Leader-Member Exchange and Its Relationship to Workplace Conflict as Mediated by Organizational Citizenship Behavior

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Abstract

This study aimed to explore the relationship between leader-member exchange and workplace conflicts as mediated by organizational citizenship behaviors among private hospital workers in the Philippines. Data from 309 regular workers were collected through random sampling from conveniently selected private hospitals in the Philippines. Descriptive-correlational design was used in this study. Correlation, descriptive statistics and regression analysis were used to analyze the data. The respondents were satisfied by leader-member exchange on the leaders' side, highly demonstrated their citizenship behaviors and perceived a low intensity of workplace conflicts. Leader-Member exchange and organizational citizenship behaviors had a significant positive relationship. However, there was no significant relationship between organizational citizenship behaviors and workplace conflicts. There was a significant negative relationship between leader-member exchange and workplace conflicts. There were significant mediating effects of organizational citizenship behaviors on the relationship between leader-member exchange and workplace interpersonal and intrapersonal conflicts. There was no significant difference in workplace conflicts when age, gender, and length of work experience of respondents were considered.

Keywords: Leader-member exchange, workplace conflict, organizational citizenship behavior

Introduction

Workplace-based conflict can result in damaged relationships, loss of productivity, diminished job satisfaction, and increasing workers' compensation claims for psychological injury (Mackenzie, 2015). Conflict is a social problem in which two or more persons, families, parties, or communities are in disagreement with each other (Salami, 2009). Interpersonal conflict is a disagreement between two or more people. Workplace conflict is a disagreement between or within groups in organization. The groups may be workers, workers' unions, or management. Organizational conflict is common in the workplace because people always have divergent views on various issues, interests, ideologies, goals, and aspirations. One study surveyed workers and found that almost 85% reported conflicts at work (Ramsbotham & Woodhouse, 2011).

Hospital environments are exposed to many types of conflict compounded by increasing demands on an over-limited staffing supply, a decrease in available resources, and a period of profound changes. These complexities and tensions in hospital settings will undoubtedly continue, and even escalate, providing a fertile ground for conflict among healthcare professionals (Sportsman & Hamilton, 2007).

Conflict within the nursing profession as part of healthcare institution, however, has traditionally generated negative feelings. It has been seen to drain energy, reduce focus, and cause discomfort and hostility. The healthcare industry is subject to increasing strains due to demands for broader access to care, greater accountability to consumers, and improved quality of care, while facing more work for less pay, staffing shortages, stiffer regulatory enforcement, and decreased reimbursement which lead to stress and often to conflict (Northam, 2009).

When nurses, who often are persons who know the patient's situation most intimately, withdraw, patient illness and death rise. Some

negative consequences of conflict can undermine an organization's efforts. However, if handled correctly, conflict can benefit individuals and organizations by producing stronger and more resilient working relationship, improving creative output, and generating innovative solutions (Deutsch, Coleman, & Marcus, 2011). Serious workplace conflicts result in an alarmingly higher number of medical errors (Baldwin & Daugherty, 2008).

Various factors contribute to the experience of conflict in organizations. Rahim (2002) posited that differences in attitudes, values, level of skills, and behaviors lead to conflict in the workplace. Generally, disagreement exist when parties think that a divergence of values, needs, interests, opinions, goals, or objectives exist (Barki & Hartwick, 2004).

Workplace conflict is considered a natural and inevitable, organizational phenomenon, that accompanies human interaction within any organization. It can be within individual himself, or between individuals, or between the individual and groups, or among groups (Mumford, Zaccaro, Harding, Jacobs, & Fleishman, 2000). By considering workplace conflict as one of the main interaction forms and its existence at a certain level is deemed a motivation, and one of the driving sources to raise individuals' and groups' performance. However, the increasing intensity of conflict, or its high level will result in a negative effect on the level of performance and then it undermines organization effectiveness (Sanders & Schyns, 2006).

Research conducted in the US shows that 60-80% of all difficulties in organizations stem from strained relationships between employees, and not from deficits in individual employee's skill or motivation (Tjosvold, 2008). In another study, typical manager spends 25-40% of his or her time dealing with workplace conflicts which is one to two days of every week that translates to $385 million spent every year as a result of conflict in the workplace (Wayne, 2005). Furthermore, another research done in US showed that 49% of employees have been affected by workplace conflicts (Barling, Dupré, & Kelloway, 2009). Another study done by the American Management Association on the cost of conflict showed that a manager will spend between 20% to as much as 50% of his/her time dealing with conflict in the workplace.

