Relational Capital: How Leader–Member Exchange Shapes Affective Commitment

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Introduction

The idea of leadership is eminently recorded in the entire world as well as in the United States since it is a source of individual achievement and organizational achievement. In the U.S., leadership is a major factor in the creation of innovation, competitiveness and organizational culture. It is also generally thought of as the fuel that connects the engagement of employees and business success in the long-term (Cai et al., 2018). After several decades of study, leadership is still a complicated and generally abstract concept which confounds both researchers and practitioners. The special attention has been paid to the leader-member exchange (LMX) model over the past couple of years, though, the particular types of relations between leaders and subordinates have been given special attention within it (Anand et al., 2011). Research conducted in the American organizational setting still demonstrates that good "LMX" ties are linked to numerous favorable outcomes including job satisfaction, improved performance, and growth of the organizational commitment (Pellegrini and Scandura, 2008). Much of this work, however, has been directed towards large outcomes, and little has been said of the emotional side of commitment. This emphasis is also opportune since the U.S workforce is encountering new challenges, such as the hybrid work environment and the evolving employee expectations. This study will focus on the connection between quality "LMX" and affective commitment which is an outcome that shows the extent to which an employee is emotionally committed to an organization. The study also seeks to provide a better insight of the interpersonal process that drives the performance of a leader and to uncover the broader implication of the study to organizations within the United States that are interested in the provision of engagement and commitment among its employees through reviewing the role of the quality of leader-member relationships in influencing the affective commitment. In so doing, the study will build upon the existing theory in addition to pointing at some of the key practical concerns that managers are struggling with at present at the workplace.

Literature Review

Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) theory defines how the leader goes about establishing relationships on the basis of limited time and resources. It can also be said to be the case that leaders are brought nearer to a few key subordinates and they establish a mutual relationship between them (Graen and Scandura, 1987). The rest of the group is put in the out-group thus they are accorded less interaction and assistance. The good quality of "LMX" relationships provides employees with clear indications of the contentment of their leader with their work (Graen et al., 1982). This transparency builds confidence and builds better relationships between leaders and subordinates. The studies always indicate that such relations result into enhanced communication, performance, and engagement of employees. There is, however, one important question. What effect do these interactions have on employee attitudes? Specifically, a closer attention should be paid to the connection between the quality of "LMX" and affective commitment the emotional attachment to the organization.

From Exchange to Outcomes: Understanding "LMX" Effects

The Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) theory has been a popular research topic in the attempt to gain insights into the impacts of the quality of the relationship between leaders and their subordinates on the workplace performance. Trust, respect, and mutual obligation are what establish high-quality

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exchanges and formality and limited interaction are the hallmarks of low-quality exchanges (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). Such differences in quality of relationships lead to a big variation in the way employees experience work environments.

There is a sufficient amount of research that demonstrates that a good "LMX" relationship leads to reduced turnover intentions and increased organizational attachment. The first study was carried out showed that workers in high-quality encounters were less likely to quit their jobs and had greater incentive to invest in their job (Ferris, 1985). These were combined by other studies that stated that the quality "LMX" was strongly correlated with the increased job satisfaction, improved performance and commitment to the organization (Liden et al., 1997). Employees who have strong leader-member relationships are typically assigned better jobs, resources, and growth opportunities (Bauer and Green, 1996). Conversely, those in low quality exchanges receive less support and are less likely to receive developmental opportunities, hence have fewer opportunities to perform and remain satisfied (Erdogan & Liden, 2002).

Other than performance based results, "LMX" can be linked to other organizational benefits. Favorable relations are associated with high citizenship behavior where employees will be ready to assume larger roles than the scheduled responsibilities (Ilies et al., 2007). These types of relationships build an ethos of trust and reciprocity that promotes discretionary effort, innovation and cooperation. Other more recent statistics indicate that "LMX" is also protecting and can be employed to counteract stress and staff welfare in the workplace (Martin et al., 2016). This way, not only the employees, but also organizational resiliency is positively affected by "LMX" quality at the individual level.

The US firms also develop further the connotation of the quality of LMX. The engagement, retention and empowerment of employees is now a matter of competitiveness that organizations in American are increasingly concerned about in a global economy. It has been established that good quality "LMX" relationships especially can be effective within the United States in terms of influencing commitment in that more often the workers would not just feel that the management is being exercised by the use of formal authority but also feel the level of inter-personal fairness and encouragement that the employees are receiving (Harris et al., 2009). Weak leader-member exchange would soon wipe out loyalty and involvement in a highly mobile labor market with high staff expectations and effective leader-member exchange would stimulate stability and organizational loyalty (Martin et al., 2018). All these results put together can be used to demonstrate that "LMX" is not merely a relationship construct but also a strategic organizational resource. Quality interactions generate trust, motivation and commitment, all these are very crucial in maintaining performance and retention within any contemporary job environments. This discloses the necessity of carrying out further research on the mechanics of "LMX" that affects the key outcome of affective commitment specifically in the transformative climate of U.S. organizations.

