



The Role of Employee Engagement in the Effect of Leader-member Exchange on Organizational Commitment: a Study From Indonesia

Wirawan Samahita Wirotama

ABSTRACT

Purpose – This paper aims to explore the effect of leader-member exchange (LMX) on organizational commitment with employee engagement as a mediator in companies in Indonesia.

Design/methodology/approach – This study used a sample of 170 employees in Indonesia and analyzed the data using partial least square-structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM).

Findings – The findings showed that LMX has a positive and significant direct effect on organizational commitment and employee engagement. Employee engagement also has a positive and significant direct effect on organizational commitment. Furthermore, employee engagement partially mediates the effect of LMX on organizational commitment.

Limitations – First, the sample size is small, and the sample characteristics are skewed to one of the subcategories. Second, this study only employs quantitative methods to describe how LMX influences organizational commitment via employee engagement. Third, this study considers one of the elements that can influence the effect of LMX on organizational commitment, namely employee engagement.

Practical implications – Leaders play a crucial role in shaping employee engagement and commitment to the organization. Therefore, leaders should value employees' contributions to the organization and provide their employees with a supportive environment and mentoring. Moreover, this study will help organizations in designing their employee experience program.

Originality/value – This study contributes to the body of knowledge by exploring how LMX, organizational commitment, and employee engagement are related in the Indonesian context and examining the mediating role of employee engagement on the effect of LMX on organizational commitment.

KEY WORDS

Leader-member exchange, Employee engagement, Organizational commitment, Social exchange theory

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CONTACT INFORMATION:

Wirawan, Samahita Wirotama, Jakarta, Indonesia, tel.: +6285 100 922 997, e-mail: wirawan@samahita.co.id

1 INTRODUCTION

Employees are essential resources for the running of an organization. Employees support the organization in achieving its objectives (Norddin et al., 2015). Moreover, employees determine the organization's success and sustainability in a highly competitive environment (Naziatul et al., 2020). Therefore, it is essential for companies to retain their employees. Organizational commitment is a factor that influences companies' efforts to retain their employees.

Organizational commitment is one of the most significant factors relating to the existence of employees within an organization and reflects the bond between employees and the organization (Lambert & Hogan, 2009). Organizational commitment enables organizations to benefit from their workforce (Imamoglu et al., 2019), which can enhance employee satisfaction and productivity (Chiu et al., 2019; Qureshi et al., 2019; Sungu et al., 2019). These things are essential for improving firm performance, the company's ability to be more competitive than its competitors, and the sustainability of the business (Jermsittiparsert, 2020; Kim & Brymer, 2011). As a result, organizational commitment is one of the most critical factors the business must consider to ensure its long-term viability.

In social exchange theory (SET), a social exchange happens when a person (initiator) behaves in a way that benefits others but does not place specific obligations on others. However, according to the norm of reciprocity, the recipient must respond in a way that also benefits the initiator (Casimir et al., 2014). Based on this principle, employees will show high organizational commitment if the organization provides a good and supportive work environment (Liu & Deng, 2011). Furthermore, leaders that support their followers and have positive attitudes towards them make their followers work more effectively and with positive attitudes (Harden et al., 2018). The quality of the reciprocal relationship between leaders and followers is related to the leader-member exchange (LMX).

Theoretically, LMX has a direct effect on organizational commitment. According to Lee (2005), in high-quality social exchange, followers may sense a commitment to the organization since they have developed an attachment to their leader and other organizational members. In addition, follower commitment can be their way of showing gratitude or obligation for what their leader has done for them. Therefore, the quality of the leader's relationship with his followers will determine the level of followers' commitment to the organization.

Previous empirical studies have not shown conclusive results despite a theoretical link between LMX and organizational commitment. Multiple research demonstrates that LMX influences organizational commitment (e.g., Griffith et al., 2011; Islam et al., 2013; López-Ibort et al., 2020; Robert & Vandenberghe, 2021). Other studies, however, have concluded that LMX has little effect on organizational commitment (e.g., Buch, 2015; Kee et al., 2004; Leow & Khong, 2009). Not all LMX dimensions positively and significantly influence each dimension of organizational commitment (Hung et al., 2004; Leow & Khong, 2009). Social and economic LMX do not significantly influence affective commitment (Buch, 2015). The discrepancy between these studies' findings indicates a research gap related to the relationship between LMX and organizational commitment.