Studies recorded in Global Human Capital Report (2008) showed that in Germany and Ireland, the average time spent managing conflict rises to 3.3 hours per week, an even higher proportion of available working time. Also in Denmark, statistics showed that 63% of Danish employees experienced workplace conflicts and 32% witnessed that conflicts make them feel demotivated. Moreover, surveys done in Europe revealed that German employees report the most workplace conflicts and these led to bullying, projects failure, sickness, and elevated level of absenteeism. Furthermore, 26% of Irish witnessed that conflicts at work make them feel angry and frustrated (Global Human Capital Report, 2008).

In the Philippines, a research showed that for three years, 2007-2009, manufacturing companies experienced the biggest slump in productivity reduction due to labor dispute problems, their productivity dropped from 30% to 60% (Philippine Labor and Employment Plan, 20112016). Workplace conflicts occur for many reasons. In the current study, the researcher aimed to seek the relationship between leader-member exchange and organizational conflict as mediated by organizational citizenship behaviors among private hospital workers.

Methods

The descriptive-correlational research design was utilized in the study. The population of this study were 309 regular employees in three selected hospitals in the Philippines. Most of them came from the age group of 30 and above (67%), and majority are female (65%). Many of them had been serving the institutions for fifteen years and below (70%). Self-constructed questionnaire was designed for the data gathering. To ensure consistency, validity, and reliability of instruments, the research instrument was subjected to experts' validation composed of nine experts from Adventist University of the Philippines. A pilot study was

conducted at one private hospital in the Philippines. The purpose of the study was clearly explained to the participants. They were informed that participation was voluntary and that they could choose not to participate at will. The researcher also ensured confidentiality and anonymity of each of the respondents by letting them answer the questionnaires without writing their names and only the researcher and human resource directors who assisted in the data gathering had access to the questionnaires. Mean, standard deviation, Structural equation modeling (SEM) using AMOS/SPSS, non-parametric tests, i.e., Kruskal Wallis and Mann-Whitney tests, were used to answer the objectives of this study.

Results

The study aimed to determine the relationship between leader-member exchange and workplace conflicts as mediated by organizational citizenship behaviors of private hospital workers in the Philippines.

The overall results revealed that respondents were *satisfied* by their relationships with leaders as ingroup members that is the leader-member exchange was generally *satisfactory* with a grand mean of 3.15 (*SD* = .48). The study of the dimensions of leader-member exchange revealed that leaders' affect towards respondents was *satisfactory,* leaders' loyalty to members was also *satisfactory* and leaders' contribution to members' job tasks was *satisfactory*, too.

Table 2
Summary of the Descriptive Results of Organizational

OCB's	M	SD	SR	VI

Altruism	3.50	0.72	Frequently	HD
Conscientiousness	4.11	0.59	Frequently	HD
Civic Virtue	3.76	0.70	Frequently	HD
Courtesy	3.90	0.70	Frequently	HD
Sportsmanship	3.25	0.83	Sometimes	FD
OVERALL	**3.70**	**0.57**	**Frequently**	**HD**
HD-Highly demonstrated, FD-Fairly demonstrated *Citizenship Behavior*				

Table 1
Summary of the Descriptive Results of Leader-Member Exchange

Leader-Member Exchange	M	SD	SR	VI
Affect	3.23	0.49	Agree	S
Loyalty	3.13	0.48	Agree	S
Contribution	3.08	0.55	Agree	S
OVERALL	**3.15**	**0.48**	**Agree**	**S**

S-Satisfactory

The results revealed that the demonstration of organizational citizenship behaviors by the respondents was *highly demonstrated* with a grand mean of 3.70 (*SD* = .57). The study of the dimensions under organizational citizenship behaviors revealed that respondents' altruism was *highly demonstrated,* their conscientiousness was *highly demonstrated,* their civic virtue was *high,* respondents were *highly courteous* and respondents' sportsmanship was *fairly demonstrated*.

Table 3
Summary of the Descriptive Results of Workplace Conflicts

Workplace Conflict	M	SD	SR	VI
Interpersonal Conflict	2.33	0.56	Disagree	LI
Intrapersonal Conflict	2.30	0.53	Disagree	LI
OVERALL	**2.32**	**0.51**	**Disagree**	**LI**

LI-Low intensity					

The results also revealed that the intensity of workplace conflicts was *low* among private hospital workers. The study of dimensions under workplace conflicts revealed that there was a *low intensity* of both interpersonal and intrapersonal conflicts among private hospital workers.