"LMX" as A Predictor of Affective Commitment.

Organizational commitment is emotional attachment that the employees have towards their organization. It indicates the extent to which individuals identify themselves with organizational goals and will put in extra effort since they want to and not because they have to (Meyer and Allen, 1991). Past theory development such as the concept of cohesion put forward by Kanter as well as the union commitment concept identified that workers have a strong sense of belonging to their firm and organization. Such a commitment has once again been linked to enhanced satisfaction, loyalty and retention (Kanter, 1968). The Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) theory can provide a valuable point of view regarding how organizational commitment can be promoted. The qualities of trust, respect, and mutual support are the characteristics of quality interactions and give a strong background upon which employees feel valued and are part of the organization (Graen and Uhl-Bien, 1995). Empirical studies have shown that employees in high-"LMX" relationships are more satisfied with their jobs, feel more sense of fairness and are more willing to engage in organizational citizenship behaviors (OCB) (Lapierre and Hackett, 2007). Conversely, weak exchanges will tend to shatter trust and reduce the emotional involvement of workers, which withdraw or alienate themselves or act adversely (Harris et al., 2009). Newer studies support the relationship between the quality of "LMX" and affective commitment. It has been discovered that high-quality relationships can not only be predictive of performance outcomes, but also good psychological states like trust, empowerment, and engagement (Breevaart et al., 2015). A meta-analysis study established that one of the most stable results of high-quality "LMX" is affective commitment and that the quality of leader-member relations is core to the way workers emotionally attach themselves to their organizations. Respect,

voice, and support are among the aspects of employee expectations that have gained significance in the U.S. workplace, which consequently has made affective commitment an important metric of organizational success (Martin et al., 2016). Combined, the evidence indicates that "LMX" quality has a direct effect on affective commitment through developing trust, fairness and feeling of being part of something. When employees believe that their leaders are supportive and fair, they will respond by being loyal and putting efforts in the choices they make, thus improving their emotional bond with the organization. According to these findings, this research anticipates a good relationship between "LMX" quality and affective commitment.

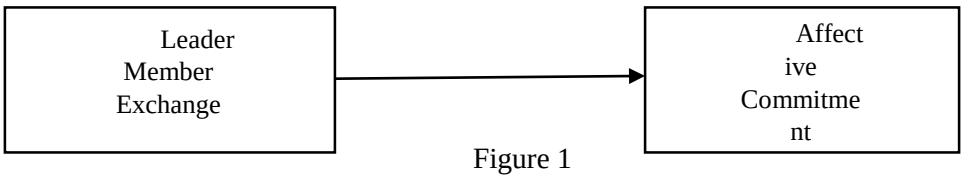


Figure 1

H1: There is a positive relationship between Leader–Member Exchange (LMX) and employees' affective commitment.

Methodology

Research Design

This study adopts a positivist paradigm and employs a cross-sectional descriptive research design. The data were collected through a self-administered survey targeting employees working in the U.S. commercial banking sector. Surveys were distributed to 235 employees across multiple bank branches located in mid-sized U.S. cities. The questionnaires distributed were 235 in total and 177 responses were returned to the researcher, which was good response rate of 75%. This sample size is deemed adequate to represent the perceptions of the employees in the banking sector, and give relevant results to test statistically. The U.S. banking sector offers a very situational background to this study since the industry is very competitive, the industry depends on the customer trust and the industry has a high focus on the quality of the services offered. Under these circumstances, the role of supervisors in developing high-quality leader-member exchanges is of particular importance. Primarily, the performance pressure, high compliance requirements, and high expectations of clients in U.S. banks demand a lot of employees. Therefore, positive relationships with the supervisors can also have an important effect on employee job satisfaction as well as emotional attachment to the organization. This renders the U.S. commercial banking industry a suitable and significant place to study the connection between the Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) and the affective commitment.

Measures

The 7-item scale that has been extensively tested was used to measure Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) (Scandura and Schriesheim, 1994). One sample question is: How well does your immediate supervisor have knowledge of your problems and needs? This was a test that showed that there was high internal consistency in the present study (Cronbachs Alpha = 0.87). The 6-item scale was used to measure the affective commitment of employees (Meyer et al., 1993). One of them is: I am emotionally attached to this organization. In this study the scale had a good reliability (Cronbachs Alpha = 0.84).

