

The Impact of Leader Member Exchange (LMX) Theory on Employee Turnover Intention: An empirical study of employees at the Ministry of Hajj and Umrah in Saudi Arabia

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Abstract

The purpose of this research paper is to investigate the impact of LMX on the turnover intention of employees. Research from both Western and Arabic contexts has shown that the quality of LMX relationships has a positive impact on turnover intentions i.e., the quality of LMX in an organization may encourage employees to stay longer with the current organization and reduce turnover intention. This research study used a quantitative methodology, distributing questionnaire surveys as the research tool to a sample of 297 participants. The participants were all employees at the Ministry of Hajj and Umrah in Saudi Arabia, or who worked for associated companies at the Hajj and Umrah information center. The quantitative survey data was then analyzed to find the relationship between levels of LMX and employee turnover intention in this context. The findings show that high quality LMX relationships were positively correlated with employee decisions to stay with the organization, and indicate that well-functioning LMX may play a part in reducing employee turnover intention at the Ministry of Hajj and Umrah and its connected organizations.

Keywords: leader member exchange theory LMX, leaders, members and turnover, turnover intention

1. Introduction

For many years, the study of the relationship between leaders and their followers has been an important area of research (Covella, et al., 2017), and leader-member exchange (LMX) theory was developed specifically to measure the quality of the relationship between leaders and members (followers/employees) (Nelson, 2013). This theory sheds light on the potential for LMX to develop quality teamwork and increase productivity in organizations. It emphasizes the initiation of an organizational culture of trust and good communication, and an enhanced understanding between leaders and followers that can lead to efficiency and innovation in the pursuit of new organizational projects. The importance of research based on LMX theory lies in capturing meaningful results and findings that may then be implemented practically to improve the relationship between leaders and members and promote better performance at work (Clarke & Mahadi, 2017).

It has long been known that in any organization, the relationship between leaders and followers potentially determines followers' decisions to leave and work for another company (Malik, et al., 2015). Our research seeks to examine this relationship between leaders and their followers from the perspective that it is the quality of an organization's LMX that affects the intentions of the employees to stay with that company or to leave (employee turnover intentions). Our study draws on LMX theory to analyze the role of quality in the leader-follower relationship and how it may potentially determine employee loyalty to the organization.

The main objective of this study to investigate the relationship between the level of LMX with turnover intentions of employees working in the Ministry of Hajj and Umrah in Kingdom of Saudi Arabia KSA. A survey questionnaire was distributed to ask a sample of employees at a governmental organization in Saudi Arabia for information about their experiences of LMX and their turnover intentions. The study participants were all employees of the Ministry of Hajj and Umrah, or their associated operating and cooperating companies at the Hajj and Umrah Information Center. The quantitative numeric data that was obtained was statistically analyzed to reveal and clarify the validity of the relationship between the main variables. In clarifying the relationship between LMX levels and employee turnover, the findings help to define the characteristics of good quality LMX that are conducive to employee

retention.

The significance of this study is that it identifies the intentions of employees working in the Ministry of Hajj and Umrah (and its associated stakeholder corporations) to stay or leave the organization as a consequence of the prevailing leadership philosophy. The study also focuses on how relationships between leaders and members can be improved, insofar as this plays a significant part in employee turnover and may enhance performance and other positive outcomes. It is intended that the findings will benefit the Ministry of Hajj and Umrah in creating a more effective LMX philosophy in order to retain the most skilled and talented employees. Focus on improved LMX may also raise the job satisfaction and motivation of employees, and add more value for society. It is important to note that the Ministry of Hajj and Umrah is of significant importance because its operations are not limited to religious affairs in Kingdom of Saudi Arabia but also impact the Hajj and Umrah operations that involve Muslims from all around the world. So, a dedicated and committed workforce with optimal LMX strategies would be a positive influence on Muslim society as a whole.

In the literature review that follows, we explore a number of perspectives of LMX and turnover intention in the published research that can later be seen to substantially support the findings of this paper.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) Theory

LMX has been viewed as the level of interpersonal exchange between leaders and their followers (Saadah and Rijanti, 2022). In addition, Sparr and Sonnentag (2008) emphasize the point that leader-member exchange (LMX) theory rests on the two-way relationship between leaders and their followers. It is basically a relationship-based approach to leadership and management that enhances the resource availability to both followers as well as leaders while protecting information (Kim, et al., 2010). A quality LMX relationship enables leaders and followers to share their knowledge, skills, and expertise with each other, resulting in skills improvement for leaders as well as employees (Joo, 2010). Moreover, employees feel more empowered, resulting in high levels of job satisfaction and reduction in employee turnover (Koçoğlu, et al., 2014).

Ozdevecioglu et al. (2015) state that LMX theory is about studying the relationship between leaders and their members and what effects it could have on the organization. Each leader, however, has their own personality and the way of dealing with their followers. Moreover, according to the literature, the behavior of leaders has the potential to either positively or negatively influence the behavior and attitudes of followers (Clarke and Mahadi, 2017).

The existing literature suggests that optimal LMX may have a positive impact on the turnover intentions of employees. This is partly because LMX enhances job satisfaction, which encourages them to stay longer with an organization. For example, the studies of Harris et al. (2009), Koçoğlu et al. (2014), and Volmer et al. (2011) all agree that LMX enhances follower job satisfaction. As a result, employees are happy to stay with the organization and are more motivated to add value for their employers. In other words, an effective LMX strategy could reduce the turnover intentions of employees in an organization.

Malik et al. (2015) studied the effect of LMX quality on employee turnover, job satisfaction, stress, motivation, and psychological empowerment. They recruited a sample of 1,500 employees from four different countries and found that high quality LMX had a positive impact on those aspects of employee experience. Interestingly, they found that high quality LMX relationships encouraged employees to stay with their organizations for longer because they became more responsible and effective in their job roles due to a heightened sense of psychological empowerment.

Valle et al. (2019) studied the effects of LMX on the relationship between abusive supervision and organizational defiance. They found that good LMX had moderating effects on the relationship of abusive supervision and organizational defiance, in addition to other benefits. The high quality of LMX relationships encouraged employees to engage in moral disengagement strategies with abusive leaders, and LMX also encouraged the employees to engage in defiant practices to avoid the negativity of abusive supervision. One important finding of this study, therefore, was that high quality LMX relationships may encourage employees to stay with their current employers while minimizing the impact of abusive leadership on employee job satisfaction.

Xu et al. (2019) used the resource theory of Foa and Foa (1974) to explore the role of followers in determining the level and quality of LMX relationships. In analyzing data from 230 respondents from China, this study found that followers' proactive behaviour to improve LMX relationships could be highly effective, and that follower-driven LMX relationships not only changed the behavior of leaders but also encouraged the employees themselves to engage more deeply with their employers. Employees would therefore tend to stay longer with their current

employers, highlighting the two-way nature of the relationship between LMX and turnover intentions.

Kong et al. (2019) explored the impact of LMX relationships, intrinsic motivation, and self-efficacy to drive implicit followership behavior in employees. They analyzed data from 267 follower–leader dyads from sixteen different Chinese enterprises, and found that although LMX did not improve job satisfaction, it did encourage employees to be more creative and productive in their jobs.