This study tries to address this gap by examining and testing the variables influencing the relationship between LMX and organizational commitment, one of which is employee engagement. Several studies have discussed the relationship between LMX and employee engagement (Breevaart et al., 2015; Burch & Guarana, 2014; Chaurasia & Shukla, 2013; Tanskanen et al., 2019) and the relationship between employee engagement and organizational commitment (Biswas & Bhatnagar, 2013; Hanaysha, 2016; Nazir & Islam, 2017; Rameshkumar, 2020). However, no research has investigated the interaction of employee engagement on the relationship between LMX and organizational commitment. Previous research only studied the mediating role of employee engagement in the relationship between corporate social responsibility (CSR) and employee-

company identification on organizational commitment (Gupta, 2017) and the relationship between employee communication and organizational commitment (Walden et al., 2017). Therefore, this study aims to study the mediating role of employee engagement in the relationship between LMX and organizational commitment.

This study is crucial for Indonesia's context. A study from Mercer ASEAN (2021) shows that even though employee motivation and satisfaction in Indonesia are higher than global and Asia-Pacific scores, the score of employees' intention to stay is below global and Asia-Pacific scores. Furthermore, this study also shows that employees that feel supported are more likely to trust their organizations. Meanwhile, researchers have acknowledged that organizational commitment can influence employees' turnover intention (e.g., Falatah & Conway, 2019; Labrague et al., 2018; Ramalho Luz et al., 2018). Employees' turnover intention can cost companies from loss of talent, additional recruitment and hiring stages, and performance difference between new employees and more experienced employees who leave the organization (Guzeller & Celiker, 2019). In the long run, it will decrease organizational knowledge and, ultimately, firm performance (Davidson et al., 2010). These findings underscore the importance of addressing internal or external factors that may influence the level of employee commitment to the organization. Therefore, this study may provide insight to organizations in Indonesia on how to improve the organizational commitment of their employees.

This study is structured as follows. The second section presents the theoretical background and research hypotheses of the proposed research model. In the third section, the research methodology is discussed. The results of the data analysis are discussed in the fourth part. The remaining sections discuss the findings, theoretical contribution, theoretical and practical implications, and conclude the study.

2 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 LEADER-MEMBER EXCHANGE (LMX)

LMX is a leadership theory that examines the dyadic relationship between leaders and their subordinates that is formed over time through a series of interactions between them (Bauer & Green, 1996; Uhl-Bien et al., 2014). The basis of this theory is that leaders can have different relationship qualities with each of their subordinates (Torka et al., 2010). According to LMX, leaders have high-quality relationships with organizational members when these relationships exceed their job responsibilities, which can be the exchange of material and non-material goods (Liden et al., 1997). On the other hand, leaders tend to have lower-quality relationships with other organizational members when the relationship is limited to the job descriptions of both the employee and the leader (Bauer & Erdogan, 2015). Thus, the quality of LMX is determined by trust, information sharing, and providing resources and emotional support to all members. This difference in the leader-member relationship occurs because the leader has limited resources and time (Chaurasia & Shukla, 2013).

2.2 EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

Employee engagement refers to employees' cognitive, behavioral, and physical states focused on organizational outcomes (Shaik & Makhecha, 2019). Highly engaged workers understand their role in achieving organizational objectives and inspire their coworkers to do the same (Anitha, 2014). A high employee engagement is associated with better productivity and improved company profitability. Employee engagement also implies that employees are engaged with the company's values and mission, are empowered, and devote their energy, passion, and maximum effort to their work (Men et al., 2020). Thus, employee engagement must be the organization's top priority, whether in good or bad times (Chanana & Sangeeta, 2021).

