

Leader-Member Exchange and Employees with Disabilities' Job Embeddedness: Mediating Effects of Organizational Climate

(Pertukaran Pemimpin-Anggota dan Pengekalan Kerja Pekerja Kurang Upaya: Kesan Pengantara Iklim Organisasi)

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ABSTRACT

Given the lack of research on employees with disability embeddedness in organizations, this study aims to investigate the mediating effects of organizational climate between leader-member exchanges and employees with disabilities' job embeddedness. A survey involving 282 employees with disability working in public and private Malaysia sectors was performed to test the study hypotheses. Furthermore, the study results were analysed using the structural equation modelling (SEM) AMOS mediation analysis and indicated partial mediating effects between the leader-member exchange, organizational climate, and employees with disabilities's job embeddedness. As individuals with disability possessed different aptitudes that necessitated diverse management initiatives from supervisors, the reciprocal advantages gained from employee with disability-supervisor relationships and organizational climates should be duly considered. The consideration proved essential in influencing employees with disabilities' work experiences and employee retention in organizations. It is hoped that these findings will enhance supervisors' understanding on the impact of leader-member exchange as well as organizational climate in strengthening a high-quality relationship with the employees with disability which simultaneously will boost their job embeddedness.

Keywords: Employee with disability; job embeddedness; leader-member exchange; organizational climate; supervisor

ABSTRAK

Berdasarkan kepada kurangnya kajian mendalam berkaitan dengan pengekalannya kerja orang kurang upaya, maka kajian ini disasarkan untuk mengkaji kesan pengantara iklim organisasi di antara faktor pertukaran pemimpin-anggota (leader-member exchange) dengan pengekalannya kerja mereka. Tinjauan dijalankan terhadap 282 pekerja kurang upaya di sektor awam dan swasta di Malaysia bagi membuktikan hipotesis-hipotesis kajian. Analisis kajian dilakukan dengan menggunakan perisian Pemodelan Persamaan Berstruktur (SEM) AMOS mendapati, adanya potensi pengantara di antara pertukaran pemimpin-anggota (leader-member exchange), iklim organisasi dan pengekalannya kerja orang kurang upaya. Dapatan kajian ini juga membuktikan bahawa pentingnya hubungan di antara penyelia dengan pekerja kurang upaya; disertai dengan iklim organisasi yang kondusif berpotensi untuk memastikan mereka akan kekal bekerja. Oleh kerana individu kurang upaya memiliki keupayaan berbeza yang memerlukan kepelbagaian dari segi inisiatif pengurusan oleh penyelia, maka manfaat timbal balik yang diperolehi daripada hubungan antara pekerja kurang upaya dengan penyelia dan iklim organisasi harus dipertimbangkan sewajarnya. Pertimbangan ini terbukti penting dalam mempengaruhi pengalaman kerja orang kurang upaya serta mengekalkan mereka dalam sesebuah organisasi. Adalah diharapkan agar dapatan-dapatan ini akan meningkatkan kefahaman penyelia mengenai kesan pertukaran pemimpin-anggota dengan iklim organisasi untuk meningkatkan hubungan yang berkualiti dengan pekerja kurang upaya dan secara tidak langsung akan menggalakkan peningkatan pengekalannya kerja mereka.

Kata kunci: Iklim organisasi; ketetapan kerja; ketua; pekerja kurang upaya pertukaran pemimpin-anggota

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INTRODUCTION

In underdeveloped countries, individuals with disabilities frequently live in abject poverty and reliance. Restricted access to essential services like education and job training is one of the causes of this. It has been demonstrated that there is a strong interaction between disability and poverty, with disability causing poverty to result in

impairment and disabilities (Lashari et al. 2022). In Malaysia, the process of hiring and employee turnover has become an endless source of concern due to the difficulty in finding jobs that match their skills. The government of Malaysia has shown its dedication to empowering people with disabilities to participate in the economy and reach their full potential through the passage of the revised Persons with Disabilities Act, 2008 (Act 685). Surprisingly, employees who identified as PWD have made up a small percentage of the workforce with high rate of turnover (with most leaving within the first six months) (Personal Communication, February 27 2014). Therefore, a disability-inclusive policy framework was required to promote a high standard of living for disabled workers, complete with equal rights and respect (Bredgaard & Salado-Rasmussen 2020; Zaidi 2018). The notion that affects plays a crucial role in leader-member exchange (LMX) processes is not new, but it has attracted significant research interest since the turn of the millennium particularly on PWDs. This interest, however, has led to a proliferation of perspectives that have tended to obscure rather than clarify the affect-LMX nexus. Following the high turnover rates among employees with disability and the consequences of the mainstream “exclusion” behaviour (Islam et al. 2015; Li et al. 2018), studies on employees with disabilities’ job embeddedness should be emphasized appropriately.