The quality of LMX improves not only employees' outcomes such as job performance, creativity, and organizational behavior citizenship but also, simultaneously reducing the employees' negative work behaviors. (Shih and Nguyen, 2023) In addition, LMX can have a positive influence on the turnover intentions of employees. For example, Harris et al. (2014) used a group engagement model to hypothesize that LMX (at both individual and group level) influences organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) and employee turnover intentions. Their study collected data from 223 leaders and followers, and found that high quality LMX reduced turnover intentions and encouraged OCB behavior. This happened at all levels of LMX i.e., individual and group. Also, Morrow et al. (2005) analyzed the impact of LMX on voluntary turnover of employees. The participants were 207 truck drivers, who were surveyed over the phone while on the road doing their jobs. Findings showed that LMX played a role in their turnover intentions. Mardanov et al. (2008) tested their hypotheses using an LMX scale as well as the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ), and found that seven out of the twelve LMX measures explained 98% of significant variance and six out of twenty MSQ measures explained 71%–79% of the variance and were significant and positive. This indicated that LMX is an important variable that directly impacts the turnover intentions of employees.

2.2 Turnover Intentions

Turnover intention is defined as the conscious willingness of the employee to leave the organization they work for (Kim, et al., 2010). According to Tolksdorf et al., (2022) turnover intention as a multi-stage process beginning with psychological reactions to unfavorable aspects of the current job and possibly culminating in the choice to leave. When an employee decides to leave their job, turnover behavior may be the inevitable result. However, there are many reasons why employees make conscious decisions to leave, such as low salary, unpleasant work environment, dissatisfaction with the position they are in, or a bad relationship with the leader (Harris, et al., 2009). Retaining staff is one of the main challenges faced by human resources departments around the world because labor turnover is a serious issue for businesses because it results in costs and productivity loss (Charles-Leija et al., 2023).

Turnover intentions can be voluntary or involuntary (Joo, 2010). In voluntary turnover intentions, employees decide to leave the organization of their own accord. This happens, for example, when an employee perceives that another job opportunity offers advantages over their current role. This can involve a variety of factors such as a salary increase, more prestigious position, travel expenses, help with accommodation etc. (Valle, et al., 2019). One of the most important points that must be noted here is that good LMX can reduce the strength of employees' voluntary intentions to leave, as they tend to perceive their current job as valuable, even if they are offered better salaries, positions, and accommodation by potential opportunities (Covella, et al., 2017; Harris, et al., 2014; Kim, et al., 2010).

On the other hand, turnover intentions can be involuntary as well. Organizations can decide to remove workers from their current position, either through demotion or temporary suspension, in which case those employees may develop the intention to leave and find a job elsewhere (Clarke & Mahadi, 2017). Organizations may also decide to downsize, and employees who suspect or experience downsizing may leave to avoid the potential disruption of redundancy. Interestingly, involuntary turnover intentions can be avoided if the quality of LMX is high, because if employees feel more connected to leaders, they may be more likely to behave proactively to persuade the organization to keep them on (Kong, et al., 2019; Xu, et al., 2019).

2.3 LMX and Turnover Intentions in Middle Eastern Contexts

There are a number of research studies that have been conducted in Middle Eastern, Arabic contexts which specifically examine the role of the LMX relationship in employee turnover intentions. In Saudi Arabia, for example, Alsughayir (2017) analyzed the relationship between LMX and innovative work behavior (IWB) in employees working in the hospitality industry in Riyadh. Findings showed that the quality of LMX improved over time as leaders and followers got to know each other better in their work relationships. In addition, it was found that better quality LMX may lead to improvements in the IWB of employees as they become more satisfied with their jobs and exchange more ideas with their leaders. Improved and enhanced IWB also encouraged employees to stay longer with their hospitality organizations.

In another piece of Saudi research, Alshamrani (2017) did not study the impact of LMX on employee turnover

directly, but rather assessed the relationships between LMX, job satisfaction, and affective commitment, which are directly related to turnover intentions in the segregated workplace environments of KSA. The segregated work environment here refers to working conditions where men and women work in separate spaces and have limited interactions with each other. Alshamrani recruited 115 male and 106 female teachers to take part in an online survey and found that the quality of LMX had the potential to improve employee job satisfaction and affective commitment, even in segregated work environments. In considering the impact of LMX on other variables, however, they concluded that inter-gender relationships are important. Increased affective commitment was also found to encourage employees to stay longer with the organizations, as discussed by Harris, Li, and Kirkman (2014).

A study by Elanain (2013) explored LMX and its impact on subordinates in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), specifically to compare findings with those from Western contexts. The researcher believed that Western studies could not be generalized to Arabian contexts due to gender segregation in the workplace, and found that LMX had a negative relationship with turnover intentions of employees even in Arab culture. This indicates that the quality of LMX may improve and enhance job satisfaction and encourage employees to stay longer with their current employers.

In a second study, Elanain (2014) explicitly explored the relationship between LMX and turnover intentions of employees. The researcher collected survey questionnaire data from 241 employees working in fifteen different service and industrial product organizations operating in Dubai. It was found that quality of LMX dramatically improved the job satisfaction and organizational commitment of employees, and at the same time it reduced their intentions to move to another organization. Those employees who were positively influenced by high quality LMX worked proactively towards adding value to the organization in order to increase the likelihood they would be kept on.

The above discussion can be summarized thus. Employee performance is strongly related to what can be called employee 'spirit', whether in terms of employee relationship to the workplace environment or to the organization itself. One of the most important factors that could significantly affect employee spirit is the direct working relationship with the line manager. In some cases, voluntary employee turnover is accelerated precisely because of poor relationships with managers. The implementation of LMX theory with the express intention of improving the quality of LMX may lower employee intentions to leave and could help significantly in understanding the importance of leader behaviour with regard to its effect on employee commitment and spirit, as well as in understanding how leaders can modify their behaviour for better outcomes. Also, as Elanain (2013) points out, Arabic culture is very different to the Western context, and it is therefore worth including contextual factors as variables in this research.

2.4 Conceptual Framework

The model of this research is shown below in Figure 1.

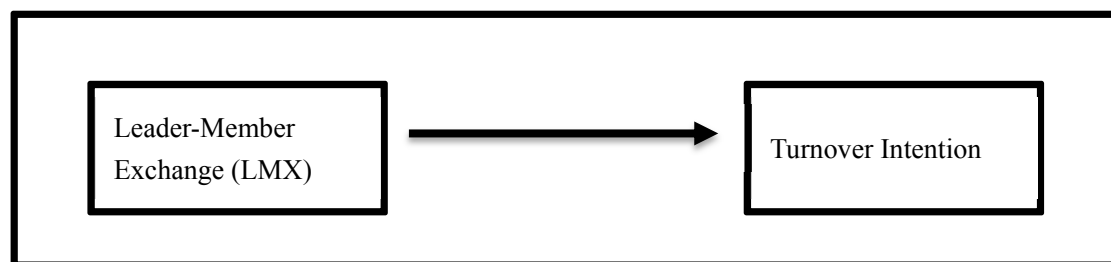


Figure 1. Research model

The appropriate set of hypotheses for this are,

- 1) H_0 (null hypothesis)

There is no relationship between the current level of LMX and employee intention to leave their job.