2.3 ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT

Organizational commitment is a psychological state that describes the relationship between employees and the organization, which can affect an employee's decision to remain in the organization or leave (Cao et al., 2019). According to the social exchange theory, organizational commitment is the outcome of a small investment that an employee has made over time and which will stop his voluntary disengagement from the organization (Herrera & De Las Heras-Rosas, 2021). Organizational commitment is a behavior that demonstrates employee loyalty to the organization and how organization members demonstrate concern for organizational operations and development (Eliyana et al., 2019). Therefore, organizational commitment is one of the employees' most significant and sensitive attitudes towards their organization. The positive effect of organizational commitment is an increase in employee loyalty, whereas employee turnover is the negative effect of it (Guzeller & Celiker, 2019).

2.4 LMX AND ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT

Theoretically, LMX and organizational commitment are related. According to the LMX theory, leaders and followers mutually contribute to the development of their relationship. Leaders can grant greater freedom or work duties, and followers will respond by demonstrating a solid commitment to attain company objectives or delivering excellent performance and effort (Bauer & Green, 1996). These things unquestionably benefit leaders and organizations. When followers are treated well by their leader, they may develop a sense of belonging and emotional attachment to the organization (Casimir et al., 2014). Employees with positive relationships with their superiors will be more committed to the company's success (Chiang & Lin, 2016). An exchange between leaders and followers that successfully blends interpersonal and professional relationships can foster a sense of purpose and employee commitment (Morris & Sherman, 1981). Thus, high-quality LMX will be indicated by the reciprocal interaction between leaders and followers who have a positive feedback loop and foster employee commitment to the organization.

Leaders will provide greater responsibility and emotional support to employees with strong LMX (Dansereau et al., 1975). The high quality of LMX is also shown by the effective collaboration between leaders and followers in resolving organizational difficulties, which positively affects employee commitment to the organization (Garg & Dhar, 2014). High LMX quality can boost organizational commitment, foster teamwork, contribute to shared goals, and reduce employee turnover (Srivastava & Dhar, 2016). Previous empirical investigations (Griffith et al., 2011; Islam et al., 2013; López-Ibort et al., 2020; Robert & Vandenberghe, 2021) also support this relationship.

According to a study of the relevant literature, LMX has a positive effect on organizational commitment. This study, therefore, suggests a hypothesis:

H1. *LMX has a positive effect on organizational commitment.*

2.5 LMX AND EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

Employee engagement refers to the level of dedication and relationship that employees have with their firm and its principles. Highly-engaged employees are aware of their role in accomplishing business objectives and motivate their coworkers to do the same (Anitha, 2014). Theoretically, SET and LMX explain the relationship between LMX and employee engagement. According to the Social Exchange Theory, when employees receive economic and socio-emotional resources (feel valued in the organization), they will attempt to return to the firm or their leaders through their contributions and efforts (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). Similarly, from the LMX perspective, the interaction between leaders and employees is dyadic. When the leader-follower connection has low LMX quality, the relationship is merely considered a monetary transaction (compensation) for employee performance. When the leader-follower connection has a high LMX quality, it is considered a social transaction characterized by reciprocity, loyalty, trust, and commitment (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005;

Gutermann et al., 2017; R. Liden et al., 1997). The emphasis of these two theories is vital for describing the relationship between LMX and employee engagement since a dyadic relationship between leaders and employees is required to foster employee engagement (Rama Devi, 2009).

The relationship between employees and their leaders is a source of employee engagement (Lartey, 2022). Moreover, the level of employee engagement depends on how employees perceive the quality of LMX, while it is the organization's responsibility to foster a conducive climate for the development of positive connections with their leaders (Chaurasia & Shukla, 2013). When employees can carry out the obligations and roles assigned to them by their leaders, they will win the trust of their leaders through increasing responsibility, stronger emotional support, and a higher level of engagement (Burch & Guarana, 2014). Employee engagement is characterized by personal commitment, emotional attachment, dedication, and cognitive focus (Lebrón et al., 2018). Many previous empirical investigations also support this association (Breevaart et al., 2015; Garg & Dhar, 2017; X. Li et al., 2012; M. Lartey, 2022; Tanskanen et al., 2019).