Research on employees with disabilities’ job embeddedness was crucial in providing new insights into managers’ incorporation of PWDs in the workplace. The findings were based on past studies indicating that job embeddedness negatively influenced turnover intention might predict organizational retention (Greene et al. 2017), and increased retention satisfaction practices (Potgieter et al. 2018). Much evidence highlighted that employee with disability faced challenges in finding employment were discriminated by employers (Bredgaard & Salado-Rasmussen 2020), and were embedded with specific jobs (Dag & Kullberg 2010). Nevertheless, past studies seldom integrated concerns on how leader-member relationships potentially affected their job embeddedness. Hence, job embeddedness is a vital factor for employees with disability, specifically in conceptualising employment retention elements (Mitchell et al. 2001).

Investigating the causes of job embeddedness may help explain why disabled workers stay longer in their occupations. Organizational climate has been overlooked as a cause of disability-related attrition and job embeddedness. Disabled employee turnover and employment are worldwide issues. Thus, this research links leader-member exchange, organisational climate, and job embeddedness for disabled employees to better explain this phenomenon. These results should help managers better understand the role that leader-member exchange and organizational climate play in fostering productive relationships with employees who experience disabilities, which in turn should improve the degree to which these workers feel integrated into their jobs.

This study contributes to the literature in two ways. First, this study is the first attempt to examine the relationship between employees with disability with high job embeddedness in Malaysia. It was believed that disabled workers who were deeply ingrained in their jobs would demonstrate their professional skills and be able to support themselves financially. Second, the novelty of this study lies considering the environmental factors of employees with disability that are associated with organizational climates due to the impact of an organizational system on groups and individuals (Denison 1996). Given the fact that research on leader-member exchanges and turnover rates consisted of various intermediaries, such as work engagement (Tanskanen et al. 2019), job satisfaction (Kim & Yi 2019), and the role of conflict (Elanain 2014). This study, therefore, believed that organizational climates could potentially mediate between leader-member exchanges and employees with disabilities’ job embeddedness.

The rest of the article is structured as follows. First, the academic literature explaining the development of the hypotheses as well as identification of the gaps between the major theories that form the conceptual framework of this study. Second, the scoping review methodology used in this study is explained. Third, the main results are presented through statistical analysis data. Finally, the last session lays out the implications and conclusion.

LITERATURE REVIEW

SOCIAL EXCHANGE THEORY

The social exchange theory was acclaimed as one of the major theoretical perspectives in social psychology regarding human behaviour (Homans 1958) and was subsequently implemented in organizational behaviour (Blau 1964). Additionally, this theory functioned as a benchmark for social interactions between the parties involved and reciprocal contributions. Blau (1964) stated that people voluntarily engaged in social relationships following the recognition of other parties’ mutual and potentially-satisfying contributions concerning breadth and value. In this vein, individuals receiving high work values would reciprocate equally (Homans 1958). The social exchange process was also perceived to be significant and meaningful in an individual’s organizational perceptions and behaviours (Burton et al. 2008).

This study also employed the social exchange theory in understanding the fundamentals of exchange rules from the employees with disabilities’ perspective. For example, one of the basic social exchange theory principles

denoted that relationships developed over time into trusting, loyal, and mutual commitments (Cropanzano & Mitchell 2005) in leader-member exchanges, organizational climates, and job embeddedness. Vlachou et al. (2021) mentioned that job embeddedness relied on supervisory support. Therefore, the exchange concept was identified in the leader-member exchange and organizational climate as it was primarily determined by the perceptions and expectations of high-quality supervisor-subordinate relationships. As employees tended to take notice and make inferences of surrounding occurrences, reciprocal advantages were based on the exchange rules.

LEADER-MEMBER EXCHANGE

Studies on leader-member exchanges have gained attention over the past 30 years (Harris et al. 2011) and specifically emphasised the importance of establishing a healthy relationship between leaders (supervisors) and organizational members (subordinates). The underlying belief in leader-member exchanges reflected that a supervisor-employee relationship developed professional exchanges work-related benefits (Liden & Maslyn 1998). In Graen and Uhl-Bien (1995), leader-member relationships were effectively strengthened when both parties developed high-quality social exchanges.

Past empirical studies also indicated that good leader-member exchange relationships were often advantageous and led to positive outcomes. For example, a strong relationship indicated low turnover intention (Elanain 2014), high employee reciprocation of organizational support (Ahmed et al. 2014), positive influences on psychological empowerment (Aggarwal et al. 2020), strong organizational commitment (Li et al. 2018), and the willingness to establish a stimulating work environment (Radstaak & Hennes 2017). Although much research was conducted on positive organizational functions, studies on organizational leader-member exchanges among employees with disability remained lacking. Mumtaz and Rowley (2020) stated that employees generally required a high-quality social exchange relationship in developing a relationship-oriented method between supervisors and employees. In this regard, different leadership styles and relationship dynamics were used during employee-supervisor interactions. Additionally, high-quality leader-member exchanges indicated positive social exchange relationships between supervisors and subordinates with beneficial outcomes.