- 2) H_1 (alternative hypothesis)

There is a negative relationship between LMX and employee intention to leave their job

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

The general purpose of this research is to test the hypothesis that LMX has an effect on employee turnover intentions. For this, a research design was needed that would enable the collection of quantitative data for the deductive analysis of the relationship between the two variables, while ensuring minimum bias and high accuracy of the data. The questionnaire survey was chosen as the research design that was best suited to measuring the effect of LMX on employee turnover intention, with the rationale that surveys yield quantitative and objective data.

3.2 Research Sample

The study participants were recruited from employees working at or associated with the Ministry of Hajj and Umrah in KSA and abroad. Pilgrims from all over the world visit KSA to perform Hajj and Umrah and the Ministry has an expanded global network. In order to narrow down a specific population, the researchers selected a sample of 298 employees working either at the Ministry of Hajj and Umrah, or their associated organizations, in KSA only. The participants were limited to Saudi nationals because Saudis are subject to permanent employment regulations, and this factor would ensure higher levels of data credibility, since non-national employees hold a non-permanent work relationship with Saudi companies and tend to leave for reasons that are different, for example, residency and work permit issues.

3.3 Data Collection

There were different ways in which data could be collected through questionnaire surveys. It is important to note that, apart from personal interaction, there are different ways in which questionnaire surveys could be conducted. The different ways are: telephonic questionnaire surveys, mail questionnaire surveys, in-house questionnaire surveys, and online questionnaire surveys (Zikmund, 2010). The most convenient form of questionnaire surveys for both the researchers and respondents are online questionnaire surveys because they could be completed at the convenience of both the parties. Also, the response rate of questionnaire surveys is usually high due to their flexibility and anonymity (Veal, 2005). So, this study selected online questionnaire surveys. The survey has been conducted via Google Forms and was distributed online for the sample of employees. It was a closed-ended survey based on questions including different variations of categorical and interval/ratio questions to opt for. Google forms were used because they are the most widely used online survey tool with lower costs. Also, majority of the population is aware of the platform of Google Forms and its interface is more user friendly than other online survey tools (Zikmund, 2010). All the questions were mandatory and take approximately 12 minutes in average to answer the survey which includes 19 questions.

3.4 Measures

For this survey, LMX questionnaire by Graen and Uhl-Bien (1995) and combined with turnover intentions questionnaire by Mobley, et al. (1978). These two questionnaires were used to analyze the relationship between the level of LMX and employees' turnover intentions.

LMX Questionnaire: This part has [7] items, where it measures the level of the LMX for the employees. It is a modified version of Graen and Uhl-Bien (1995)

Intention for Turnover: This part contains [6] items, where are placed in order to find the intention for the employee to turnover. It is a modified version of Mobley, et al. (1978).

The two questionnaires were used because they are the most widely used, valid, and accurate questionnaire surveys for measuring the level of LMX and turnover intentions (Kong, et al., 2019).

3.5 Data Analysis

The data was analyzed using SPSS software. Descriptive and inferential statistics were collected to further clarify the results. The descriptive statistics provided general information regarding the data, and a correlation analysis was used to test the hypothesis.

4. Results

4.1 Biographical Data of Research Sample

The charts in the figures below represent the most important demographic data. From these we can be sure that the our sample was comprehensive and included only the intended target population.