According to the previous studies, LMX positively impacts employee engagement. This study, therefore, suggests a hypothesis:

H2. *LMX has a positive effect on employee engagement.*

2.6 EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT AND ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT

Employee engagement is associated with employee loyalty and commitment to their work, whereas organizational commitment is associated with employee loyalty and commitment to the organization (Aboramadan et al., 2020; Agyemang & Ofei, 2013). These two variables describe distinct yet interdependent relationships. From a theoretical standpoint, social exchange theory is the fundamental mechanism for employee engagement. Employees with a high level of employee engagement at work are more likely to respond with enhanced organizational commitment (Lin & Ping, 2016).

In a highly competitive economic environment, having highly engaged employees can offer an organization a competitive advantage since employee engagement positively affects essential organizational outcomes, such as organizational commitment and job performance (Breevaart et al., 2015). Employees with a high level of organizational commitment firmly accept and believe in the organization's goals and values and are willing to help. Additionally, they strongly desire to maintain a relationship with the organization (Cao et al., 2019). Many earlier empirical investigations also support this relationship (Breevaart et al., 2015; Garg & Dhar, 2017; X. Li et al., 2012; Tanskanen et al., 2019; Walden et al., 2017).

According to a study of the existing literature, employee engagement is positively related to organizational commitment. This study, therefore, suggests a hypothesis:

H3. *Employee engagement has a positive effect on organizational commitment.*

2.7 THE MEDIATING ROLE OF EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT IN THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LMX AND ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT

Even though there is a relationship between LMX, employee engagement, and organizational commitment, no empirical research has examined how these three factors are related, especially in Indonesia. Moreover, there are currently no conclusive results regarding the direct effect of LMX on organizational commitment time (Buch, 2015; Hung et al., 2004; Leow & Khong, 2009). This study examines the role of employee engagement as a mediator between the effect of LMX on organizational commitment.

Based on prior research findings, leaders with a high-quality LMX can provide resources that assist employees in attaining their work goals, promote personal growth, and enhance employee engagement (Agarwal et al., 2012). When the level of engagement is high, employees feel connected to

their work and colleagues. In addition, they are better able to complete tasks and enjoy their work. Employees are ultimately attached and committed to their organization (W. Kim et al., 2017; Orgambidez et al., 2019). Social exchange theory, which emphasizes the reciprocal link between leaders and followers, may offer a view related to the mechanism of this process. In accordance with the norm of reciprocity, when a leader displays positive attitudes toward his followers, those followers will also reciprocate with positive attitudes (Casimir et al., 2014).

Based on the existing literature review, LMX positively affects employee engagement, which then affects organizational commitment. Thus, this study proposes a hypothesis:

H4. *Employee engagement mediates the effect of LMX on organizational commitment.*

These four hypotheses are crucial to address the research gap identified in this study. To test a mediation effect, Carrión et al. (2017) suggest that it is necessary to test the indirect effect of the independent variables on the dependent variable through a mediator. The direct effect will determine whether there exists a full mediation effect or partial mediation effect. Therefore, to test the mediating role of employee engagement in the relationship between LMX on organizational commitment, this study needs to test whether there is a relationship between LMX and employee engagement and whether there is a relationship between employee engagement and organizational commitment. Then, the direct effect of LMX on organizational commitment will determine the type of mediation effect in the model. If both indirect effect and direct effect are significant, then there exists a partial mediation effect of employee engagement. If only indirect effect is significant, then there exists a full mediation effect of employee engagement. If both indirect effect and direct effect are not significant, then there is no mediation effect.

3 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

3.1 SAMPLE AND PROCEDURE

This study's sample comprised 175 Indonesian employees. Data from 170 respondents can be used for further study after outlier removal. This study was conducted between 14 June and 7 July 2022. Using Google Form, the study questions were delivered and filled out online. Table 1 lists the characteristics of the respondents.

