

THE MODERATING ROLE OF LENGTH OF INVOLVEMENT IN THE EFFECTS OF LEADER-MEMBER EXCHANGE ON JOB SATISFACTION

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Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study was to examine the moderating role of length of involvement in the relationships between leader-member exchange (LMX) factors: affect, loyalty, contribution, and professional respect, and job satisfaction among volunteers in non-profit sport organizations.

Theoretical background

Non-profit sport organizations heavily rely on volunteers for their operational success. Given the essential role of volunteers in non-profit sport organizations, it is important to understand what individual differences affect volunteers' job satisfaction in non-profit sport organizations. Although research suggests that LMX is one of the most important factors that affect volunteers' work attitudes and behaviors (Gerstner & Day, 1997), little research has paid attention to volunteers' LMX and job satisfaction and what personal characteristics may enhance the relationships between LMX and job satisfaction. Experienced workers tend to have relatively more stable psychological contracts (Rousseau, 2001). This indicates that the length of volunteer involvement could be explained through the organization's treatment toward volunteers, and the emotional support provided by the organization (Jiménez & Fuertes, 2005). However, some changes in a work situation, such as contract breaches, may have a more intense impact on less experienced workers (Rousseau, 2001). Therefore, quality LMX may have less influence on the job satisfaction of volunteers whose organizational involvement is longer, than on those with shorter organizational involvement. Thus, the study formulated the following research question: among the four relationships between LMX factors and job satisfaction, what relationships are moderated by length of involvement?

Method

A mail survey was conducted with a sample of 214 individuals (57.3 % male; 42.7 % female) who had voluntarily worked for 22 non-profit sport organizations in a Midwestern state in the United States. The researcher contacted the president of each non-profit sport organization to discover the availability of volunteers for participation in the study. The president or executive director of each organization then requested all volunteer members of the organization to participate in the survey and return completed surveys to the researcher using pre-paid postage envelopes. The survey questionnaire consisted of three parts—(a) LMX, (b) job satisfaction, and (c) demographic information. The four dimensions of LMX were measured using a 12-item multidimensional LMX scale (Liden & Maslyn, 1998): affect (3 items), loyalty (3 items), contribution (3 items), and professional respect (3 items). Job satisfaction (5 items) was assessed using the Job Diagnostic Survey by Hackman and Oldham (1980). All responses ranged from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (7), using a 7-point Likert-type scale. Demographic information questions included sex, age, marital status, and the number of years of work experience in the organization (i.e., length of involvement).

Results

Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficients supported the internal consistency of the items within the LMX and job satisfaction variables as they ranged from .77 to .96, meeting the minimum level (.70). Hierarchical multiple regression analyses were performed to examine the moderating effect of length of involvement on the relationships. The main effect variables were centered to reduce potential issues of multicollinearity by subtracting the mean from each main effect variable. Interaction terms were computed as a cross-product of the centered predictors. Predictor and moderator variables were entered first in the regression analysis where a criterion variable was job satisfaction, and then each interaction term was added in the second model. Among four regression analyses, only one analysis revealed a significant interaction effect: professional respect \times length of involvement. The first model including professional respect and length of involvement was significant ($R^2 = .34$, $F_{(2, 83)} = 17.43$, $p < .001$). The second model with an interaction was significant ($F_{(3, 82)} = 13.76$, $p < .001$) with a significant R-squared change ($R^2 = .34$). Therefore, the second model with main effect of professional respect ($\beta = .56$) and interaction of professional respect \times length of involvement ($\beta = -.21$) was considered acceptable. A simple slope analysis was further conducted to understand the direction of the interaction effect at 'shorter' and 'longer' of the length of involvement variable (Cohen, Cohen, West & Aiken, 2003). The results showed that the effect of professional respect on job satisfaction increased with short-term involvement.

Discussion

The high levels of professional respect for voluntary workers with longer involvement may be less predictive of job satisfaction than the same high levels of respect of voluntary workers with shorter involvement. Ng and Feldman (2009) suggest that more years of work experience tend to lower individuals' expectations of others. Therefore, volunteers with longer time involvement may have less expectation on others' professional knowledge and skills whereas volunteers with short-time involvement rather try to connect their high respect of their leaders' or members' profession to their job satisfaction.

References

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