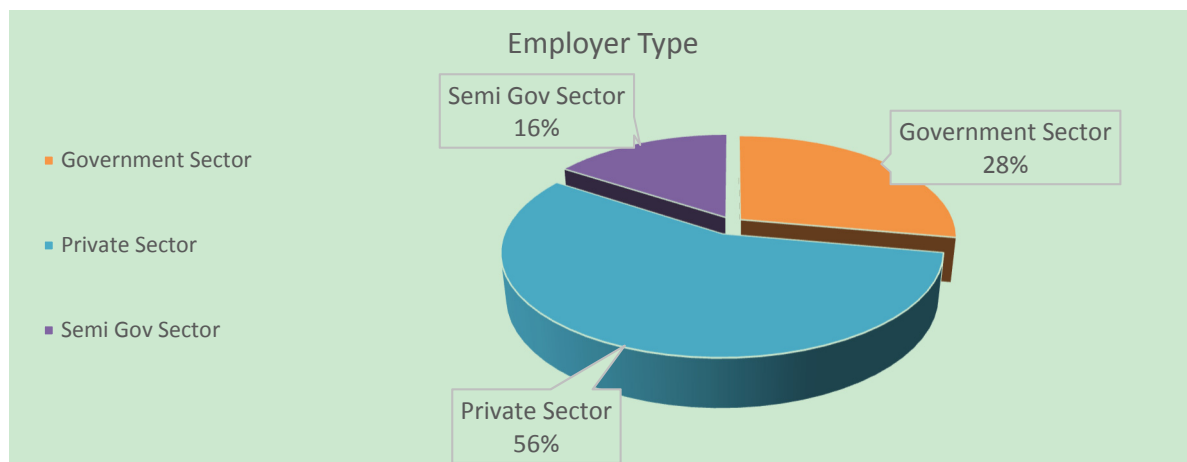


Figure 2. Participants employer type

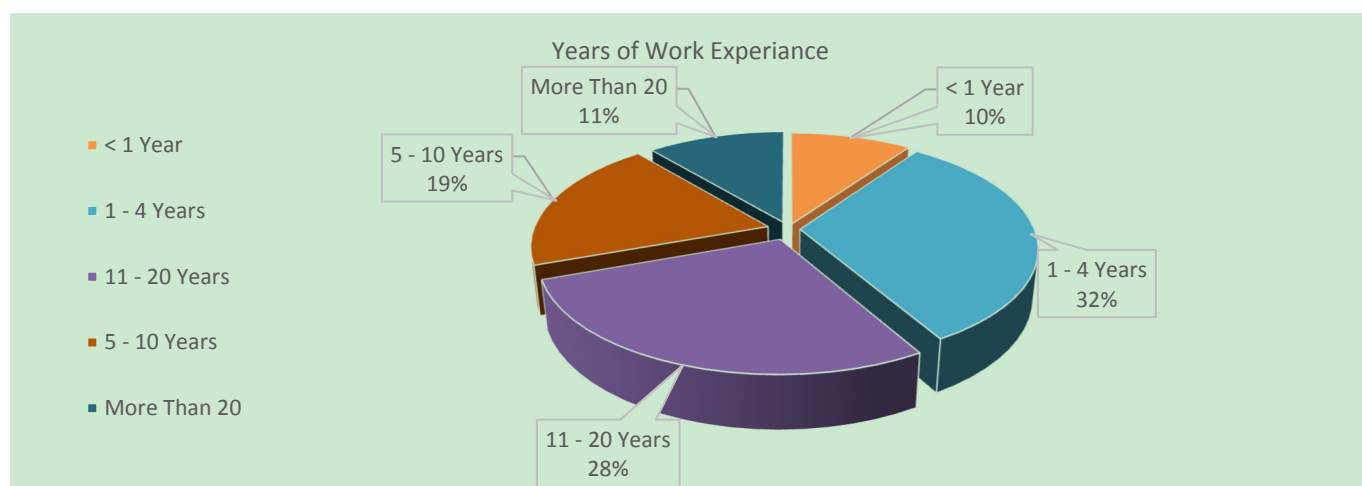


Figure 3. Participants years of experience

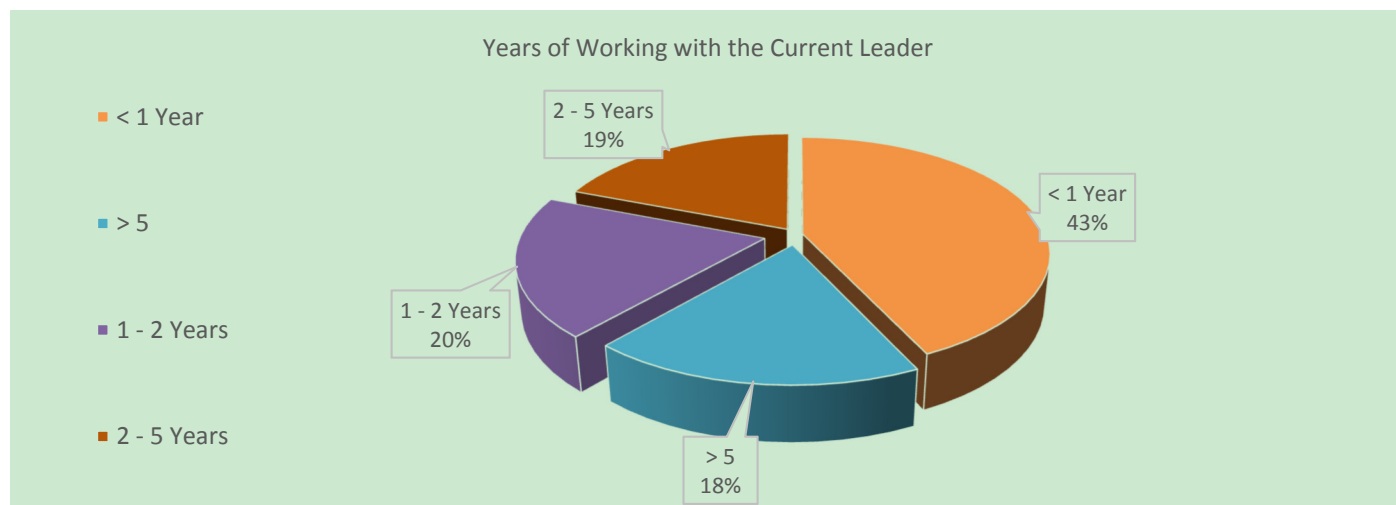


Figure 4. Number of working years with the current leader

4.2 Reliability Test

The reliability test was performed once for each scale. Here, we have two scales: first, the questions pertaining to LMX level and second, the questions designed to elicit information on employees' intentions to leave or stay at the organization.

Table 2. Reliability of LMX questions

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.903	.903	7

Cronbach's Alpha should be ≥ 0.5 if the fewer than ten questions are to be analyzed. If there are more than ten questions, then Cronbach's Alpha should be ≥ 0.7 . As table 2 shows, it is 0.903, which is considered reliable.

Table 3. Reliability of intention-to-leave questions.

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.680	.677	6

Cronbach's Alpha should be ≥ 0.5 if the questions that being analyzed are fewer than ten. If more than ten, it needs to be ≥ 0.7 . As table 3 shows, it is 0.680, which is considered reliable.

4.3 LMX Questionnaire Analysis

New variables were created to elicit the overall LMX level experienced by each participant by taking the mean value (average) of all the LMX questions:

- Do you know where you stand with your leader and do you usually know how satisfied your leader is with what you do?
- How well does your leader understand your job problems and needs?
- How well does your leader recognize your potential?
- Regardless of how much formal authority your leader has built into his or her position, what are the chances that your leader would use his or her power to help you solve problems in your work?
- Again, regardless of the amount of formal authority your leader has, what are the chances that he or she would bail you out at his or her expense?
- I have enough confidence in my leader that I would defend and justify his or her decision if he or she were not present to do so.
- How would you characterize your working relationship with your leader?

4.3.1 LMX Level Frequencies

Table 4. LMX frequencies

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 1.00	2	.7	.7	.7
1.14	2	.7	.7	1.3
1.29	3	1.0	1.0	2.3
1.43	2	.7	.7	3.0
1.57	2	.7	.7	3.7
1.71	6	2.0	2.0	5.7
1.86	5	1.7	1.7	7.4
2.00	2	.7	.7	8.1
2.14	8	2.7	2.7	10.7
2.29	6	2.0	2.0	12.8
2.43	11	3.7	3.7	16.4
2.57	8	2.7	2.7	19.1
2.71	12	4.0	4.0	23.2
2.86	11	3.7	3.7	26.8
3.00	15	5.0	5.0	31.9
3.14	14	4.7	4.7	36.6
3.29	13	4.4	4.4	40.9
3.43	17	5.7	5.7	46.6
3.57	17	5.7	5.7	52.3
3.71	14	4.7	4.7	57.0
3.86	14	4.7	4.7	61.7
4.00	28	9.4	9.4	71.1
4.14	15	5.0	5.0	76.2
4.29	10	3.4	3.4	79.5
4.43	16	5.4	5.4	84.9
4.57	19	6.4	6.4	91.3
4.71	14	4.7	4.7	96.0
4.86	8	2.7	2.7	98.7
5.00	4	1.3	1.3	100.0
Total	298	100.0	100.0	

- 4.00 was the most frequent result, appearing 28 times.
- 4.57 was the second frequent result, appearing 19 times.
- 1.00 was the lowest value, appearing 2 times.
- 5.00 was the highest value, appearing 4 times.

4.3.2 Descriptive statistics

Table 5. LMX descriptive statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
LMX_LEVEL	298	1.00	5.00	3.4770	.92563
Valid N (listwise)	298				

- The overall mean of LMX level variable for the sample is 3.477.

4.3.3 Distribution of LMX Level

(Normal Distribution)