Table 4

Correlational Results of Leader-Member Exchange and Organizational Citizenship Behaviors

LMX ALT		CS	CV	CT	SP	OCBs
Affect Pear r .237**		.168**	.339**	.176**	.180**	.273**
Sig (2tailed) .000		.003	.000	.002	.002	.000
VI S		S	S	S	S	S
Loyalty Pear r .225**		.134*	.306**	.182**	.176**	.255*
Sig (2tailed) .000		.018	.000	.001	.002	.000
VI S		S	S	S	S	S
Contribution Pear r .253**		.119*	.288**	.147**	.199**	.253**
Sig (2tailed) .000		.037	.000	.10	.000	.000
VI S		S	S	S	S	S

S-Significant

The overall correlations revealed that there was a significant positive relationship between leadermember exchange and respondents' organizational citizenship behaviors with $r = .273$, $p= .000$ at 0.01 level (2- tailed). This shows that the higher is in-group leader-member exchange, the more members demonstrate organizational citizenship behaviors.

Table 5

Correlation Results of Organizational Behaviors and

Workplace Conflicts

OCBs		WCE	WCA	Overall WC
Altruism	Pear r	-.074	-.031	-.057
	Sig (2tailed)	.196	.583	.321
	VI	NS	NS	NS
Conscientiousness	Pear r	-	-.196**	-.228**
		.230**		
	Sig (2tailed)	.000	.001	.000
	VI	S	S	S
Civic Virtue	Pear r	-.164**	-.154**	-.170**
	Sig (2tailed)	.004	.007	.003
	VI	S	S	S
Courtesy	Pear r	-.086	.155**	-.128*
	Sig (2tailed)	.130	.007	.024
	VI	NS	S	S
Sportsmanship	Pear r	.064	.140*	.108
	Sig (2tailed)	.264	.014	.057
	VI	NS	S	NS

NS-Not significant, S-significant

There was no significant relationship between organizational citizenship behaviors and workplace conflicts. This means that OCBs did not have a significant influence on the workplace conflicts.

Table 6

Correlational Results of Leader-Member Exchange and Workplace Conflicts

Leader-Member Exchange		WCE	WCA	Overall WC
Affect	Pear r	-.247**	-.165**	-.221**
	Sig (2tailed)	.000	.004	.000
	VI	S	S	S
Loyalty	Pear r	-.237**	-.122*	-.194**
	Sig (2tailed)	.000	.032	.001
	VI	S	S	S
Contribution	Pear r	-.206**	-.081	-.155**
	Sig (2tailed)	.000	.153	.006
	VI	S	NS	S

NS-Not significant, S-significant

There was also a significant negative relationship between leader-member exchange and workplace conflicts with Pearson correlation of -.198, $p = .000$ at 0.01 level (2- tailed). This implies that the higher was leader-member exchange, the lower was the intensity of workplace conflicts among private hospital workers. It means that in-group leader-member exchange helps decrease the intensity of conflicts in the workplace.

There was no mediation of organizational

citizenship behaviors on the relationship between leader-member exchange and workplace conflict. This means that leader-member exchange directly correlated with workplace conflicts regardless of the mediation of organizational citizenship behaviors.

Respondents perceived the same level of workplace conflicts regardless of their moderator variable profiles. This means that there was no difference in workplace conflicts when respondents' profiles were considered.

Discussion

The regular employees of the three selected hospitals in the Philippines were *satisfied* with the leader-member exchange in their respective hospitals, *highly* demonstrated organizational citizenship behaviors and perceived a *low intensity* of workplace conflicts. Respondents' organizational behaviors were *influenced* by their relationships with leaders. The respondents perceived that workplace conflicts were not influenced by their citizenship behaviors. Results also showed a significant influence of leadermember exchange on workplace conflicts. Workers' citizenship behaviors had mediating effects on the relationship between leader-member exchange and workplace conflicts among workers.

Management and administrators should consider in their plans, a clear path for leaders to create ingroup relationships with their subordinates as a way of diminishing the intensity of workplace conflicts.

Workers should be encouraged to represent their organizations as they are the precious asset of their institution through a strong system of friendship which is not only based on the prescribed contract but also on the discretional behaviors that would promote the performance and productivity of hospitals. Leaders should find ways to reduce the intensity of workplace conflicts by providing support to employees so as to help them to be satisfied with whatsoever is communicated to them in their daily work. Workers have to work for their relationships with leaders to be as good as possible through a high demonstration of selflessness as a result of

satisfactory support from their leaders. They should also work hand in hand as a team so as to mitigate the intensity of workplace conflicts which is considered inevitable.

Other researchers should conduct more studies on what other factors influence workplace conflicts such as workplace incivility, employee downsizing, organizational change, organizational justice, among others. Researchers may also do a qualitative study on workplace conflicts; to have an in-depth reason of what influences workplace conflicts. They may also replicate the same study in different public healthcare institutions and hospitals.

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