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The Effect Leader-Member Exchange and Interpersonal Communication on Employee Job Satisfaction

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Abstract

Job satisfaction reflects an individual's enthusiasm and fulfilment in performing work tasks, making it a crucial factor in employee performance. Among the key determinants of job satisfaction are the quality of leader-member relationships and effective interpersonal communication. Leaders must align their leadership style with employees' preferences and establish strong communication within the organization. This study aims to examine the influence of leader-member exchange and interpersonal communication on job satisfaction among employees at the Ministry of Religious Affairs Office, Sleman Regency. Using a quantitative approach with survey methods, the study involved 115 employees selected through a saturated sampling technique. The instruments used include the Interpersonal Communication Scale, the leader-member exchange, and the Job Satisfaction Scale. Validity was tested using Gregory analysis, and reliability. Data analysis using multiple linear regression with SPSS version 22 revealed that both leader-member exchange and interpersonal communication significantly affect job satisfaction. The findings suggest that higher quality relationships between leaders and subordinates, along with effective interpersonal communication, enhance employee job satisfaction.

Keywords

Employee Performance, Interpersonal Communication, Job Satisfaction, Leader-Member Exchange.

1. Introduction

Job satisfaction is a positive feeling felt by employees and reflects their emotional condition in the work environment (Cristofaro et al., 2024). Job satisfaction is an important factor in organizations because it is directly related to employee productivity and well-being. When employees feel job satisfaction within themselves, they will give maximum performance to achieve goals, loyal and willing to sacrifice for the interests of the organization, and there is a strong desire to remain in the organization (Gazi et al., 2022; Dorta-Afonso et al., 2023; Williams et al., 2024). Job satisfaction also affects employee retention rates as well as the quality of services provided to the public (Waworuntu et al., 2022; Prasetyo et al., 2024).

The phenomenon of job satisfaction problems is still often found in organizations, this is due to the lack of attention given by the organization to employees, so that a sense of not caring for each other arises which has an impact on employee job satisfaction (Irwan et al., 2023). Job dissatisfaction can increase absenteeism, work stress, and even decrease work motivation (Puhanić et al., 2022). The study from Fütterer et al. (2023) also stated dissatisfied employees tend to show greater intentions to leave the organization, either by looking for another job or decreasing their involvement in their work.

A similar phenomenon also occurred in government institutions in Indonesia, including the Ministry of Religion. The tendency for some employees to feel dissatisfied with their jobs has the potential to affect their motivation, productivity, and involvement in carrying out their duties. This disparity in job satisfaction levels creates a risk to the quality of public services, especially in the context of religious services that require high commitment and integrity. Ministry of Religion employees also deal directly with the public on various sensitive issues such as inter-religious conflicts, which trigger risks in the form of verbal threats, social pressure, and even intimidation, especially when handling complex and potentially dangerous social and religious conflicts, so it is important to maintain employee job satisfaction (Ghasemy et al., 2021)

This study also fills the gap in existing literature, because there are not many studies that explore the topic of LMX and job satisfaction in the Sleman Ministry of Religious Affairs environment. Local government policies and programs that focus on improving the quality of human resources in government agencies also make Sleman the right location to conduct this research. This study also combines two important variables Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) and interpersonal communication as predictors of job satisfaction that are rarely studied simultaneously. The preliminary study approach also enriches contextual understanding before quantitative analysis is carried out. This study provides a practical contribution to human resource management in a multicultural government bureaucratic environment.

The purpose of this study is to analyze the Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) and interpersonal communication as predictors of employee job satisfaction at the Ministry of Religious Affairs of Sleman Regency through an understanding of the factors that influence job satisfaction so that organizations can design more effective strategies in managing human resources to achieve organizational goals optimally. The implementation of policies that support increased job satisfaction, such as strengthening communication, leadership training, and improving employee welfare, is expected to have a positive impact on overall organizational performance.

2. Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

2.1. Leader Member Exchange on Job Satisfaction

Leader member exchange is a two-way link between leaders and employees and focuses on social exchange and reciprocal relationships, where leaders treat employees differently based on the time, ability, and quality of the relationship between the two (Erdogan & Bauer, 2015; Sulistio and Darmastuti, 2024). According to Liden and Maslyn (1998), leader-member exchange can be understood as a social relationship involving trust, ideas, and obligations between leaders and team members. These social relationships are like the social exchange of trust that occurs between individuals (Baker, 2018; Shaikh et al., 2019; Chen et al., 2024). In addition, Wang et al. (2019) explains that the social relationship that occurs between superiors and employees will give rise to creative support which results in new and useful ideas. Shang et al. (2024) also states that the obligations between the two parties in the social relationship that occurs give rise to a sense of mutual respect and liking for each other and have high quality.