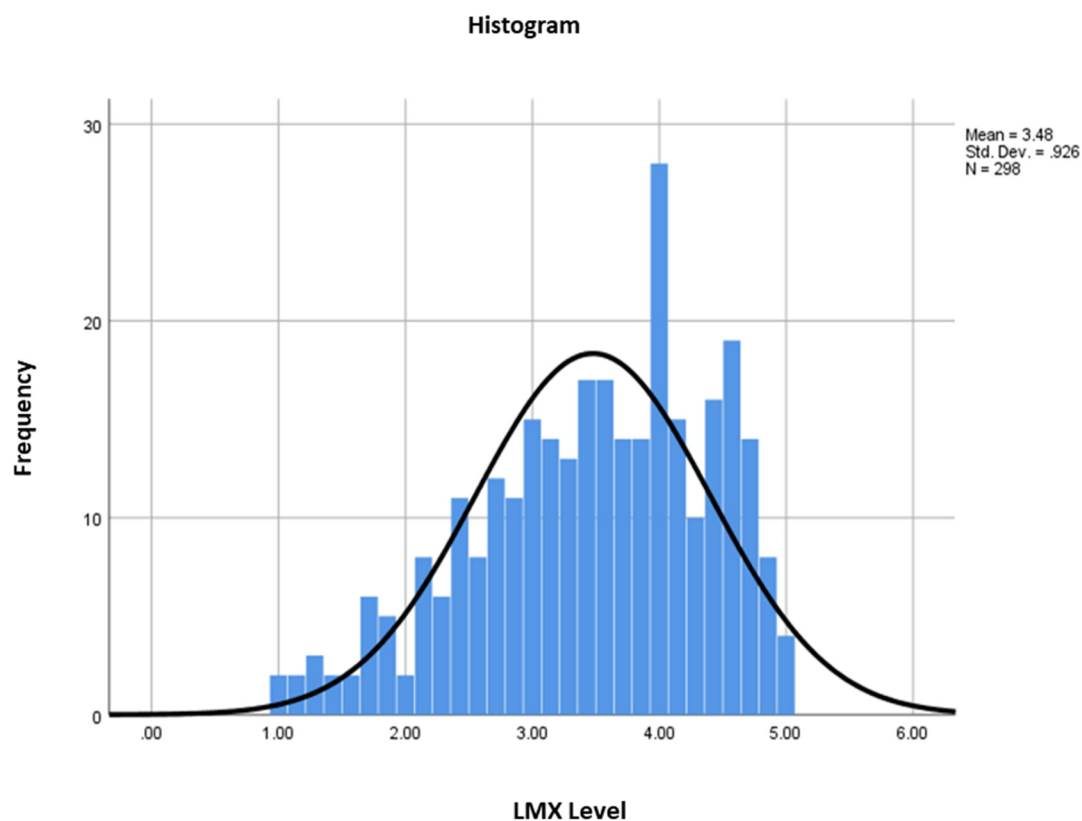
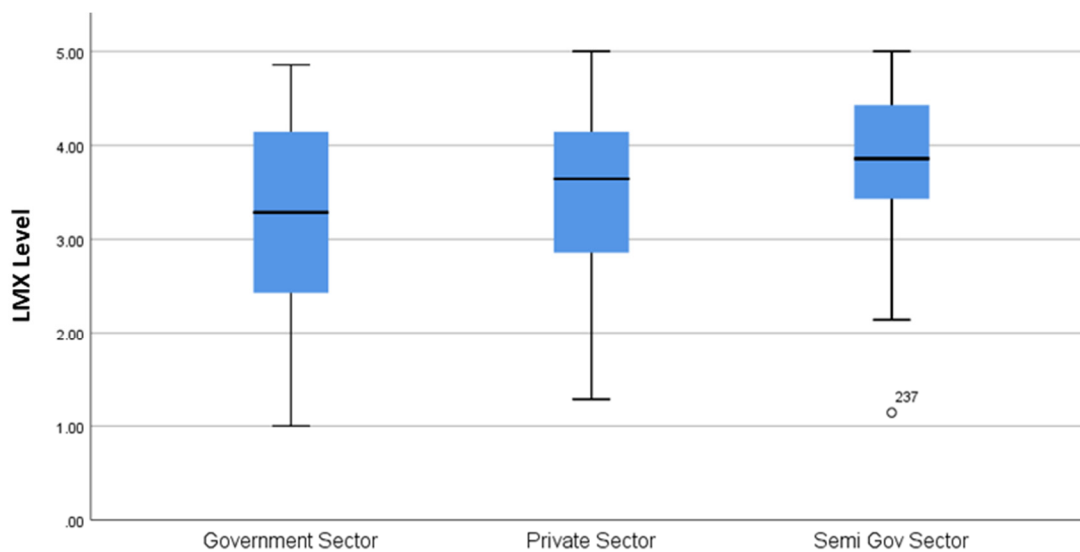


Figure 5. Distribution of LMX level



What is the type of your employer ?

Figure 6. Type of employer with LMX level

If we analyze LMX level based on employer type, as shown in the boxplots above, we notice the following. First, the semi-government sector has the highest range, with only one outlier. Second, the government sector has the largest range of levels and the lowest mean. Third, both the private and government sectors show the same maximum.

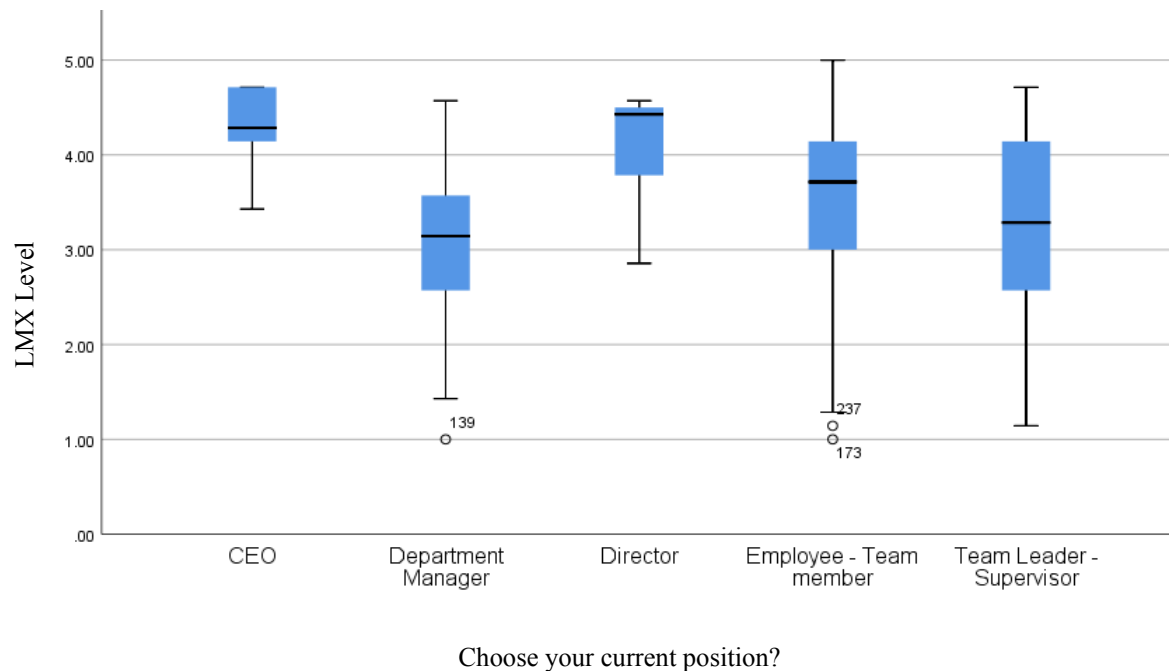


Figure 7. Participants position with LMX level

Based on the above boxplot, after ignoring the outliers we can see the following. The directors and CEOs have the highest LMX level. Surprisingly, department managers and team leaders scored the lowest averages of LMX level. Team members are in the middle scores.