ORGANIZATIONAL CLIMATE

Litwin and Stringer's (1968) definition of organizational climate was incorporated into this study as the directly or indirectly perceived organizational factors by employees that potentially affected individual motivation and behaviour. Following the social exchange theory, the mutual interaction between environmental and personal elements involved the development and modification of human beliefs through social influences within an organizational environment. However, the beliefs and perceptions relied on the values derived from exchange qualities. On another note, Berberoglu (2018) believed that employees observed personal characteristics and surrounding occurrences to determine organizational priorities.

JOB EMBEDDEDNESS

Given that high employee turnover rates (Huning et al. 2020) might cause various challenges, Mitchell et al. (2001) proposed a factor that promoted job retention. According to Mitchell et al. (2001), job embeddedness involved multiple aspects that retained employees in the current organization. Essentially, people were integrated into a social web that promoted job retention following three key aspects: link, fit, and sacrifice. It was also assumed that employees with high job embeddedness reflected more organizational connections (link), were comfortable with job scopes that complemented personal aims (fit), and voluntarily handed over valuable items upon resigning (sacrifice) (Sekiguchi et al. 2008). Existing studies pertaining to the notion of job embeddedness have expanded significantly but without differentiating among the dimensions that it consists of (Tian et al. 2016) thus their true global nature can be questioned. It is significant to look on job embeddedness, considering each of its dimensions is related to employee with disabilities' intention to quit.

HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

Following the theoretical principles of the social exchange theory, the leader-member exchange relationship potentially affected organizational climates and mediated the relationship between leader-member exchanges and employees with disabilities' job embeddedness. As such, the concept proposed mutual exchanges. For example, employees in a supportive and conducive environment were motivated to generate positive reactions to work situations. Pagan and Malo (2008) confirmed that PWDs with lower job expectations reflected higher work happiness compared to non-disadvantaged groups. Workplace treatments also significantly influenced PWDs on personal grounds. Hence, it was predicted that rational exchange relationships might lead to higher motivation among employees with disability and positively affected their job embeddedness (Ehtiyar & Ersoy 2018).

Unsurprisingly, the leader-member exchange operated as a predictor and was significantly positive to various outcomes in line with the previous section. Nevertheless, Colella and Varma's (2001) study indicated that employees with disability experienced a lower leader-member exchange quality with supervisors. Theoretically, individuals who were committed to social exchanges expected reciprocations from the other party (Blau 1964), thus creating a sense of obligation and indebtedness. In the case of employees with disabilities, high leader-member exchange relationship provides hints to them about the behaviors that are accepted and appreciated in the organization. Working in an organization which supports the fulfilling of disabled work needs will likely increase the tendency of the disabled employees to embed with their job (Ehtiyar & Ersoy 2018). In a lower leader-member exchange quality, employees underwent higher stress and lower motivation levels compared to employees in a high exchange relationship (Radstaak & Hennes 2017). Resultantly, the findings indicated the factors underlying high turnover rates among employees with disability. A sound understanding of the turnover rates proved crucial in employees' job embeddedness. Hence, the following hypothesis was developed:

H₁ Leader-member exchange is positively related to job embeddedness.

Human behaviours generally denote the functions of an individual's characteristics and actions in the environment (Ancarani et al. 2019). The relevant works of literature indicated that leader-member exchanges involved both supervisors' and employees' behaviours for mutual as opposed to one-sided relationships (Maslyn & Uhl-Bien 2001). Meanwhile, the organizational climate was defined as an insider's perceptions of organizational characteristics (Tagiuri & Litwin 1968) and employees' perceptions of observable practices and procedures on the surface level of organizational routines (Denison 1996). It was also highlighted that leader-member exchanges provided an exploratory mechanism for employees with disability in an organizational climate. The concept corresponded to the exchange rules in the social exchange theory, wherein the mutual benefits received by both supervisors and employees positively influenced the environment (Al Ghazo et al. 2019) as observed by organizational members. Consequently, it was proposed that a high-quality leader-member exchange led to various organizational climate-related benefits and resources. Thus, the following hypothesis was developed:

H₂ Leader-member exchange is positively related to the organizational climate.

According to Organ (1988), organizational climate is related to both the performance of the individual as well as the performance of the organization. In fact, Organ (1997) further take task performance and organizational climate as in-role and extra-role performance behaviors respectively. They emphasized that organizational climate could lead to the effectiveness of job embeddedness. Previously, many other researchers also reported that organizational climate has positive relationship with job embeddedness (Podsakoff & MacKenzie 1994; Walz & Niehoff 2000).

When an employee believes that their organizational climate is providing more support, he or she will feel a greater sense of obligation to that organization (Shore & Wayne 1993) which ultimately affect on their job embeddedness (Fatima et al. 2015). Even if an employer claims to value employee input during the decision-making process, that message will fall flat if workers believe they are being ignored. Therefore, the extent to which employees feel they are supported by the organizational climate is likely to have an impact on how they act while on the job. Those workers who have a high job embeddedness are connected to their work, feel comfortable in their roles, and believe they will have to give up a lot of things they value if they quit their jobs. Being one of the 'anti-withdrawal' mechanism of job embeddedness, organizational climate also instigates employees to keep performing (Lee et al. 2004). Therefore, employees who are highly embedded in their jobs will exhibit superior positive organizational climate compared to those who are less embedded. Consistent with this notion, organizational climate is found to positively associated with job embeddedness as the following hypothesis was proposed:

H₃ Organizational climate is positively associated with job embeddedness.