A good relationship between leaders and members also produces a good environment in the organization so that employees can be more enthusiastic in working and produce good work (Chang et al., 2024; Wang et al., 2019; Jufrizen et al., 2023). This needs to be considered by the organization so that employees feel a high-quality reciprocal relationship. Research conducted Shin and Park (2021) found that leader-member exchange has a more positive influence on job satisfaction. In addition, other findings also support that leader-member exchange has a significant influence on job satisfaction by creating a sense of employee loyalty to the organization (Little et al., 2016; Eşitti & Kasap, 2020; Xie et al., 2023). This is not in line with research Widodo and Wiardi (2015) that the correlation of leader-member exchange does not affect employee job satisfaction. Therefore, the inconsistent research results in previous studies require a re-examination of leader member exchange on job satisfaction. The following is the hypothesis of this research:

H1: Leader-member exchange has a positive influence on job satisfaction.

2.2. Interpersonal Communication on Job Satisfaction

According to Anderson and Martin (1994), interpersonal communication occurs based on motives such as pleasure, affection, escape, relaxation, control, and inclusion. Awad and Alhashemi (2012) define it as mutual interaction involving exchanges in various settings like appraisals, praise or criticism, counseling, meetings, brainstorming, and negotiations. Communication plays a vital role in organizational success and contributes to job satisfaction (Syarif et al., 2020; Widana & Telagawati, 2023). Naiemah et al. (2021) state that greater employee involvement in interpersonal communication improves job performance and satisfaction. Good interpersonal communication is characterized by positive feelings, empathy, openness, support, and similarity. Jiang et al. (2021) emphasize that interpersonal communication is not just a connection between individuals but reflects the quality of their relationship.

Interpersonal communication helps employees obtain important information about their jobs, policies, procedures and organizational culture (Singh et al., 2023). Communication in an organizational environment when it does not run well will result in a work environment that is not open, thus giving rise to negative implications for work motivation (Santalla-Banderali & Alvarado, 2022; Sulistiasih & Widodo, 2022). The impact of a non-open work environment will have a negative impact on employee job satisfaction which will decrease (Putri et al., 2023). Research conducted by Obiunu and Yalaju (2020) interpersonal communication can have a positive influence on job satisfaction because it increases understanding between employees which can help cooperation between employees and support them to be

able to work well. In addition, research Madhur and Sriram (2020) explains that interpersonal communication also has a positive influence on job satisfaction and results in achieving job satisfaction. Different from the findings Abbas and Mohammed (2022) which shows that there is no relationship between interpersonal communication and job satisfaction. This shows that there is an imbalance in research so that it is necessary to review interpersonal communication as a predictor of job satisfaction. The following is the hypothesis of this research:

H2: Interpersonal communication has a positive influence on job satisfaction.

2.3. Leader Member Exchange and Interpersonal Communication

Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) is a leadership theory based on social exchange, as proposed by Graen and Uhl-Bien (1995), emphasizing reciprocal relationships between leaders and subordinates. When leaders offer trust, support, and opportunities, team members reciprocate with loyalty, commitment, and better performance, which enhances job satisfaction. High-quality LMX is marked by personalized interaction, emotional support, and mutual understanding. Erdogan and Bauer (2015) argue that this closeness positively influences job satisfaction, as employees feel appreciated and involved. Conversely, low-quality LMX tends to be formal, rigid, and may lead to dissatisfaction.

Interpersonal communication also plays a vital role in shaping positive work experiences. According to Interpersonal Communication Theory by Michael Argyle, communication builds relationships, emotional bonds, and impacts individual feelings during social interaction (Kim & Yi, 2019; Rizky et al., 2023; Shang et al., 2024). In the workplace, effective communication helps deliver expectations, provide feedback, and foster emotional connections between leaders and subordinates. Research by Abbas and Mohammed (2022) and Yeo and Ha (2025) shows that open, supportive, and empathetic communication by supervisors can significantly improve job satisfaction, making employees feel valued.