Table 1. Characteristics of Respondents

No	Characteristics	n	%
1	Gender		
	Male	95	55.88%
	Female	75	44.12%
2	Age		
	<30 year	89	52.35%
	30 - <40 year	38	22.35%
	40 - <50 year	31	18.24%
	≥ 50 year	12	7.06%
3	Level of Education		
	High School	23	13.53%
	Diploma	30	17.65%
	Undergraduate	90	52.94%

	Postgraduate	27	15.88%
4	Working Period at Current Company		
	<10 year	148	87.06%
	10 - <20 year	16	9.41%
	≥ 20 year	6	3.53%
5	Location (Island)		
	Java	156	91.76%
	Kalimantan	6	3.53%
	Bali	1	0.59%
	Maluku	1	0.59%
	Nusa Tenggara	1	0.59%
	Papua	5	2.94%
6	Business Field		
	Service	82	48.24%
	Transportation	55	32.35%
	Manufacturing	9	5.29%
	Distribution	4	2.35%
	Logistics	3	1.76%
	Mining	2	1.18%
	etc.	15	8.82%

Source: own illustration

3.2 INSTRUMENTS

The study employed 5-point Likert scale items with values ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The questionnaire for this study is divided into two sections. The first section requires the respondent to provide descriptive and general information, such as gender, age, education, working period at the current company, and industry in which the respondent works. The second section consists of questions designed to assess LMX, employee engagement, and organizational commitment. The questionnaire was first translated into Indonesian before being delivered to respondents.

Leader-Member Exchange (LMX). This study uses an instrument from Tanskanen et al. (2019), consisting of 9 items to measure LMX. This unidimensional measure was developed to overcome the weaknesses of some well-known LMX measures, for example, as proposed by Scandura and Graen (1984) and Liden and Maslyn (1998). Some of the items include "I get along well with my supervisor," "Our cooperation benefits the performance of us both at work," and "We appreciate each other's competence at work."

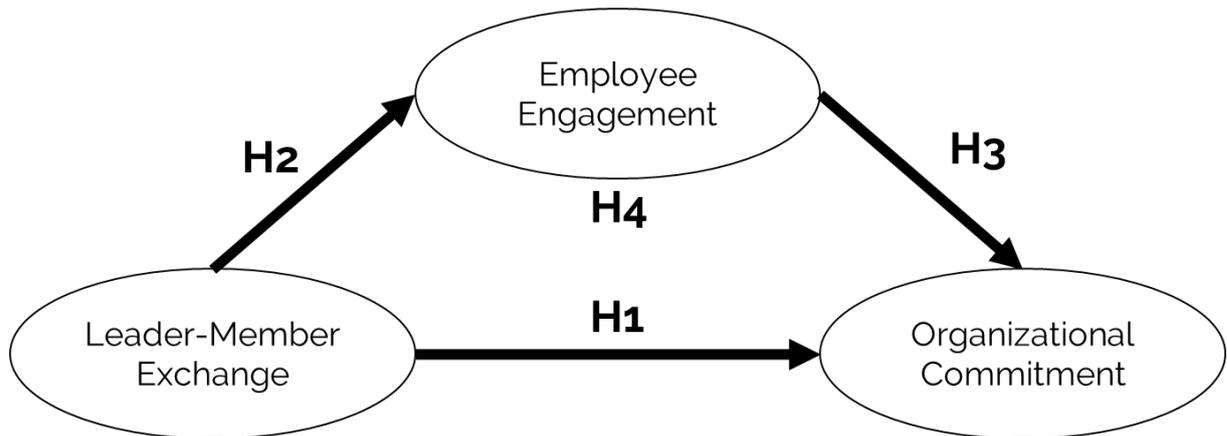
Employee Engagement (EE). This study uses an instrument from Soane et al. (2012) to measure employee engagement. This measure consists of 3 dimensions, and each dimension consists of 3 items. The dimensions are intellectual engagement, social engagement, and affective engagement. Some of the items include "I focus hard on my work," "I share the same work values as my colleagues," and "I feel energetic in my work."