Empirical study by Mehralian et al. (2020) found significant impact of mediating role of organizational climate between managerial skills and pharmacy performance. In this study, leader-member exchanges may directly affect employees with disabilities' work performance, whereas organizational climates indirectly influenced the employees. Consequently, leader-member exchanges were recommended to strengthen the relationships between immediate supervisors and employees with disability for mutual exchanges. For example, both parties would engage in reciprocity, whereby the supervisor provided cognitive or affective support (Perez et al. 2015) in exchange for the employee's work performance or efforts.

Furthermore, the exchanges should be integrated into the organizational climate that may attach employees with disabilities to the organization. It implies that the more the interactions are, the more the benefits than can be obtained (Ghahtarani et al. 2020). Given the positive perception of the organizational climate, employees felt

professionally adequate for the leaders and organization. The argument indicated that a strengthened leader-member exchange relationship at the supervisory level would enable the provision of support, information, and resources to nurture employees. A high-quality relationship did not only result in a more positive organizational climate (Ahmad et al. 2017), but the positive exchange led to employees with disabilities' job embeddedness and promoted employee retention. Hence, the following hypothesis was developed:

H₄ Organizational climate mediates the relationship between leader-member exchange and job embeddedness.

As such, the study objectives are presented as follows: a) investigate the leader-member exchange relationship and employees with disabilities' job embeddedness, b) assess the leader-member exchange quality as a predictor to organizational climate, c) investigate the relationship between organizational climate and job embeddedness, and d) assess the organizational climate as a mediating mechanism between leader-member exchange and employees with disabilities' job embeddedness.

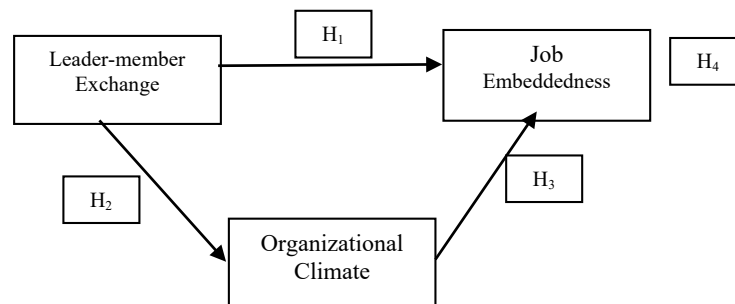


FIGURE 1. Theoretical framework

METHODOLOGY

PROCEDURES AND SAMPLES

This study used validated measures from previous works of literature. Notably, past research was primarily performed and assessed in Western countries and written in English. As this study was performed in Malaysia and involved non-English speakers, the questionnaire was translated into Malay language (Bahasa Melayu) to minimise any linguistic and cultural variances (Nes et al. 2010). Specifically, the back-translation process was utilised as recommended by scholars due to extensive usage in cross-cultural studies (Brislin 1970). Furthermore, the instrument was evaluated by an officer from the Department of Social Welfare and two employees with disability from the private and public sectors for improvisation. One of the employees with disability was physically challenged, whereas the other employee was hearing-impaired. The employees were requested to read the instrument and circle any item, word, or phrase that sounded odd, sensitive, or unfamiliar. The questionnaire was then modified and submitted to another bilingual for evaluation.

In this study context, the employees with disability were selected from public and private Malaysian sectors. A cross-sectional study using questionnaires was employed to answer questions on job embeddedness. Self-administered questionnaires were chosen as a longer timeline was required for respondents to provide feedback. The time constraint was caused by the limited break time allocated by the organization. Many organizations were unwilling to permit employees to utilise working hours for irrelevant tasks, such as completing questionnaires. Hence, questionnaire sets were mailed in stamped envelopes to the respondents' home addresses to be personally received.

Additionally, instructions on mailing the completed questionnaire using the provided envelope to the researcher's home address were specified in the cover letter. As some organizations permitted the researcher to meet the employees with disability at work, the session occurred at the respondents' workplace or shopping malls (subject to the officers' or respondents' requests). Several respondents preferred to have the session conducted outside the organization. Regardless, some sessions were held in the organizations as recommended by the human resource officers who arranged the meeting. Specifically, the sessions involved visually-impaired and hearing-impaired employees as the individuals faced challenges in reading the questions. There were several ways applied on how employees with vision impairment access the printed survey. They were asked on their sight condition as well as how much they can see. Some of them used their special assistive reading device in answering the survey while others seek help from researcher to read the questionnaire for them.