Data Analysis

Data Screening and Cleaning

The data was also examined appropriately to ensure it was right and complete then hypothesis testing would be conducted. All the variables together with the control variables were subjected to descriptive statistics to determine whether there are any anomalies in coding, outliers or missing responses. The observed minimum and maximum values did not show any range of unusual response hence there were no invalid entries. This measure of validation was significant as it ensured that people being sampled in the survey were interpreting survey items in a similar manner and providing quality data, particularly given that they were the sampled respondents who were U.S. commercial banks. The analysis of descriptive statistics revealed that the means of both Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) and Affective Commitment (AC) were moderate indicating that the employees

were inclined to report a positive relationship with their supervisors and high rate of emotional attachment with their organizations. This follows what has been already demonstrated in the literature on organizational behavior where quality exchanges have a tendency to bring out improved commitment among the workforce. Additionally, skewness and kurtosis were also examined as a parameter of normality of the data distribution. Although a perfectly normal distribution would imply that the two values ought to be equal to zero, that is not very likely in behavioral and social sciences (Hair et al., 2006). The skew and kurtosis values in this data were in the acceptable range of +-2, meaning that there were no extreme deviations of normality, and they could be incorporated in the parametric statistical process. Typically, the screening and descriptive analysis resulted in showing that a dataset was valid and that it could be used in subsequent analysis. These preliminary results can be applied to the U.S. banking context where employee retention and engagement is of utmost significance due to the high competition and regulations. Employees with higher-quality leader-member exchanges reported stronger affective commitment, as well as exhibited a lot of variance in their answers, which is a legitimate basis to test hypothesized propositions.

Scale Reliability Analysis

Internal consistency was used to determine the reliability of the measurement instrument by analysis of Cronbach's alpha. The outcomes are shown in Table 2 and Table 2b (13 items, seven on the Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) scale, and six items on the Affective Commitment (AC) scale. Both scales had fair levels of reliability with a cumulative Cronbachs alpha of 0.703. It is argued that a threshold of 0.70 or higher is the acceptable level of research in the social sciences at the earliest stages (Nunnally, 1978). The reliability analysis also showed that the internal consistency of the scales could be enhanced by removing some items. In particular, the findings showed that in case of the deletion of item LMX4, the Cronbach alpha would go up to 0.736, as compared to 0.703. This implies LMX4 might not have concurred with the overall construct as much as other items. Nonetheless, given that the reliability did not drop outside of an acceptable range even with the entire set of items, all of the items were kept to avoid compromising the theoretical soundness of the construct and to make it comparable to the previous studies. When it comes to the U.S. organizations, especially the banking industry, it is essential to make sure that the measurement is reliable. Other employee attitudes like quality of leader-member exchange and affective commitment are complex and depend on various aspects at the workplaces. With such a holistic scale, the study will be able to trigger such small differences and capture the reality of the relationship between supervisors in highly competitive and customer-driven settings. With these findings, the scales were considered valid and fit to be used in the future correlation and regression analyses.

Regression Analysis

In order to further test the hypothesis of the study, a linear regression was done whereby Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) was taken as the independent variable and Affective Commitment (AC) was taken as the dependent variable. This analysis was conducted with the aim of establishing how much the quality of leader-subordinate relationships is used in predicting the emotional attachment of employees, towards their organizations. The regression findings showed that "LMX" had a strong predictive value of AC. The model accounted a considerable level of variance in affective commitment, which corroborated the reality that the employees who had reported more quality interactions with their supervisors were more prone to report higher levels of organizational attachment. The standardized beta coefficient was also found to have a positive and significant value ($b = 0.350$, $p < 0.01$), which means that an increase in the quality of "LMX" has a positive and significant impact on the level of affective commitment. The outcomes of such are based on the extensions of the correlation analysis outcomes that show that the correlation between "LMX" and AC is not only significant but also strong enough to determine any meaningful difference in employee commitment. This supports the hypothesis that great leader-member interactions are a kind of mechanism to cause the increased organizational loyalty.

This discovery has enormous impacts in the American banking scenario. In the labor markets, banks are very competitive because employees are likely to be offered an opportunity to move to other competing banks that offer good financial packages. The results however suggest that relational variables, such as trust, respect and open communication between the employees as well as the managers are significant in order to retain talent. Good quality of interaction gives a feeling of equality and appreciation, which reinforces the desire to stick around by employees even in cases where they can have external options. Overall, the regression analysis reinforces the central argument

of this study: leadership practices that nurture strong leader–member relationships are instrumental in promoting affective commitment, which in turn supports organizational stability and long-term success in the U.S. financial services sector.