The integration of LMX and interpersonal communication is further explained through Graen and Uhl-Bien (1995) two-factor motivation theory, which distinguishes motivator factors (like recognition and achievement) from hygiene factors (preventing dissatisfaction). Positive LMX and strong communication serve as motivator factors, fostering better relationships and enhancing job satisfaction. Widodo and Wiardi (2015) highlight that interpersonal communication mediates the relationship between LMX and job satisfaction. When communication flows effectively, building and sustaining quality LMX becomes easier, leading to a more satisfying and productive work environment. The following is the hypothesis of this research:

H3: Leader member exchange and interpersonal communication has a positive influence on job satisfaction.

3. Methods

The type of research used in this study is survey research with quantitative methods. Quantitative methods rely on data analysis using statistical modes to reveal the relationship between two or more variables being studied (Azwar, 2017). The population used was 115 employees of the Ministry of Religion of Sleman. The sampling technique applied used the Saturated Sampling method, which is a comprehensive sampling in the population included as a research sample. The population size is 115 employees, so the entire population is used as a research sample. The data collection process utilizes a Likert scale with four answer choices, namely Very Suitable (4), Suitable (3), Unsuitable (2), Very Unsuitable (1), and the scale is distributed using a hard copy distributed through the Head of Division.

The instrument used is a modification of the An Interpersonal Communication Scale which is based on the concept Bienvenu (1971) developed by Jared and Oznur (2016) consists of 11 items which are a unidimensional scale covering aspects of positive feelings, empathy, openness, support and similarity, the Leader Member Exchange Scale which is based on the concept Liden and Maslyn (1998) developed by Joseph et al. (2016) consists of 12 items covering aspects of affection, loyalty, contribution and professional risk and the Job Satisfaction Survey which is based on the concept Spector (2022) developed by Mustafa et al. (2019) which includes aspects of salary, promotion, benefits, supervision, operational procedures, coworkers, work methods and communication. Content validation was conducted with Gregory analysis showing very high criteria with a score of 1 (>0.8). Reliability on the An Interpersonal communication scale was 0.882, Leader member Exchange Scale was 0.912 and Job Satisfaction Survey was 0.948 which was tested using Cronbach's Alpha.

The data analysis method used in this study uses descriptive analysis and multiple linear regression analysis using the SPSS version 22 application. Before conducting multiple linear regression analysis tests, prerequisite analysis tests are first carried out which include normality tests, multicollinearity tests and heteroscedasticity tests.

4. Results

The demographics of the subjects in this study were employees working in Ministry of Religion of Sleman for more details can be seen in Table 1. Based on Table 1, it shows that most of the sample is aged 41-50 years, as many as 45 people (39%) of the Sleman Ministry of Religion employees. Most of the samples in this study have a bachelor's degree, as many as 75 people (65%). Meanwhile, most of the samples in this study have a work period ranging from 11 to 20 years, with a total of 50 people (45%).

Table 1. Characteristics Respondent

Characteristics		Frequency	Presentation
Age	20-30	13	11%
	31-40	20	17%
	41-50	45	39%
	51-60	36	31%
	61-70	1	1%
Education	High School	10	9%
	S1	75	65%
	S2	30	26%
Years of service	1-10 years	27	23%
	11-20 years	50	43%
	21-30 years	33	29%
	31-40 years	5	4%
	41-50 years	0	0%
Gender	Man	69	60%
	Woman	46	40%
Division	Supervisor of Middle School / Madrasah	9	8%
	Middle School Supervisor / PAI	8	7%
	Madrasah Education Section	9	8%
	Section of Early Islamic Education and Islamic Boarding Schools	8	7%

Characteristics	Frequency	Presentation
Islamic Religious Education Section	9	8%
Hajj Umrah Organizing Section	9	8%
Islamic Community Guidance Section	9	8%
Zakat Waqf Organizer	9	8%
Catholic Organizer	9	8%
Christian Overseer	9	8%
Subdivision of Finance	9	8%
Subdivision of Personnel Affairs	9	8%
General Sub-Division	9	8%