The research sample was derived from relevant sources, such as the Department of Social Welfare and the Department of Labour. Additionally, this study consisted of employees with disability at the operational level in both the private and public sectors. Due to the insufficient information on employees with disability, the researcher

was required to individually approach the appropriate ministries, departments, and companies concerning employees with disability based on the previous general list. This study used 536 raw data from the private sector and 343 from the public sector. All the received PWD name lists were then filtered to identify four disability types. The study respondents were selected based on the following categories: physical disability, hearing impairment, visual impairment, and speech disability. Intellectually-employees with disability were excluded from this study due to cognitive challenges (National Academies of Sciences et al. 2015). Specifically, the deficiency in intellectual functioning minimised reasoning abilities, problem-solving, planning, abstract thinking, judgment, and academic learning.

The stratified random sampling method was employed in this study as the most efficient technique in distinguishing the required information from various sections (Sekaran & Bougie 2010). Each subgroup (disability type) was identified and the final data was classified following the disability type to gather respondents' information from each group in both the public and private sectors. The survey participation was open to all employees with disability. From the 684 distributed questionnaires, 282 were returned with a response rate of 41.2% for the mailed self-administered questionnaires. Regarding the physical session, respondents were immediately approached upon receiving permission from the human resource manager. Respondents were also approached at residences to participate in the study.

MEASURES

The constructs, including some reverse items, were measured by using a seven-point scale ranging from (1) "Strongly Disagree" to (7) "Strongly Agree". Multiple items from different sub-constructs in each part and reverse items were used to improve the reliability and validity of the instruments.

This research employed three validated scales to be measured as illustrated in the theoretical framework. The scales were adapted to fit with the research objectives. A total of 53 scale items were used to measure the constructs. Table 1 lists the number and sources of the items for each construct used.

TABLE 1. Total of scale items used to measure each construct

No	Constructs	Number of Items	Source
1	Leader-member exchange - Affect - Loyalty - Contribution - Professional Respect	12	Liden & Maslyn (1998)
2	Organizational climate - Decision-making - Warmth - Risk - Openness - Rewards - Structures	15	Litwin & Stringer (1968)
3	Job embeddedness - Fit - Link - Sacrifice	26	Mitchell et al. (2001)

Leader-Member Exchange The measurement of leader-member exchange quality used Liden and Maslyn's (1998) studies ($\alpha = 0.80$). The items measured how the respondents agree regarding their relationship with their supervisor. A sample question from this scale was "I like my supervisor very much as a person". This scale is a valid measure used in previous research (Sparrow & Liden 2005).

Organizational Climate This research employed the organizational climate scale used by Downey et al. (1974), which was based on the work by Litwin and Stringer (1968). The items measured the employees' agreement on their working environment ($\alpha = 0.60$). A sample question for organizational climate scale included was "There is a lot of warmth in the relationship between management and workers in this organization".

Job Embeddedness The questionnaire items used for assessing job embeddedness were based on the validated instrument developed by Mitchell et al. (2001) ($\alpha = 0.74$). The original sub-constructs for job embeddedness were divided into "on-the-job" and "off-the-job" relationships. However, the focus was given only to on-the-job side of embeddedness. The main reason was based on the main concern of this study, which is how job embeddedness relates with other work-related variables such as leader-member exchange and organizational climate. Furthermore, on-the-job embeddedness is believed to interact with work-related variables more than off-the-job embeddedness. A sample question from this scale was "I feel like I am a good match for this company".

ANALYSIS TECHNIQUES

This research followed a two-step modelling, which is developing the measurement model before proceeding with the structural model, as recommended by Mulaik and Millsap (2000), to assess the relationships between conceptual constructs. The measurement properties of the constructs were assessed first, and then the structural model was analysed to test the hypotheses. This research adopted measures that are commonly used to evaluate models, namely the root-mean-square error (RMSEA) ($RMSEA < 0.08$), comparative fit index (CFI), and lastly, parsimonious fit indices, which can be measured by normed chi-square (χ^2/df) ($\chi^2/df < 5.0$).

RESULTS

PROFILE ANALYSIS

Table 3 represents the profile of respondents. All information is represented using actual figures and percentages to simplify the interpretation.

TABLE 2. Profile of respondents

Demographic Profile	Number of Respondents (N = 282)	Valid Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	73
	Female	27
Race	Malay	82.3
	Chinese	6.7
	Indian	7.8
	Others	3.2
Types of Disability	Hearing Impairment	25.5
	Visually Impaired	5.3
	Physical Disability	66.3
	Speech Disabled	2.8
Marital Status	Single	46.1
	Married	49.3
	Divorced	4.6
Disability Since	Born	55.3
	Accident Met	44.7
Work with recent supervisor Mean = 2.74 SD = 1.26	Less than 1 year	20.6
	Between 1 – 2 years	24.1
	Between 3 – 5 years	25.2
	Between 6 - 10 years	20.9
	More than 10 years	9.2
Age Mean = 35.09 SD = 9.87	Less than 21 years old	2.8
	Between 21 to 30 years old	36.2
	Between 31 to 40 years old	34
	Between 41 to 50 years old	16.3
	Between 51 to 60 years old	10.3
	More than 61 years old	0.4

Note: SD – standard deviation

Descriptive statistics for all variables used in this research are shown in Table 3. The correlation values between the variables were found to be less than 0.85 as recommended by Kline (1998). The measurement model has achieved the discriminant validity as its diagonal value is higher than the values in its row and column. In this research, the Cronbach's alpha ranged from 0.83 to 0.91, while the correlations between variables were found to be between 0.67 and 0.782.