Table 1

Model Fit Summary of CFA with all items

Variables	Mean	SD	LMX
LMX	3.8238	0.7210	
AC	3.8563	0.6061	0.350**

N= 160;* p<0.05, **p<0.01

Exploratory Factor Analysis (Principal Component, Varimax Rotation)

To establish construct validity and assess the generalizability of the measurement scales within the study context, an Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was performed using Principal Component Analysis with Varimax rotation. This step was essential to confirm whether the items designed to measure Leader–Member Exchange (LMX) and Affective Commitment (AC) appropriately loaded onto their respective factors. The analysis revealed that certain items, specifically AC1, AC5, AC6, and LMX4, displayed weaker loadings and could potentially introduce problems in subsequent analysis (see Table 4). Despite this, the overall sampling adequacy for the factor analysis was confirmed, with the Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) measure well above the recommended threshold of 0.60 (Kaiser, 1970), indicating the dataset was suitable for factor analysis. Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was also significant ($p < 0.001$), further supporting the appropriateness of the data structure for factor extraction. The rotated component solution identified two clear factors, consistent with the theoretical model, corresponding to "LMX" and AC. Together, these two factors accounted for 38.238% of the total variance, which falls within an acceptable range for behavioral and social science research (Hair et al., 2006). This level of explained variance suggests that the items collectively captured the constructs of interest, though with some room for future refinement. In the U.S. organizational context especially in competitive service industries like banking; validating measurement tools through factor analysis is critical. Employee perceptions of supervisory relationships and commitment can be influenced by cultural and institutional factors. By confirming that the scales maintain construct validity in this context, the study ensures that its findings on "LMX" and affective commitment are both meaningful and generalizable. Overall, the EFA confirmed that the two-construct structure of "LMX" and AC holds in the U.S. banking sector, supporting the use of these measures in subsequent statistical analyses.

Confirmatory Factor Analysis with all Items of "LMX" and AC

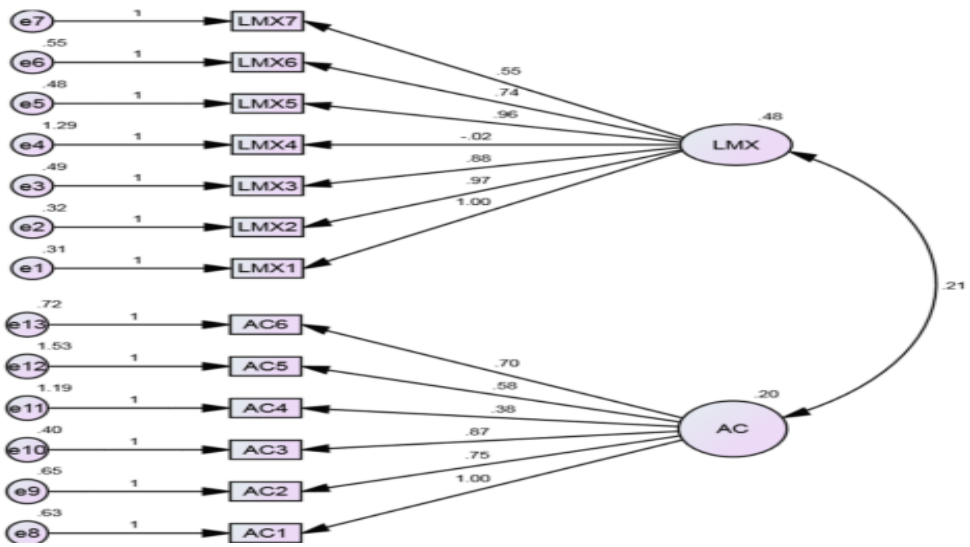


Figure 2: Confirmatory Factor Analysis with all Items of "LMX" and AC

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA)

To further validate the measurement model and test the proposed structure of the study, a Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was conducted using AMOS. The constructs of Leader–Member Exchange (LMX) and Affective Commitment (AC) were analyzed simultaneously, and model fit indices were examined to determine overall adequacy. Key indices included the Chi-square difference test, Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA), Comparative Fit Index (CFI), and Tucker–Lewis Index (TLI). Following the guidelines of Hair et al. (2006) an RMSEA value below 0.08, combined with CFI and TLI values above 0.90, indicates a good model fit. The results demonstrated that most of the model fit indices fell within acceptable ranges, supporting the adequacy of the measurement model. Regression estimates showed that all hypothesized paths were significant with the exception of two, which did not reach statistical significance. Examination of modification indices suggested the presence of some residual covariances among items, with the highest covariance observed between select measurement errors. While such residuals are not uncommon in behavioral research, they highlight areas where measurement refinement may further improve model fit in future studies. Overall, the CFA results confirmed the distinctiveness of the two constructs; "LMX" and AC; while also supporting the theoretical foundation of the study. Importantly, in the U.S. banking context, where employee–supervisor relationships are often shaped by competitive pressures and strict regulatory environments, validating the factor structure ensures that the constructs are being measured reliably and meaningfully. This strengthens the generalizability of the study's findings and provides confidence in the subsequent structural analysis.