Organizational Commitment (OC). This study uses an instrument from Walden et al. (2017), which consists of 5 items to measure organizational commitment. This measure is unidimensional. Some of

the items include "I have a long-lasting bond with the organization I work for," "I would rather work together with this organization than not," and "I can see that the organization I work for wants to maintain a relationship with me."

3.3 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Fig 1. Conceptual framework of this study



Source: own illustration

4 RESEARCH RESULTS

This study applies a reflective measurement model, which assumes that the items or measure represents the effect of the underlying variable (Hair et al., 2014). LMX and organizational commitment are first-order factors, while employee engagement is a second-order factor consisting of the dimensions of intellectual engagement, social engagement, and affective engagement. Based on the instrument provided by Soane et al. (2012), employee engagement is a reflective-reflective second-order construct. Therefore, the data analysis for this study consisted of evaluating the first-order model to determine the instrument's reliability and validity. Then, the model will be assessed to determine the direct relationship between variables and the mediation effect.

This research model was evaluated using partial least square-structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM). PLS-SEM is utilized to develop an explanatory research model by explaining the variance in the dependent variables (Hair et al., 2014). This is consistent with the purpose of this study. This study calculates the standard errors of the estimates using bootstrapping with 10,000 replications. The common method test is conducted by examining the value of the inner VIF on the results of the collinearity test. The inner VIF test results indicate that all VIF values are less than 3.3, with the maximum value being 3.12. Therefore, this research model is free from common method bias (Kock, 2015).

This study uses the VAF value to test the mediating effect by comparing the value of the indirect effect to the total effect. If VAF is less than 20%, then no mediation occurs. If VAF is larger than 80%, there is a full mediating effect. If VAF is between 20% and 80%, then there is a partial mediating effect (Hair et al., 2014).

4.1 ASSESSMENT OF MEASUREMENT MODEL

The research model is shown in Figure 1. To evaluate the measurement model, multiple tests must be conducted. If the composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha are between 0.60 and 0.70, the

instrument for this model is considered reliable (Hair et al., 2017; Ursachi et al., 2015). If the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) value is greater than 0.50, and the outer loading value of an item is 0.70, the instrument passes the convergent validity test. If the value of the outer loadings of the items on the related variables is greater than the cross-loadings of items with other variables (pass the cross-loadings test) and the root of the AVE value is greater than the correlation with other variables (Fornell-Larcker test), then the instrument passes the discriminant validity test (Hair et al., 2017).

The values of outer loadings, AVE, composite reliability, and Cronbach's alpha are presented in Table 2, the results of the cross-loadings test are in Table 3, and the results of the Fornell-Larcker test are in Table 4 show that the measurement model of this study is reliable and valid for this study.

Table 2. Result of Reliability, Convergent Validity, and Fornell-Larcker Tests

	Cronbach's α	rho_A	CR	AVE	CA	FinP	MarP	SE
CA	0.787	0.800	0.863	0.613	0.783			
FinP	0.737	0.780	0.849	0.653	0.626	0.808		
MarP	0.874	0.877	0.923	0.799	0.615	0.520	0.894	
SE	0.769	0.790	0.865	0.682	0.688	0.459	0.528	0.826

Notes: CR, composite reliability; AVE, average variance extracted; SE, strategy execution; CA, competitive advantage; FinP, financial performance; MarP, market performance. For Fornell-Larcker test, bold values indicate square root of AVE, while others indicate correlation with other variables

Table 3. Result of Outer-Loading and Cross-Loading Tests

	SE	CA	FinP	MarP
SE3	0.834	0.506	0.240	0.304
SE4	0.871	0.689	0.430	0.487
SE5	0.770	0.476	0.429	0.481
CA3	0.637	0.839	0.528	0.531
CA4	0.517	0.829	0.600	0.514
CA5	0.492	0.776	0.383	0.473
CA6	0.496	0.676	0.426	0.397
FinP3	0.422	0.632	0.889	0.503
FinP4	0.220	0.405	0.748	0.392
FinP5	0.432	0.443	0.781	0.354
MarP1	0.488	0.508	0.494	0.904
MarP2	0.535	0.551	0.507	0.918
MarP3	0.387	0.592	0.390	0.859