TABLE 3. Means (M), standard deviation (SD) and correlation between constructs

Constructs	M	SD	Cronbach's Alpha	1	2	3
1 Leader-Member Exchange	5.50	0.90	0.84	1		
2 Organizational Climate	5.75	0.77	0.83	.672**	2	
3 Job Embeddedness	5.50	0.74	0.91	.732**	.787**	3

Note: **p<0.01,* p<0.05 (2 tailed)

VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

The reliability and validity is assessed once the unidimensionality of the constructs was achieved. Reliability is assessed using Cronbach's alpha, construct reliability (CR) and average variance extracted. Table 4 shows the summary of measurement model evaluation. The Cronbach's alpha for all constructs exceeded the benchmark of

0.65 (Piaw 2009). Using confirmatory factor analysis, construct reliability (CR) and average variance extracted (AVE) were calculated based on formulas proposed by Hair Jr. et al. (2010) to further confirm on the reliability of the constructs. All constructs in this research fulfilled the benchmark of $CR \geq 0.60$ and $AVE \geq 0.50$ as recommended by Zainudin (2012). Furthermore, the results for discriminant validity showed that the correlation between factors in the measurement model did not exceed 0.85 as suggested by Kline (1998).

TABLE 4. Measurement model evaluation

Construct	Item	Standardized Loading	Cronbach's Alpha	Construct Reliability (CR) >0.60	Average Variance Extracted (AVE) >0.50
Affect	LMXaff1	0.83	0.859	0.694	0.871
	LMXaff2	0.92			
	LMXaff3	0.74			
Loyalty	LMXloy1	0.80	0.870	0.703	0.876
	LMXloy2	0.91			
	LMXloy3	0.80			
Contribution	LMXcon1	0.87	0.896	0.811	0.895
	LMXcon2	0.93			
Professional Respect	LMXpror1	0.89	0.871	0.691	0.870
	LMXpror2	0.79			
	LMXpror3	0.81			
Decision Making	OCdm1	0.83	0.844	0.732	0.845
	OCdm2	0.88			
Warmth	OCwarm1	0.88	0.833	0.715	0.834
	OCwarm2	0.81			
Reward	OCrew1	0.93	0.877	0.777	0.874
	OCrew2	0.83			
Risk	OCrisk1	0.68	0.766	0.645	0.781
	OCrisk2	0.91			
Fit	JEfit1	0.80	0.908	0.676	0.912
	JEfit2	0.87			
	JEfit3	0.88			
	JEfit4	0.88			
Sacrifice	JEsac3	0.78	0.912	0.638	0.914
	JEsac4	0.76			
	JEsac5	0.84			
	JEsac6	0.83			
Link	JElto1	0.83	0.921	0.703	0.922
	JElto2	0.81			
	JElto3	0.83			
	JElto4	0.85			
	JElto5	0.87			

STRUCTURAL MODEL

The hypothesised structural model of this study was tested using path analysis with AMOS version 21.0. The confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted to assess the dimensionality and fit of the measures used in the model. The model fit was verified through the ChiSq/df, p-value, RMSEA, and CFI as mentioned in the previous part. The results from testing the measurement models used in this research are summarised in Table 5. The fit indices of the initial structural model specified a weak fit to the data. It revealed that the predicted responses are discrepant from observed responses and need to be revised. The revised model showed consistency with the empirical data as all fit statistics fulfilled the cut-off values.

TABLE 5. Summary of goodness-of-fit indices of measurement models (CFA)

Measurement Models	Initial Model	Revised Model	Cut-off Values
ChiSq/df	0.193	2.527	$p > 0.05$
p-value	0.141	0.000	$p < 0.08$
RMSEA	0.955	0.074	$p < 0.80$
CFI	0.732	0.900	$p \geq 0.90$

Based on the new fitness indexes results, the hypothesised revised model provides a good fit whereby all indexes have achieved the minimum required level. The reviewed structural model as shown in Figure 2 clearly indicates a strong fit to the data.