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) - Initial Model

In the first model, when all items from the two factors ("LMX" and AC) were tested together, the model fit indices produced a mixed picture of adequacy. The results indicated: $\chi^2/df = 1.868$, $p < 0.001$, GFI = 0.905, TLI = 0.844, CFI = 0.872, and RMSEA = 0.070. These results imply that the model showed a reasonable fit in some of the indices, including RMSEA (less than the 0.08 value) and kh2/df (in the range of recommended 1-3). Other indices did not, however, exhibit the conventional values of good fit, especially the TLI (0.844) and the CFI (0.872) which both are below the widely accepted value of 0.90. Also, the Chi-square was large which meant that the model was not one that fitted the data exactly, but this number is highly sensitive to sample sizes in behavioral studies. Overall, the initial CFA results suggest a partially acceptable but not fully adequate model. While the RMSEA and GFI support reasonable model fit, the lower TLI and CFI values highlight areas for improvement. These results point toward the need for further model refinement, potentially through item re-specification or removal of poorly performing items, to achieve stronger validity evidence for the constructs under study.

Table 2 Regression Weights: (Group number 1 - Default model)

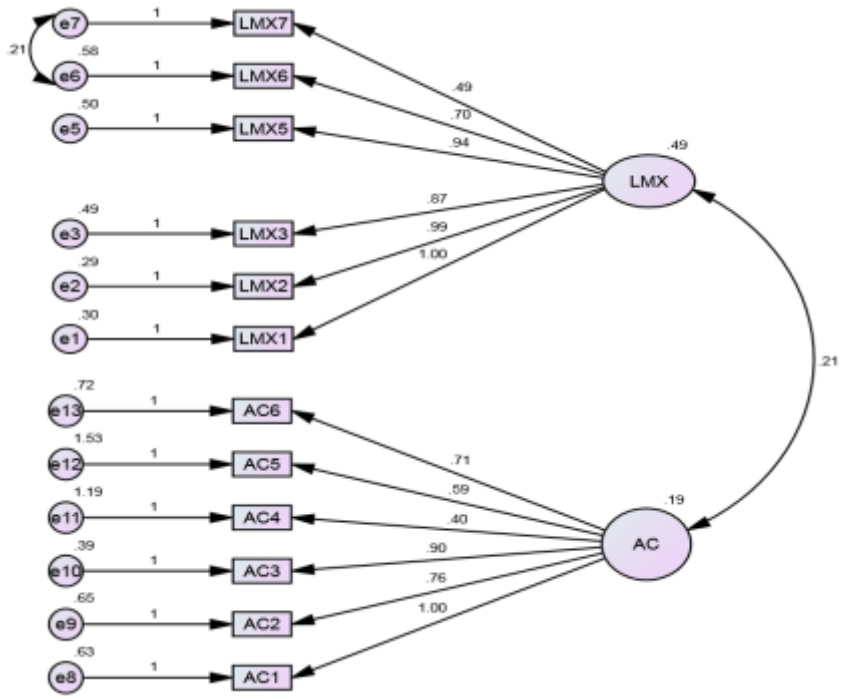
			Estimate	SE.	CR.	P	Label
LMX1	<---	LMX	1.000				
LMX2	<---	LMX	.974	.099	9.807	***	par_1
LMX3	<---	LMX	.876	.105	8.376	***	par_2
LMX4	**<---**	**LMX**	**-.016**	**.133**	**-.120**	**.904**	**par_3**
LMX5	<---	LMX	.959	.108	8.852	***	par_4
LMX6	<---	LMX	.745	.103	7.230	***	par_5
LMX7	<---	LMX	.555	.112	4.944	***	par_6
AC1	<---	AC	1.000				
AC2	<---	AC	.745	.225	3.315	***	par_7
AC3	<---	AC	.871	.221	3.947	***	par_8
AC4	<---	AC	.382	.242	1.576	.115	par_9
AC5	<---	AC	.582	.285	2.042	.041	par_10
AC6	<---	AC	.698	.225	3.095	.002	par_11

Table 3 Model Fit Summary- CFA with all Items of Variables in Model

	CMIN/df	GFI	TLI	CFI	RMSEA
SR Model	1.868	.905	.844	.872	.07

CFA After Modification -Delectation of low factor loading Path ("LMX"4) and Creating Covariance among, e6 –e 7

Figure 3: CFA Estimates and Model Fit Summary - After Modifications



Following initial estimation, modification indices and non-significant paths were examined. To improve parsimony and model fit, we removed non-significant structural/cross-loading paths and added a covariance between the residuals of items e6 and e7 due to their closely overlapping content. The revised model was re-estimated in AMOS. All remaining regression estimates were statistically significant, and overall model fit improved across multiple indices (χ^2/df, RMSEA, CFI, TLI). These adjustments were theoretically justified and kept to a minimum. The revised measurement model therefore demonstrates adequate construct validity for subsequent structural analyses.