Notes: Bold values indicate outer-loading, while others indicate cross-loading

Table 4. Result of Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) Test

	CA	FinP	MarP	SE
CA				
FinP	0.792			
MarP	0.740	0.639		
SE	0.864	0.575	0.624	

Source: own illustration

4.2 ASSESSMENT OF STRUCTURAL MODEL

The model fit test, the coefficient of determination R², the effect size Q², the direct effect test, and the mediation effect test were conducted to assess the research hypothesis. The results of the model fit test indicate that the SRMR for the saturated model is 0.085 and 0.089 for the estimated model. Since the SRMR is less than 0.1, this research model has an excellent model fit (Knock, 2022). The R² test reveals that the power of LMX in predicting EE is 67.94%, whereas the power of LMX and EE in predicting OC is 60.38%. This number suggests that this model's predictive power is moderate (Hair et al., 2014). The Q² test result with an omission distance of 7 reveals that the Q² value of all variables is greater than 0. The values range from 0.399 to 0.678. These findings suggest that this research model has predictive relevance for predicting OC.

Table 5 displays the results of the direct effect and mediating effect tests. LMX has a positive and statistically significant direct effect on OC ($\beta=0.224, p<0.05$) and EE ($\beta=0.824, p<0.01$). This statistical evidence supports H1 and H2. EE positively and directly affects OC ($\beta=0.582, p<0.01$). This statistical evidence supports H3.

Table 5. Result of Direct Effect Test

Path	Path Coefficient	Standard Deviation	t-statistics	p-value
SE → FinP	0.476	0.129	3.686	0.000**
SE → MarP	0.540	0.087	6.222	0.000**
SE → CA	0.691	0.060	11.510	0.000**
CA → FinP	0.635	0.075	8.443	0.000**
CA → MarP	0.618	0.087	7.148	0.000**

Notes: **p < 0.01 (99%), t-statistics ≥ 2.581

For the mediating effect test, Table 6 shows that LMX has a positive and significant indirect effect on OC through EE ($\beta=0.479, p<0.01$). The total effect of LMX on OC is also positive and significant ($\beta=0.704, p<0.01$). Therefore, the VAF value is 68.12%, between 20% and 80%. This result indicates that EE has a partial mediating effect on the effect of LMX on OC. This result statistically supports H4.

Table 6. Result of Mediation Effect Test

Path	Path Coefficient	Standard Deviation	t-statistics	p-value
Direct Effect				
SE → CA	0.688	0.064	10.798	0.000**
CA → FinP	0.590	0.146	4.049	0.000**
CA → MarP	0.479	0.144	3.323	0.001**
SE → FinP	0.053	0.180	0.294	0.769 ^{ns}
SE → MarP	0.198	0.144	1.373	0.170 ^{ns}
Specific Indirect Effect				
SE → CA → FinP	0.406	0.120	3.377	0.001**
SE → CA → MarP	0.329	0.108	3.061	0.002**
Total Effect				
CA → FinP	0.590	0.146	4.049	0.000**

CA → MarP	0.479	0.144	3.323	0.001**
SE → CA	0.688	0.064	10.798	0.000**
SE → FinP	0.459	0.121	3.804	0.000**
SE → MarP	0.528	0.095	5.553	0.000**

Notes: ** $p < 0.01$ (99%); ns, not significant, $p > 0.05$ (95%)

5 DISCUSSION

This study hypothesizes that LMX has a significant effect on organizational commitment. The results of this study support this hypothesis, which found that LMX has a significant positive effect on organizational commitment. This finding is in line with LMX and social exchange theory, which hypothesize that employees with high LMX quality with their leaders will reciprocate with greater employee commitment to their firms based on the norm of reciprocity. This result is also consistent with earlier research indicating that employees whose supervisors provide support will demonstrate more organizational commitment (Islam et al., 2013).

