
The GoF Model

	<b>AVE</b>	<b>R Square</b>
LMX	0.660	0.490
SL	0.581	0.140
IJ	0.747	-
OD	0.614	0.194
SDV	0.620	0.197

## F. Path Coefficient

The path coefficient shows the statistical value in each path of the relationship between variables calculated through the bootstrapping method. PLS indicates the significance level of the relationship between variables by the t-value and p-value. The hypothesis is supported if the t-value  $> 1.96$  and the p-value  $\leq 0.05$  (Hair et al., 2017). Table 6 shows the path coefficient in the direct effect between variables.

**Table 6**  
Direct Effect

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	t Statistics ( O/STDEV )	p Values
IJ $\rightarrow$ LMX	-0.700	0.703	0.043	16.257	0.000
LMX $\rightarrow$ OD	-0.440	-0.445	0.047	9.306	0.000
LMX $\rightarrow$ SD	-0.444	-0.446	0.059	7.541	0.000
LMX $\rightarrow$ SL	-0.375	-0.380	0.057	6.594	0.000

Table 6 shows that IJ negatively affects LMX ( $t = -0.7$ ;  $p < 0.000$ ). This finding is different from the proposed hypothesis 1 that IJ positively affects LMX. On the other hand, LMX was shown to negatively affects OD ( $t = -0.44$ ;  $p < 0.000$ ) and SD ( $t = -0.444$ ;  $p < 0.000$ ), supporting hypotheses 2 and 3. The results also showed that LMX negatively affects SL ( $t = -0.375$ ;  $p < 0.000$ ), supporting hypothesis 6.

Indirect effect analysis was conducted to analyze the indirect effect of LMX, as summarized in Table 7.

Based on table 7, LMX mediates the effect of IJ on OD ( $t = -0.308$ ;  $p < 0.000$ ), as well as SD ( $t = -0.31$ ;  $p < 0.000$ ). Thus, hypothesis 4 and hypothesis 5 are supported. LMX was also shown to mediate the effect of IJ on SL ( $t = -0.262$ ;  $p < 0.000$ ), supporting hypothesis 7.

**Table 7**  
Indirect Effect

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	t Statistics ( O/STDEV )	p Values
IJ $\rightarrow$ LMX $\rightarrow$ OD	-0.308	-0.313	0.039	7.959	0.000
IJ $\rightarrow$ LMX $\rightarrow$ SD	-0.310	-0.313	0.047	6.643	0.000
IJ $\rightarrow$ LMX $\rightarrow$ SL	-0.262	-0.267	0.045	5.816	0.000

## G. Discussions

The results showed several essential findings in line with the need for more attention to the relationship between LMX and negative organizational behaviors (Liu et al., 2013) while describing the dark side of social exchange between leaders and employees (Bolino and Turnley, 2009). This study reveals the LMX effect on negative behaviors at work in the form of OD, SD, and SL. This study underlines the importance of the relationship between leaders and employees, in which the quality of the relationship may determine employee responses. When leaders build low-quality relationships with employees, indicated by low mutual trust and disrespect (Graen and Uhl-Bien, 1995) this condition may trigger deviant behaviors aimed at the organization and supervisors. This condition indicates the negative norm of the reciprocity principle, in which employees perceive



unjust treatment that reflects a low-quality relationship and could retaliate through deviant behavior (Cropanzano and Rupp, 2008). The intention to retaliate is considered to be compatible with negative responses because it involves the intention to retaliate by causing losses to their retaliation target (El Akrami et al., 2010). In other words, the concept of retaliation matches with a broader concept of negative responses. This finding corroborates previous research, implying a possible negative relationship between LMX and deviant behavior (Bolino and Turnley, 2009; Kim et al., 2013). Using relative deprivation theory and reactions to relative deprivation, Bolino and Turnley (2009) provided a theoretical foundation for the relationship between low-quality LMX and deviant behavior. According to the relative deprivation theory (Crosby, 1976), relative deprivation occurs when an individual compares rewards they received with rewards received by others as their reference. In this process, they might feel they have received less than they deserve (Walker and Smith, 2002; Bolino and Turnley, 2009). Individuals with low-quality LMX will envy others with high-quality LMX and perceive different and unfair treatment (Vecchio, 1995; Lee, 2001). This condition triggers relative deprivation, which in turn leads to deviant behavior.