Table 2. Research Categorization

	Category	Score Interval	Frequency	Presentation
Job Satisfaction	Very Low	$X < 30$	3	3%
	Low	$30 < X \leq 36$	26	23%
	Medium	$36 < X \leq 42$	48	42%
	High	$42 < X \leq 47$	29	25%
	Very high	$X \geq 47$	9	8%
Leader member Exchange	Very Low	$X < 28$	3	3%
	Low	$28 < X \leq 33$	20	17%
	Medium	$33 < X \leq 38$	50	43%
	High	$38 < X \leq 43$	21	18%
	Very high	$X \geq 43$	21	18%
Interpersonal Communication	Very Low	$X < 28$	3	3%
	Low	$28 < X \leq 33$	20	17%
	Medium	$33 < X \leq 38$	50	43%
	High	$38 < X \leq 43$	21	18%
	Very high	$X \geq 43$	21	18%

Based on Table 2, it shows that the level of job satisfaction of the majority of Kemenag employees is in the moderate category with a total of 65 (57%) and members who have a very very low level of job satisfaction are 9 (8%) employees. Majority of the level of leader member exchange owned by the Ministry of Religious Affairs employees is in the medium category with a total of 48 (42%) and the level of leader member exchange of the Ministry of Religious Affairs employees who are in the very low category is 3 (3%). Majority of employees of the Ministry of Religion's interpersonal communication are in the moderate category with a total of 50 (43%) and employees with very low interpersonal communication numbering 3 (3%).

The results of the normality test, applied using the One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test and processed through the SPSS version 22 application for Windows, indicate that the Monte Carlo Sig. value is greater than 0.05, specifically 0.059. This shows that the research data are normally distributed and that the samples taken are representative of the population. The results of the linearity test show that the linearity significance values for Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) and interpersonal communication on job satisfaction are both 0.000, while the deviation from linearity values are 0.755 for LMX and 0.107 for interpersonal communication. These results indicate that the linearity significance values are < 0.05 , and the deviation from linearity values are > 0.05 . The results of the multicollinearity test show that the tolerance values for the Leader-Member Exchange and interpersonal communication variables, with respect to job satisfaction, are both 0.521, with a VIF value of 1.921 (< 10). This indicates that there is no multicollinearity between the

two independent variables, meaning they do not overlap. The results of the heteroscedasticity test show that the Leader-Member Exchange variable has a significance value of 0.541 (> 0.05) and interpersonal communication has a significance value of 0.682 (> 0.05). Thus, the regression model passes the heteroscedasticity test. Furthermore, the results of the F-test analysis can be seen in Table 3.

Table 3. F test analysis results

Model	Mean Square	F-count	P-Value
Regression	1850.757	50,463	0.000
Residual	36,675		

Based on Table 3, it is known that the Sig value obtained is 0.000, which means it is below the significance limit of 0.05. This shows that the independent variables leader member exchange and interpersonal communication together have a significant contribution to the job satisfaction variable. Furthermore, the results of the T-test analysis can be seen in Table 4.

Table 4. T-test analysis results

Model	Unstandardized	Standardized	P-Value
LMX	0.199	0.133	$< .001$
KI	0.947	0.590	$< .000$

Based on Table 4, the Sig value for the leader member exchange and interpersonal communication variables were <0.001 and <0.000 , respectively, indicating that the value was below the threshold of 0.05. This shows that the leader member exchange variable can provide a strong significant influence on job satisfaction, as well as interpersonal communication can have a significant effect on job satisfaction. Furthermore, the results of the determination coefficient can be seen in Table 5.

Table 5. Coefficient of determination

Model	R	R Square	Adj. R Square	Std. Error
1	0.688	0.474	0.465	6.05603

Based on table 5, the Adjusted R² value is 0.465, which shows that the variables of leader member exchange and interpersonal communication together can play an important role in increasing job satisfaction by 46.5%, the remaining 53.5% is influenced by other factors outside of this study. The variable leader member exchange provides an effective contribution of 7.19% to job satisfaction while leader member exchange provides an effective contribution of 40.2% to job satisfaction.

Table 6. Effective contribution of independent variables

Variables	Regression Coefficient	Correlation Coefficient	Effective Contribution
Leader Member exchange	0.133	0.541	0.0719
Interpersonal Communication	0.590	0.682	0.4023
Amount			0.4742

Table 6 shows the effective contribution of each independent variable to the magnitude of the influence, which is 0.4749 or 47.4%. The effective contribution is obtained from the result of multiplying the regression coefficient by the correlation coefficient and then presented in percentage form. The Leader Member exchange

variable has an effective contribution of 0.0719 or 7.19% and the Interpersonal Communication variable has an effective contribution of 0.4023 or 40.2%. The total effective contribution of the two variables is the same as the magnitude of the influence of the independent variables simultaneously, which is 0.4742, equivalent to the r-square value.