In addition, this study also hypothesizes that LMX has a significant effect on employee engagement. This study's findings validate this hypothesis. This finding is also compatible with the social exchange theory, which states that when employees feel valued and supported by their leaders in the organization, they will attempt to repay their leaders with their contributions (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). This result is consistent with prior studies, which revealed that employees who frequently interact with supportive leaders would have high levels of engagement and performance (Aggarwal et al., 2020).

The findings of this study indicate that LMX has an indirect effect on organizational commitment via employee engagement. These results are consistent with social exchange theory explaining the dyadic relationship between leaders and followers. If their leaders display positive attitudes toward them, followers will reciprocate with positive attitudes (Casimir et al., 2014). Consequently, followers with a high LMX quality with their leader will respond with a high level of engagement. With a high level of engagement, employees will reinvest tangible and intangible resources into their organization by being committed to the organization (Boon & Kalshoven, 2014). This study also demonstrates that employee engagement positively and statistically significantly affects organizational commitment. High organizational commitment is characterized by a strong desire to contribute to the organization (Cao et al., 2019). These results can shed new light on how LMX influences organizational commitment via employee engagement.

5.1 IMPLICATIONS FOR THEORY AND PRACTICE

The results of this study have numerous essential implications. First, LMX and employee engagement may be the most crucial aspects to comprehend when attempting to explain the level of employee commitment to the organization. This can enrich LMX and social exchange theories in their ability to explain complicated leader-follower relationships within organizations. In general, leaders significantly impact employee engagement and commitment (P. Li et al., 2021; Mwesigwa et al., 2020). Therefore, leaders must provide support and mentoring so that employees feel valued and recognize that their contributions are integral to achieving larger organizational objectives. Thus, employees are motivated to give maximum effort.

Second, the findings of this study demonstrate that LMX has a significant effect on shaping employees' perceptions of the organizational environment in which they work, which ultimately determines the contributions they make to the organization. This discussion becomes crucial to studying employee experience. Employee experience is essentially an employee's view of their work

experience as a result of their interactions with the organization (IBM & Globoforce, 2017). In recent years, human resource management and companies have frequently discussed employee experience, emphasizing employee engagement enhancement (APQC, 2019). This research can contribute practically and theoretically to our understanding of how the interactions between leaders and followers affect employee experience in organizations.

6 CONCLUSION

The main objective of this study is to examine how employee engagement can mediate the effect of LMX on organizational commitment. This study employs LMX theory and social exchange theory as its foundational theories. The findings of this study indicate that LMX has a direct effect on organizational commitment and employee engagement. Employee engagement directly influences organizational commitment. Additionally, employee engagement partially mediates the effect of LMX on organizational commitment. These findings corroborate the LMX theory and the social exchange theory in describing how the quality of the dyadic interaction between leaders and followers might influence employees' psychological condition and attitude outcomes in the Indonesian context.

6.1 LIMITATIONS

Although this research has novelty and contribution to the development of theory and its application in human resource management, some limitations can be addressed in future research. First, the sample size is small, and the sample characteristics are skewed to one of the subcategories, as shown in Table I. These issues can influence the generalizability of the findings to various characteristics of the sample. Future studies can resolve these issues by conducting studies in various companies with different demographic conditions. Second, this study only employs quantitative methods to describe how LMX influences organizational commitment via employee engagement.

6.2 FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Future research can explore the relationship between these three variables by conducting in-depth interviews with employees and managers to understand both perspectives comprehensively. Third, this study considers one of the elements that can influence the effect of LMX on organizational commitment, namely employee engagement.

Future research may examine psychological well-being, employee motivation, or employee experience as potential mediators of the effect of LMX on organizational commitment. Future studies can also learn more about how employee involvement can directly or indirectly affect organizational commitment. This is the first study to jointly examine LMX, organizational commitment, and employee engagement in Indonesian organizations. Future research can examine research models in various industries or demographic circumstances.

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