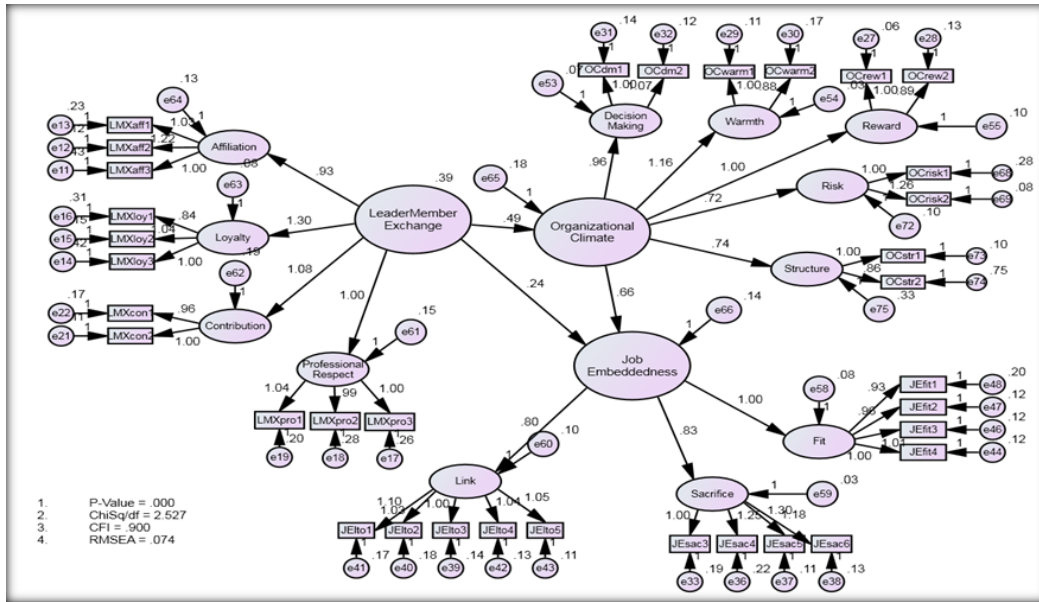


FIGURE 2. Revised structural model

The full CFA model was carried out to test the hypotheses as well as to measure the mediation effect. This research employed suggestions made by Baron and Kenny (1986) and Zainudin (2012) to determine the degree of the mediation effect (full or partial mediation). When establishing the mediation effect, it is essential to evaluate the direct effect between leader-member exchange and job embeddedness. If both the indirect effect and direct effect are significant, this shows a partial mediation. If the indirect effect and total effect are significant but the direct effect is not significant, this indicates a full mediation.

Table 6 presents the result of the mediation effect for leader-member exchange, organizational climate, and job embeddedness. It revealed that the beta coefficient for the direct effect of leader-member exchange and job embeddedness is significant ($p < 0.001$), which supports Hypothesis 1, while the beta coefficient for the indirect effect between leader-member exchange to organizational climate and organizational climate to job embeddedness is significant ($p < 0.001$), which supports Hypothesis 2 and Hypothesis 3.

TEST FOR MEDIATION EFFECT

Table 6 reveals that the beta coefficient for the direct effect of leader-member exchange and job embeddedness is significant ($p = 0.001$), while the beta coefficient for the indirect effect between leader-member exchange to organizational climate, and organizational climate to job embeddedness is significant ($p = 0.001$). Based on the results, it is confirmed that organizational climate partially mediates the relationship between leader-member exchange and job embeddedness (Hypothesis 4 supported).

TABLE 6. Result of mediation effect on organizational climate towards the relationship of leader-member exchange and job embeddedness using Beta Coefficient

Hypothesized Paths	Beta Estimate	Standardized Estimate	C.R	P-value	Result	Hypothesis
Leader-member exchange → Job embeddedness	0.095	0.059	1.593	0.000***	Significant	H ₁
Leader-member exchange → Organizational climate	0.289	0.069	4.215	0.000***	Significant	H ₂
Organizational climate → Job embeddedness	0.487	0.068	7.139	0.000***	Significant	H ₃

***indicate a highly significant at < 0.001

DISCUSSION

In this study, the job embeddedness concept was proposed and developed as an extension of the social exchange theory to comprehend employees with disabilities' voluntary job embeddedness. The three integrated job embeddedness mechanisms potentially functioned as indicators in effectively measuring and identifying employees' job retention (Burton et al. 2010). Our study found leader-member exchange is positively related to the organizational climate and job embeddedness. Relevant literature proposed that the leader-member exchange was a vital and influential attribute in work behaviour (Elanain 2014; Mumtaz & Rowley 2020). It was also found

that leader-member exchanges positively related to job embeddedness. Thus, leadership significantly motivated people towards particular goals. Through this study, organizational climate was also found to partially mediate the relationship between leader-member exchange and job embeddedness.

Given the aforementioned context, it is argued that organizational climate acts as a meaningful concept that provides significant inferences for recognizing the behaviour of employees in an organization, particularly those with disabilities. In addition, it is widely acknowledged that each member of the organization plays a significant role in fostering an organizational climate that is consistent with the organization's strategy and promotes the growth of human capital for a better social system. It occurs when employees perceive that their organization is a great place to work, which ultimately causes them to "stick" with the organization. The scope of disabled employment in Malaysia, as well as the use of influence based on social exchange theory, has room to grow. Nonetheless, it was noteworthy that a strong leader-member (employee with disability and supervisor) relationship existed in a positive organizational climate due to the awareness of moral exchange obligations for a supportive workplace. Indeed, the provision of employment opportunities and positive interactions between disabled employees would foster organizational pride and maintain a healthy work environment.