Regression Weights: (Group number 1 - Default model)

			Estimate	SE.	CR.	P	Label
LMX1	<---	LMX	1.000				
LMX2	<---	LMX	.995	.099	10.074	***	par_1
LMX3	<---	LMX	.870	.104	8.392	***	par_2
LMX5	<---	LMX	.939	.107	8.732	***	par_3
LMX6	<---	LMX	.703	.103	6.853	***	par_4
LMX7	<---	LMX	.493	.112	4.387	***	par_5
AC1	<---	AC	1.000				
AC2	<---	AC	.757	.230	3.292	***	par_6
AC3	<---	AC	.899	.228	3.935	***	par_7
AC4	<---	AC	.401	.247	1.621	.105	par_8
AC5	<---	AC	.592	.291	2.038	.042	par_9
AC6	<---	AC	.708	.230	3.073	.002	par_10

Table 5 Model Fit Summary, After Modification

	CMIN/df	GFI	TLI	CFI	RMSEA
SR Model	1.523	.929	.918	.935	.055

The Structural Regression (SR) Model was estimated in AMOS to test the hypothesized relationships and to evaluate the overall fit of the conceptual framework. The results indicated that the model provided a good fit to the data. Specifically, the χ^2/df ratio was 1.523**,** which falls well below the recommended upper limit of 3.0, suggesting an acceptable level of model parsimony. The Tucker–Lewis Index (TLI = 0.918) and the Comparative Fit Index (CFI = 0.935) exceeded the threshold of 0.90, indicating a strong comparative fit. The Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA = 0.055) also fell within the acceptable range (< 0.08), confirming approximate model fit. Although the Goodness of Fit Index (GFI = 0.929) was slightly below the ideal cutoff of 0.95, it still indicated an adequate fit. Collectively, these indices support the conclusion that the hypothesized SR model adequately represents the observed data and is suitable for hypothesis testing.

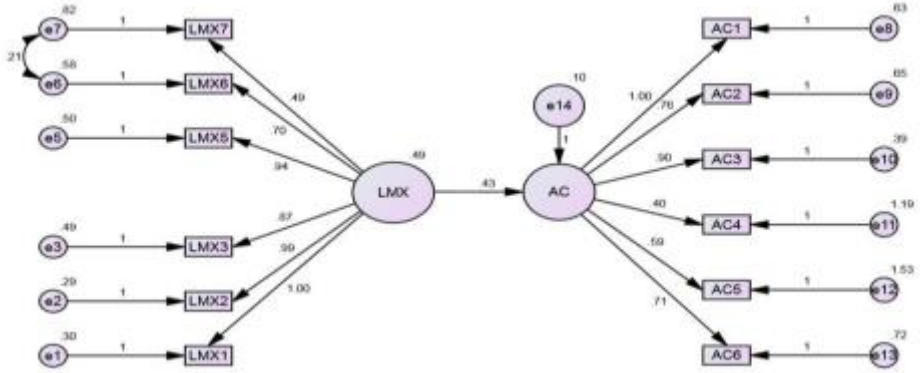


Figure 4: Final - Structural Regression (SR) Model

Structural Model Assessment

The results of the structural model provide strong support for the hypothesized relationship between Leader–Member Exchange (LMX) and employees' Affective Commitment (AC). The regression analysis indicated a standardized coefficient (β) of 0.429, suggesting that for every one-unit increase in LMX, employees' affective commitment increased by 0.429 units on average. This effect was statistically significant at $p < 0.01$, confirming that the observed relationship is unlikely to have occurred by chance. Although the exact standard error (SE) value was not reported, the significance level indicates that the estimated coefficient is robust. The results imply that employees who perceive higher-quality relationships with their supervisors; characterized by trust, mutual respect, and support—tend to develop stronger emotional attachments and loyalty toward their organizations. These findings align with earlier research (Lapierre & Hackett, 2007), which consistently highlighted that high-quality leader–member exchanges foster positive job attitudes, greater organizational commitment, and reduced **turnover intentions**. Specifically, affective commitment, as an emotional bond with the organization, is widely recognized as a critical predictor of employee retention, motivation, and long-term performance outcomes. From a managerial perspective, the results underscore the importance of fostering effective supervisory–subordinate relationships. Leaders who invest in building trust, demonstrating empathy, and providing support are more likely to cultivate employees' affective commitment. In turn, this can enhance organizational performance through higher job satisfaction, stronger motivation, and increased citizenship behaviors.