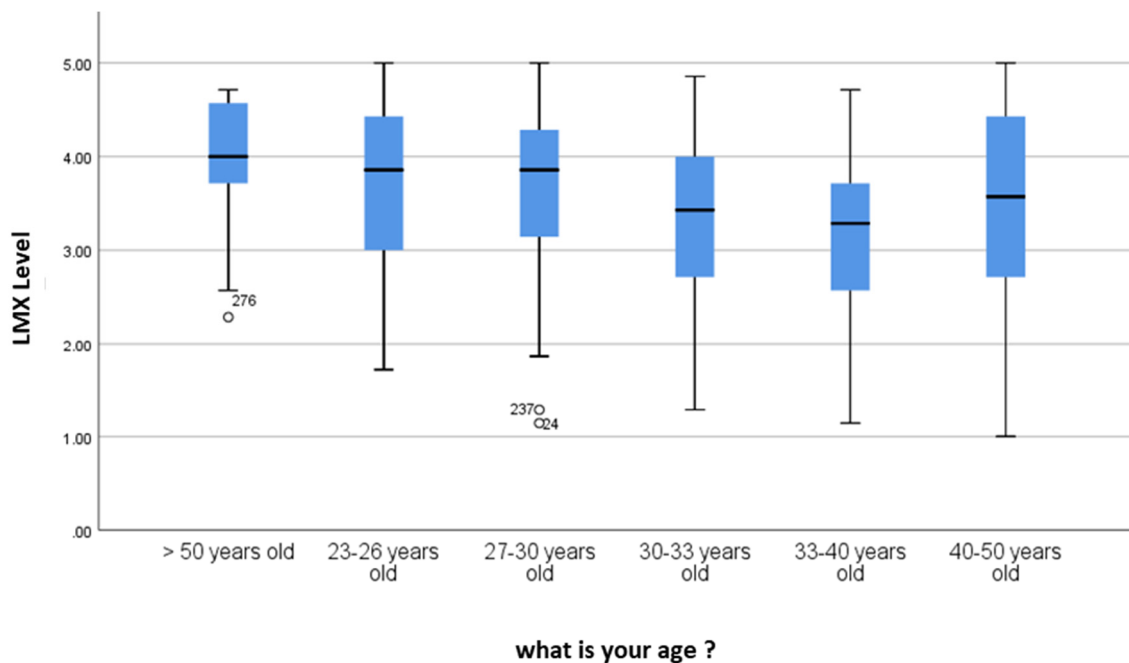


Figure 8. Participants age with LMX level

Based on age category, we can see that the lowest LMX level is found in the 30–40 age bracket.

4.3.4 Applying the Likert Scale to the LMX Questionnaire

According to the Likert scale, the LMX level of our sample fits into the category of ‘good’ because the overall mean is 3.477.

Table 6. Likert scale applied to LMX level

<i>Scale</i>	<i>Interval</i>	<i>Difference</i>	<i>Description</i>
1	1 - 1.80	0.80	Very poor
2	1.80 - 2.60	0.80	poor
3	2.60 - 3.40	0.80	Fair
4	3.40 - 4.20	0.80	Good
5	4.20 - 5	0.80	Very Good

4.4 Intention to Turnover Questionnaire Analysis

New variables were created to represent the overall intention to leave, or turnover, of each participant by taking the mean value (average) of all the LMX questions:

- How often do you dream about getting another job that will better suit your personal needs?
- How often are you frustrated when not given the opportunity at work to achieve your personal work-related goals?
- How often have you considered leaving your job?
- How likely are you to accept another job at the same compensation level should it be offered to you?
- To what extent is your current job satisfying your personal needs?
- How often do you look forward to another day at work?

4.4.1 Intention-to-leave Frequency

Table 7. Intention-to-leave frequency

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 1.17	1	.3	.3	.3
1.33	10	3.4	3.4	3.7
1.50	3	1.0	1.0	4.7
1.67	16	5.4	5.4	10.1
1.83	15	5.0	5.0	15.1
2.00	14	4.7	4.7	19.8
2.17	19	6.4	6.4	26.2
2.33	14	4.7	4.7	30.9
2.50	33	11.1	11.1	41.9
2.67	27	9.1	9.1	51.0
2.83	32	10.7	10.7	61.7
3.00	22	7.4	7.4	69.1
3.17	23	7.7	7.7	76.8
3.33	12	4.0	4.0	80.9
3.50	17	5.7	5.7	86.6

3.67	6	2.0	2.0	88.6
3.83	11	3.7	3.7	92.3
4.00	6	2.0	2.0	94.3
4.17	10	3.4	3.4	97.7
4.33	2	.7	.7	98.3
4.50	2	.7	.7	99.0
4.67	3	1.0	1.0	100.0
Total	298	100.0	100.0	

As table 7 illustrates, 2.50 was the most frequent result, appearing 33 times, while 2.83 was the second most frequent result, appearing 32 times. The lowest value was 1.17, which appeared only once, whereas 4.67 was the highest value, appearing 3 times.

4.4.2. Descriptive Statistics

Table 8. Descriptive statistics for intention-to-leave

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Intention_to_leave	298	1.17	4.67	2.7517	.74864
Valid N (listwise)	298				

The overall mean of the intention-to-leave variable for the sample is 2.7517.

4.4.3 Distribution of Intention-to-Leave

(Normal Distribution)

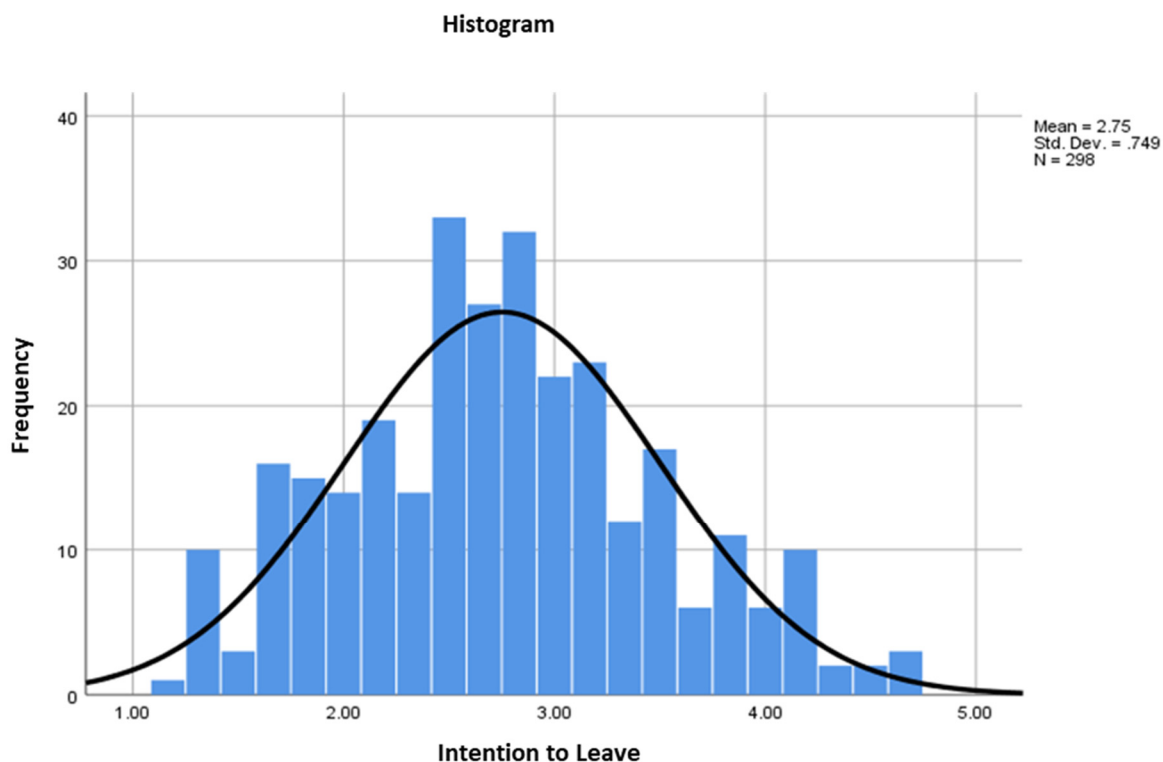


Figure 9. Distribution of intention-to-leave

As figure 9 shows, the intention-to-leave variable did not show any changes that were due to any of the demographic attributes of the participants. We can consider this as an important insight in our study because it motivates us to dig deeper in our search for the relationship between LMX Level and the intention to leave. None of the other data variables had any observable special relationship with the intention-to-leave variable. The boxplots below illustrate that no effect or special insight was observed.