5. Discussion

The results of the hypothesis test that have been conducted indicate that all hypotheses in this study are accepted. Thus, it can be concluded that Leader Member Exchange and Interpersonal Communication, both together and separately, affect job satisfaction in employees of the Ministry of Religious Affairs of Sleman. The two independent variables in this study, namely leader member exchange and interpersonal communication, provide an effective contribution of 46.5% to the job satisfaction variable of employees of the Ministry of Religious Affairs of Sleman. Furthermore, the results of the T-test in this study indicate that the leader member exchange variable has a positive influence on job satisfaction. This means that the higher the level of leader member exchange owned by an individual, the higher the level of job satisfaction felt. Conversely, if the individual's leader member exchange is low, the individual's job satisfaction will also be low following the influence of the leader member exchange. The results of the T-test on the leader member exchange variable are in accordance with previous research belonging to Harahap et al. (2023), Suharnomo and Kartika (2018), and Kangas (2021) who found that leader member exchange has a positive influence on job satisfaction. This happens because a good leader member exchange relationship between employees and superiors allows superiors to provide support, opportunities, and guidance that are beneficial to employees. It is proven that in the Ministry of Religion, leader member exchange inspires employees to have high work contributions because efforts in doing work are appreciated and will provide more feedback so that employees feel satisfaction in their work.

Then, the results of this study also support the research conducted by Pramastuti and Widodo (2016) stating that leader member exchange has many advantages such as high trust between employees and leaders, good social interaction in the organization, and formal/informal rewards received by employees. This is proven at the Ministry of Religious Affairs that leader member exchange has an impact on the quality of employee social interaction so that it can create a more conducive and comfortable work atmosphere that can benefit the organization. In addition, a quality Leader Member Exchange relationship between leaders and subordinates encourages subordinates to follow leaders in seeking valuable information and experience, which can be used to improve skills and self-development. Pratiwi and Alfaruqy (2023) stated that leader member exchange can motivate shared awareness between leaders and subordinates in carrying out work so that company goals will be more easily achieved.

In addition, the existence of an imbalance in the results of effective contributions between interpersonal communication and LMX is due to the characteristics of the organization and work environment that tend to prioritize emotional closeness, social relationships, and strong religious values. In an environment like this, employees tend to be more motivated and feel appreciated when there is intense and humane two-way communication, compared to the formal relationship between superiors and subordinates emphasized in the LMX concept (Putri et al., 2023). Therefore, interpersonal communication is able to provide a much greater contribution to job satisfaction in organizations such as the Ministry of Religious Affairs. The results of this study also show that there are other factors that can influence job satisfaction besides leader member exchange and interpersonal communication, including problems that can influence the formation of job

satisfaction in employees of the Sleman Ministry of Religion (Ghasemy et al., 2021). Therefore, it is important for agencies to pay attention to and support the strengthening of job satisfaction in their employees, especially through increasing leader member exchange by building trust and increasing interpersonal communication in the form of building self-confidence and communication improvement training (Erdogan & Bauer, 2015).

6. Conclusion

The results of this study indicate that leader member exchange and interpersonal communication has a positive and significant influence on the formation of job satisfaction of employees of the Sleman Ministry of Religion. Employees who have a good leader member exchange relationship between employees and superiors allow superiors to provide support, opportunities and guidance that is beneficial to employees, so that they have a high work contribution because efforts in doing work are appreciated and will provide more feedback so that employees feel satisfied with their work. This belief can encourage members to remain calm, think clearly and be able to take adaptive steps even when faced with challenging situations. On the other hand, The good interpersonal communication possessed by the employees of the Sleman Ministry of Religion shows the ability in an active relationship between two or more people who provide information to each other by requiring individual abilities, building a comfortable relationship between the two so that they can mutually produce benefits according to needs, so that they are able to show the form of individual feelings or attitudes towards their work in a positive way. This research has limitations, including: This research was conducted on employees who were mostly ASN, where there was a sense of stable job satisfaction due to the salary obtained by employees of the Sleman Ministry of Religion. In addition, this research was only conducted on employees of the Sleman Ministry of Religious Affairs. The results cannot be generalized to agencies with different characteristics. Therefore, future research is suggested to explore the characteristics of respondents and be able to develop other variables that affect employee satisfaction.

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Data Disclosure Statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.



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