Discussion

The results of the present research have a strong inclination towards the hypothesis that Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) is positively connected with affective commitment of employees. This finding brings to the fore the core importance of relationships between leaders and their followers in determining the level of emotional attachment of the employees to their organizations. Specifically, the research shows that when employees have high-quality interactions with their supervisors, they

have a greater probability of feeling appreciated, respected and supported, which in turn enhances their belonging and loyalty. The findings correlate with the findings of the previous studies, which show that "LMX" quality is positively related to organizational outcome measures, including job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and performance, but negatively related to turnover intentions and absenteeism (Lapierre and Hackett, 2007). These results are particularly relevant to the organizational environment of the U.S. The American workplace is highly mobile and personality-performance based and consequently, employee retention is a modern issue. By investing in the relationship development based on trust, leaders have not only the chance to eliminate the threat of turnover but also to foster the environment where employees are encouraged to play a greater role than they are supposed to play in their immediate, tangible employment. Indicatively, employees in service industries like finance, technology etc. in the U.S tend to be overwhelmed with heavy work quantities and competitive performance requirements. These pressures can be mitigated by the high-quality "LMX" that offers social support, recognition, and offers an opportunity that fosters development thus leading to affective commitment in stressful contexts as well.

The second implication of this research is that "LMX" may be used to provide some protective benefits to low organizational support or high stress employees. This observation appears to be in line with the previous study which has reported that the existence of good leader-follower relations allows employees to be resilient to uncertainty and still feel part of an organization (Wayne et al., 1997). "LMX" can become an invaluable leadership asset in the U.S. where workplace stress and burnout are extremely prevalent and, thus, lead to a deficit of dedication and engagement.

In sum, the current study is a contribution to the existing body of knowledge that "LMX" quality can be a motivational factor among the employees and the performance of the organization. The more empathy is enforced by the leaders, the more impartiality and trust-development, the better he/she is more likely to elicit an effectual commitment on the part of the employees. In its turn, this might culminate in a vicious cycle of increased motivation and higher job performance and lower turnover rates. The implication on the practitioners is obvious; the relation-oriented leadership development programs, which would focus on people-oriented leadership patterns, could form a significant source of organizational performance, particularly in a competitive labor market, like the United States.

The implications of the findings of this study in practice on managers and organizations are many, especially within the U.S. framework where the issue of retaining talented individuals is central. To begin with, there are facts that suggest that leaders need to invest in developing of high quality relationship with subordinates. Simple interventions such as being emphatic, responsive feedback, and rewarding individual efforts can go a long way in improving affective commitment by the employees. Second, the results indicate that relational and emotional intelligence training should be included in the leadership development programs. The U.S. firms have traditional leadership training that is usually concentrated on either the technical skills or strategic decisions. Nevertheless, since affective commitment is enhanced by supportive interactions, the companies should provide managers with the abilities to promote trust, fairness and open communication. Third, "LMX" may be a buffer in areas of the U.S. economy where employees experience high-stress environments and pressures like banking, technology and healthcare among other sectors. Leaders that emphasize open dialogue and provide avenues of partnership assists employees to overcome uncertainty and remain dedicated despite competition. This is particularly important in industries where employee turnover is high and it may be expensive to replace talented employees. Lastly, the findings do indicate the strategic usefulness of institutionalizing "LMX" concepts in business policies. An example of this is performance management systems where instead of focusing on results, it focuses on the quality of the relationships between the leaders and employees can motivate supervisors to interact more effectively with their staff. Similarly in the twist, the affective commitment in the organization can also be enhanced by mentorship programs and peer-support programs that satisfy the "LMX" practices.

Additionally, the existing study provides considerable insights into the positive relationship between Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) and affective commitment, but it also has a few unanswered questions that may be pursued in the future research. To begin with, the results provide the additional credibility to the strength of the association, but they do not indicate fully the mechanisms underlying it. The mediating variables, which could be explored in research in the future, would be job satisfaction, leadership trust, or perceived organizational support to obtain a better perspective of the connection between the quality of "LMX" and the strengthening of commitment. On the same note,