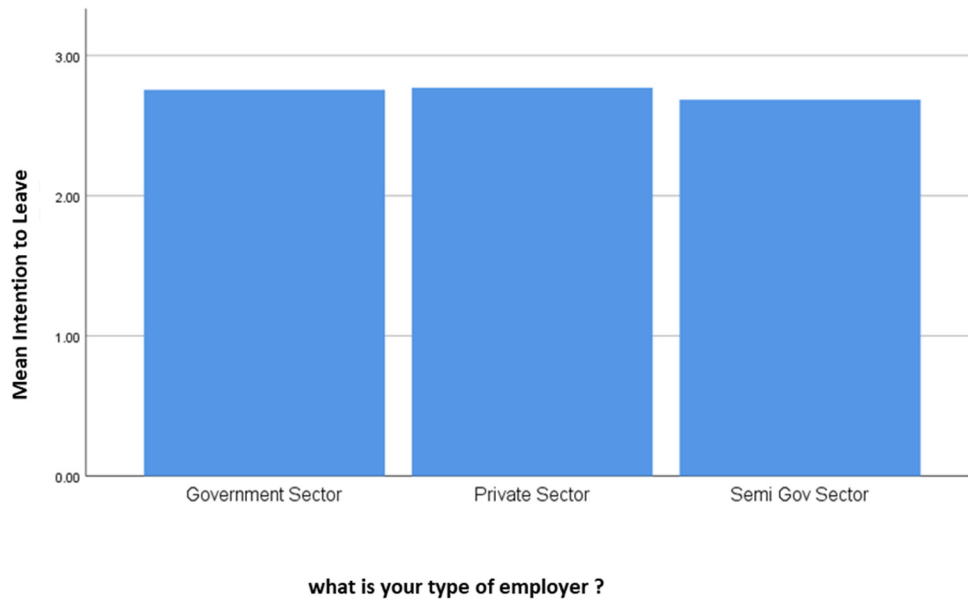


Figure 10. Type of employer with intention to leave level

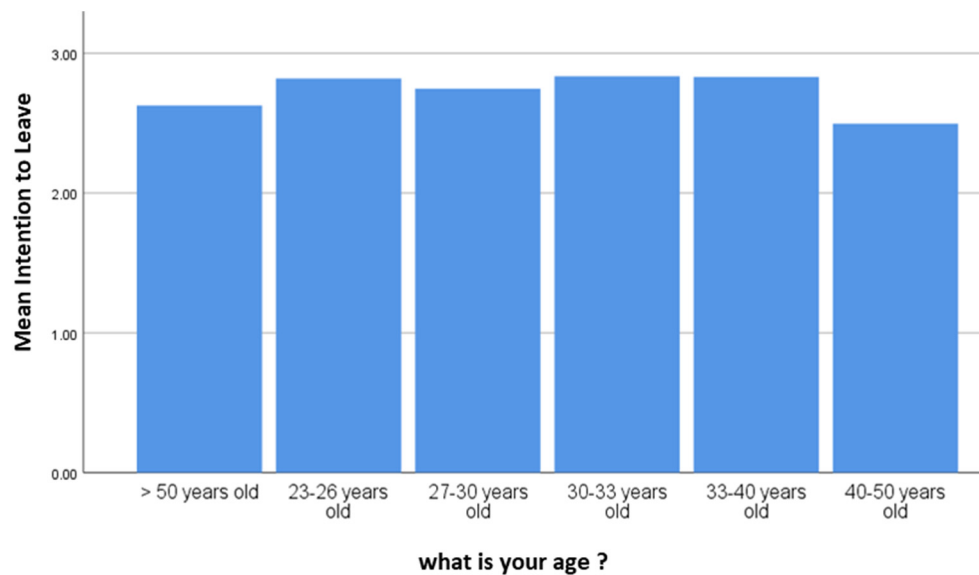


Figure 11. Participants age with intention to leave

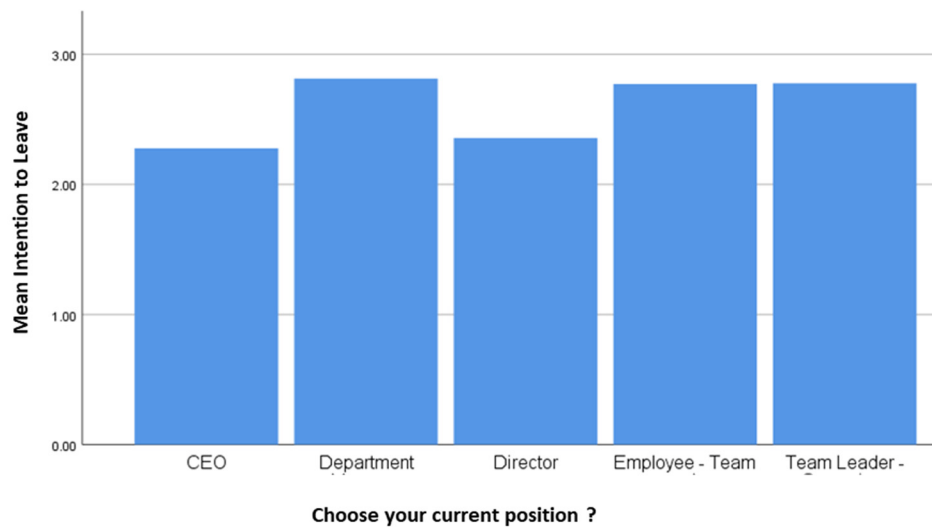


Figure 12. Participants positions with intention to leave level

As shown above its clear that directors and CEOs showed a lower mean regarding the intention to leave. But we must consider that the sample contained only sixteen directors or CEOs, which represents only 5.37% of the whole sample. This is why this trend is not especially noticeable.