This study also shows that LMX negatively affects SL, indicating that employees with high-quality LMX will develop lower SL and vice versa. This finding is in line with Kidwell and Bennet's argumentation (1993) that the bonds made by individuals with organizational actors can lead to SL. This result aligns with the social exchange theory (Blau, 1964), which explains that when an individual operates in a high-quality relationship, they will act in a way that benefits their partners, even when they are not rewarded for such actions. Thus, based on this assumption, SL could become a means for individuals to react toward their low exchanges with their leaders (Murphy et al., 2003). Individuals with low-quality LMX might retain their efforts as long as possible because they want to avoid benefitting their leaders indirectly. With SL, individuals retain their efforts when they work in a group because it could protect them from adverse outcomes since it will be difficult for their leaders to detect their low performance (Murphy et al., 2003). This study's findings also answer the call for more research to understand better the importance of LMX in predicting SL in existing workgroups (Murphy et al., 2003).

LMX as the mediator variable in the relationship between IJ and deviant behavior, also SL, is another critical finding in this study. In particular, the effect of IJ on SD through LMX is consistent with the target similarity approach (Lavelle et al., 2007). The target similarity approach suggests that an employee's fair evaluation of certain parties will affect the social exchange levels with the mentioned parties (Lavelle et al., 2007). Therefore, how leaders develop interpersonal relationships with their employees will be perceived as how far interpersonal fairness was achieved, as it will affect the quality of exchanges between leaders and their employees. When this relationship is perceived as low-quality LMX by the employees, it will likely lead to SD.

This finding also aligns with the agent-dominance model of justice (Fassina et al., 2008), in which the quality of exchange with the supervisor (i.e., the agent) as measured by LMX is a critical mediator in predicting deviant behavior directed at supervisors and the organization. This study's results also strengthen El Akrami et al. (2010), where LMX as a social exchange construct mediates the relationship between types of justice, workplace deviance, and SL. El Akrami et al. (2010) believe that the notion of a desire for revenge, attribution of blame, and an outward focus on negative emotions represent indications of a low-quality exchange relationship as well as signals of an individual's

willingness and intention to retaliate negatively by destroying the source of perceived injustice.

Contradicting the hypothesis that IJ positively affects LMX, this study's finding indicates that IJ negatively affects LMX. This result might be related to eastern cultural values in Indonesian society, especially Javanese culture. In Javanese culture, a leader will try to build a good relationship with all his subordinates to uphold politeness. However, this good relationship does not necessarily indicate the personal closeness of the leader to his subordinates. Therefore, subordinates can assume the excellent relationship shown by the leader is only on the surface of the interaction between the two, which reduces the quality of the relationship.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

This study aims to investigate the role of LMX as the mediator in the relationship between IJ and negative behaviors in the workplace, i.e., OD, SD, and SL. This study found that LMX negatively affects OD, SD, and SL. LMX also mediated the relationship between IJ, OD, SD, and SL. These findings emphasize the importance of LMX roles in influencing negative employee behaviors in the workplace. Although LMX is associated with positive outcomes in various studies, LMX's effect on negative organizational behaviors cannot be ignored.

This study provides significant practical implications for leaders and their organizations. The results showed that LMX mediates the effect of IJ on deviant behaviors and SL. Therefore, it is crucial for leaders to build and maintain the quality of their relationships with employees. Based on the relationship, employees will assess the extent to which IJ is carried out by the leader, which leads to employee behavioral responses. In this case, leaders must treat employees with respect and dignity and prevent discrimination from promoting IJ. Eventually, IJ will lead to a better-quality relationship between leaders and employees, which can hinder deviant behavior and SL. When employees perceive low levels of interpersonal fairness, they will notice and adjust their behavior as a countermeasure. Therefore, leaders need to show sensitivity in treating all employees fairly.

This study has several limitations that could be addressed in future research. First, this study used a cross-sectional design, which could generate ambiguity in the causal direction and alternative explanations for the observed results. Future research needs to consider a longitudinal design to explore deeper the causal relationship between the independent variable and outcomes. Secondly, this study's results reflect employee perceptions through a self-report survey, in which responses are limited to a predetermined scale. Further research can be conducted through an in-depth study using a structured interview because it would be an excellent method to learn more about employees' overall emotions, providing a more profound and richer response (Glaser and Strauss, 1999). Third, the variables used in this study were measured from the same source at a particular time. This single source of bias may lead to common-method variance, resulting in spurious relationships among variables. Data must be collected from different sources to reduce common-method bias in future studies.

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