it is also possible that moderators (organizational justice, workload, or leadership style) might play a role in the strength of this relationship and are more worth a deeper analysis. Second, it is worth mentioning that the implications of "LMX" do not always have the same implications in all organizational contexts. Considering the example of a highly competitive environment in the U.S. (e.g., the financial sector, a healthcare or technology sector) with a high demand on skilled workers, "LMX" might exert more influence on affective commitment than in a less risky environment. Future studies would thus be able to analyze industry specific dynamics to determine where "LMX" practices are generating the highest value. Third, longitudinal designs can be useful in future studies to demonstrate how "LMX" relationships evolve as time progresses and how they may support or deteriorate employee commitment in the long-term. Cross-sectional studies, as informative as they are, are only a snapshot; a time-based one could provide a picture of the changes in the nature of the leader-employee interactions. Lastly, the aspect of culture is still an important aspect to be explored. According to past research, workers in collectivist societies will tend to regard personal contact with coworkers more highly than workers in individualist societies like the United States. The cross-cultural research may clear up the question on whether "LMX" is of universal benefit or the effects of "LMX" on affective commitment depend on cultural expectations and norms. Combined, these instructions imply that although the relationship between "LMX" and affective commitment is well understood, further insights into the when, how, and who of the association will contribute to the further fine-tuning of leadership tactics in different organizational environments by scholars and practitioners.

Although this research offers valuable information about the connection between Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) and affective commitment, it is worth noting that there are a number of limitations. To begin with, the study was based on a cross-sectional research design that limits the possibility to demonstrate causality. The findings reveal that there is a strong positive relationship; however, future studies using longitudinal or experimental designs would assist in proving the hypothesis that high-quality "LMX" indeed leads to affective commitment with an extended period of time. Second, the research has used self-reported survey data, which can be affected by social desirability bias or common method variance. The employees were not required to give answers based on their true experience but on their perceptions of their leaders or their organizations, which may be favorable. The inclusion of data that is documented by various sources (e.g., by supervisors or objective measures of performance) might help to enhance the validity of future results. Third, the study targeted a particular sample of U.S. workers working in the banking industry, which is not suitable to generalize the findings to other industries and countries. The workplace environments can be somewhat different, like medical or technology companies, and they can have exceptional challenges that determine the impact of "LMX" on affective commitment. However, lastly, the research did not consider other personal and situational factors -e.g., personality, organizational culture, or leadership approaches- that could influence the magnitude of the LMX-commitment relationship. The incorporation of these factors into future models would provide a better perspective of the dynamics at issue. Acceptance of these limitations offers clarity and points towards areas of improvement of future researches. Nevertheless, the study is significant because it supports the contribution of the high-quality leader-member relationships to the improvement of employee affective commitment, especially in the U.S. organizational setting.

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Table 1

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean
LMX1	177	1	5	3.90
LMX2	177	2	5	3.92
LMX3	177	2	5	3.82
LMX4	177	1	5	3.15
LMX5	177	1	5	3.51
LMX6	177	1	5	4.12
LMX7	177	1	5	3.86
AC1	177	1	5	3.65
AC2	177	2	5	3.42
AC3	177	2	5	3.93
AC4	177	1	5	3.51
AC5	177	1	5	2.84
AC6	177	1	5	3.71
Gender	177	1	2	1.14
Age	177	1	7	3.25
Experience	177	1	6	2.37
Valid N (listwise)	177			

Appendix

Table 2

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.703	13

Table 2 a

Item-Total Statistics

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
AC1	43.69	30.727	.331	.685
AC2	43.92	31.335	.286	.691
AC3	43.41	31.197	.380	.682
AC4	43.82	32.509	.093	.721
AC5	44.50	31.286	.142	.720
AC6	43.63	31.495	.254	.695
LMX1	43.44	28.532	.585	.653
LMX2	43.42	28.757	.566	.656
LMX3	43.52	29.217	.480	.665
LMX4	**44.19**	**33.690**	**-.006**	**.736**
LMX5	43.83	27.607	.627	.643
LMX6	43.21	29.363	.479	.666
LMX7	43.47	30.523	.319	.687

Pearson's Product Moment Correlations among Leader Member Exchange (LMX) and Affective Commitment (AC)

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Mean_LMX	3.8238	.72107	177
Mean_AC	3.8563	.60612	177

Table 3 a

Correlations

	Measures	Mean_LMX	Mean_AC
Mean_LMX	Pearson Correlation	1	.350**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	177	177
Mean_AC	Pearson Correlation	.350**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	177	177

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Factor Analysis (Principal Component, Varimax Rotation)

Table 4

Rotated Component Matrix[a]

Items	Component 1	Component 2
LMX1	**.775**	
LMX5	**.731**	
LMX2	**.730**	
LMX3	**.711**	
LMX6	**.697**	
LMX7	**.567**	
AC1	**.474**	
AC5		
AC4		**.725**
AC3		**.472**
AC2		**.401**
LMX4		
AC6		

Total Variance Explained = 38.238 % , KMO = .0.777 (Values above 0.60 are acceptable)