Table 9. Likert scale to LMX

<i>Scale</i>	<i>Interval</i>	<i>Difference</i>	<i>Description</i>
<u>1</u>	1 - 1.80	0.80	Very poor
<u>2</u>	<u>1.80 - 2.60</u>	<u>0.80</u>	<u>poor</u>
<u>3</u>	<u>2.60 - 3.40</u>	<u>0.80</u>	<u>Fair</u>
<u>4</u>	<u>3.40 - 4.20</u>	<u>0.80</u>	<u>Good</u>
<u>5</u>	<u>4.20 - 5</u>	<u>0.80</u>	<u>Very Good</u>

According to the Likert scale, LMX Level of our sample fits into the 'fair' level because the overall mean = 2.751

4.5 Relationship between LMX and Intention to Leave

We calculated the p-value (probability) and visualized the relationship (if existing) using Pearson's correlation coefficient technique:

The p-value may take a value between 0 and 1:

0.1 = 10% sig. level => weak evidence against H_0

0.05 = 5% sig. level => strong evidence against H_0

0.01 = 1% sig. level => very strong evidence against H_0

4.5.1 Correlation between LMX and intention to leave

Table 10. Correlation

		Intention_to_leave	LMX_LEVEL
Intention_to_leave	Pearson Correlation	1	-.513**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	298	298
LMX_LEVEL	Pearson Correlation	-.513**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	298	298

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

$p = 0.000$

$n = 298$

$r = -0.513$

$p = 0.000 < 0.01$ is rejected at 1% sig level so we conclude that there is a very strong relationship between the two values.

It is negative because (r) is a minus value. It means that whenever the LMX level drops, the intention to leave will be high.

The scatter plot below illustrates this relationship.

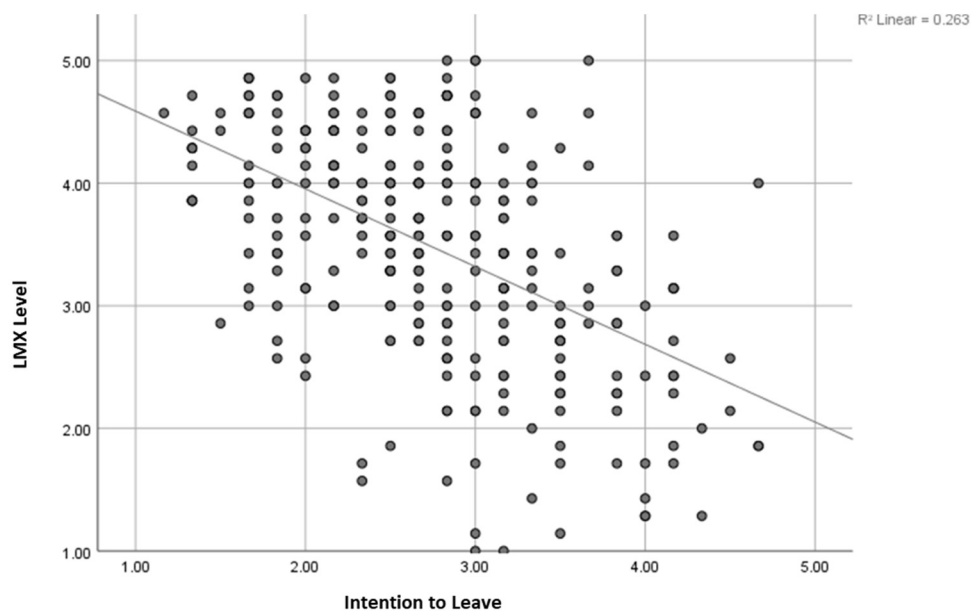


Figure 13. The relationship between LMX & intention to leave

The trend line makes it clearer that the relationship is very strongly negative.

5. Discussion

It is important to note that these findings confirm research discussed in the literature review. For example, the findings confirm those of Malik et al. (2015) who found that the quality of LMX positively influenced job satisfaction, stress, motivation, and psychological empowerment, and lowered turnover intention. Our analysis likewise shows that high quality LMX relationships encouraged employees to stay with the Ministry of Hajj and Umrah and its associated organizations.

Our study findings also confirmed those of Harris et al. (2009) who found that LMX at both individual and group level increased organizational citizenship behavior as well as turnover intentions. Our analysis also looks at individual and group level LMX, but in the context of Saudi Arabia rather than in a Western culture. We conclude

that here, too, the higher the quality of LMX, the greater the likelihood of lower turnover intentions in employees. Our study also brought out the interesting detail that employees at the ministry perceived higher LMX levels in with the directors and CEOs of the organization, but significantly lower levels from their departmental managers and team leaders. Team members were given scores that were more at middle levels of LMX. Also, the intention-to-leave variable did not appear to be influenced by the demographics of the participants.

This can be considered an important insight because it provides future directions for deeper research into the relationship between LMX level and the intention to leave, as none of the other variables we identified appeared to affect it.

In terms of the correlation analysis, an important finding was the statistically significant negative relationship between level of LMX and turnover intentions; i.e., the higher the quality of LMX, the less the employees are inclined to leave the company. This relationship could further be explored by stating and investigating a causal hypothesis analyzing the impact of the level of LMX and employee turnover intentions.

As a study specifically located in the Middle-Eastern/Arabic context, this study has confirmed the findings of Elanain (2014), who was interested in comparing LMX research from Western cultures with the Arabic culture. Our study findings reveal that quality of LMX is positively correlated with job satisfaction, and that this results in lowered intentions to shift or move to another organization. Employees who reported their experiences of high quality LMX intended to stay longer in their jobs at organizations in the Ministry of Hajj and Umrah.

6. Conclusion

The main purpose of this research paper was to investigate whether or not the quality of LMX in a government organization (and its associated companies) affected the turnover intentions of employees. The study was carried out in a specifically Saudi Arabian context in order to compare the findings with those from Western cultures, as well as to confirm existing findings from other Arabic contexts. Our quantitative analysis of survey data from almost 300 employees clearly demonstrates that the higher the quality of LMX, the lower the employees' intentions to leave the company.

6.1 Research Contributions and Future Research Directions

Over the years, a gap was created in the literature due to the inability of LMX theory to be generalized to cultural and country contexts other than the Western. In terms of theoretical contribution, then, the fact that this study was conducted in Saudi Arabia means its findings can be compared and connected with previous LMX studies that have mostly been conducted in Western contexts. Organizational employment and workplace norms in Western cultures are significantly different to those in Arab and Muslim societies, and therefore it may be surmised that differences may exist between them in the area of leader-member exchange and its effects. This study therefore contributes towards filling this gap in the theoretical knowledge by analyzing the relationship between LMX levels and turnover intentions in the context of the Ministry of Hajj and Umrah in KSA.

The findings of this study in general confirm those put forward in research from both Western and Middle Eastern contexts. In doing so, we can now suggest directions for future research, for example, analyzing the causal relationship between LMX and turnover intention in this same context. In other words, while the current study analyzes the correlation between LMX and turnover intentions, a further step would be to ascertain exactly how LMX directly affects turnover intention.

As far as practical contribution is concerned, after reflecting on the findings of this study, industry practitioners could usefully find innovative ways to improve existing LMX relationships that would yield positive outcomes for all the stakeholders of the industry. For example, employee job satisfaction and retention levels can be raised by working on improving the quality of LMX. Greater focus on successful LMX on the sides of both leaders and employees has the potential to boost productivity and efficiency due to reduced turnover, since ongoing projects will be more efficient without a constantly changing workforce, and the time and effort needed to train new employees. As a result, a better service quality could be offered to the Muslim community all around the world that would not only enhance the efficiency of Hajj and Umrah operations but also improve the satisfaction and retention of all employees as well as stakeholders. As discussed earlier, Ministry of Hajj and Umrah is of significant importance because its operations are not limited to religious affairs in KSA but involve Muslims from all around the world. So, a dedicated and committed workforce with right leader-member exchange strategies would make a positive impact on the whole Muslim community.

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