The research findings also proposed that employees' views on organizational climate were related to job embeddedness. Studies by Ancarani et al. (2018) confirmed the significant relationship between organizational climate and employees' work engagement. Thus, the statement denoting that employee with disabilities' perception of a conducive organizational climate significantly impacted job attachment was supported. Specifically, an assessed mediation route confirmed the study hypothesis. The findings corresponded to the social exchange theory in recommending a collaborative method to attain mutual goals. Employees with disability tended to value relationships that could increase a sense of organizational duty and reciprocity. Generally, the reciprocity value was created based on the supervisor-employee relationship and positively affected multiple work outcomes.

It is important to study job embeddedness among employee with disabilities because they are not only under presented in the workforce, but they also have to strive to work and overcome some barriers persisted in the workplace. This can substantially contribute towards understanding the need to retain them, fostering their job satisfaction and permanence in the organization. Armed with job embeddedness theory, it can give some meaningful insights on how to reach their full potential through job retention strategies which eventually will improve employment outcomes for all people with disabilities (Thomas & Morgan 2021).

THEORETICAL IMPLICATION

The next theoretical implication is the understanding of how organizational climate affects the relationship between a) leader-member exchange and people with disabilities' job embeddedness. These findings have expanded a deeper understanding on the Social Exchange Theory through the mediation effect of organizational climate. The significant mediated relationship suggests that organizational climate could enable the disabled employees' job embeddedness in Malaysia by adopting a high quality of leader-member relationship. The positive relationships between leader-member exchange and employee embeddedness have been established in the literature. This research suggests that an indirect relationship could possibly take place through the commitment of creating a proper organizational climate for employees with disabilities. Hence, supervisors should be more prudent in understanding and conducting their relationship with them. Burton et al. (2008) pointed that the social exchange process is meaningful to employees in an organization, and therefore it is likely to affect their behavior. Failure to create good relationship will somehow influence the employees in perceiving positively about their organizational climate which might consequently give negative impacts on their decision to embed in their job.

MANAGERIAL IMPLICATION

The research found that supervisor-member relations and social exchanges promoted trust, loyalty, and mutual commitments, especially among disabled Malaysian personnel. The combination of leader-member exchange and organizational climate shown that PWDs can be retained in an organization. Typically, employees with disabilities exhibited work loyalty (Vashishth & Jhamb 2021) since employment was a privilege that was not easily gained. Supervisors are needed to create an emotionally motivating workplace for disabled workers to continue in complex activities and keep their jobs. Thus, it is urgent to develop a new paradigm for the study of job embeddedness that extends beyond individuals with disabilities.

A solid supervisor-employee with disability relationship was crucial to strengthening job embeddedness with the current employer. Disability policies and procedures might be evaluated to ensure knowledge and implementation at all organizational levels. To demonstrate the importance of employing PWDs, policy implementations should be closely monitored. Employees with disabilities' job embeddedness was also positively correlated with organizational climate (Denison 1996). Thus, organizations must seriously consider disabled employees' perceptions of organizational climates that shaped professional experiences and employee retention.

Disability management required different norms and goals to maximise employee potential. Without assessing aptitudes and skills, society views PWDs negatively (Adabi 2011; Bredgaard & Salado-Rasmussen 2020). Thus, disability employment was low (Bredgaard & Salado-Rasmussen 2020). Duckett (2000) stressed improving "people" rather than "places" for PWD employment decisions. Thus, the findings were intended to improve organizational perceptions of disabled workers. To increase job embeddedness, supervisors' understanding of the leader-member exchange should be improved. Strong organizational relationships with disabled employees without reward systems should be prioritised to reduce work hesitations. Managers should also be more supportive, open, and empathetic toward disabled workers (Aichner 2021).

CONCLUSION

Disabled workers (PWD) and their rights in the workplace are a perennially contentious and intriguing topic. From the moment they begin their search for employment until the moment they are hired, they face a few obstacles. Due to this, there is a high rate of employee turnover among them. Even though the idea that affects play a significant role in LMX processes has been around since the turn of the millennium, it has recently received a lot of attention, especially in regard to people with disabilities (PWDs). Despite this renewed focus, the affect-LMX nexus has become more muddled as a result of the proliferation of competing theories. Thus, this study attempts to fill the void in the existing literature by examining how leader-member exchanges and organizational climate mechanisms affected employees with disabilities' job embeddedness. In the context of this study, a model geared toward employees with disabilities was used to investigate the relationship between leader-member exchange, organizational climate, and job embeddedness. Additional constructs (apart from the aspects integrated into the model) that could possibly provide employees with disabilities' job retention factors were acceptable.

The findings found a potential supervisor-disabled employee relationship and conducive organizational climates may have contributed to staff retention in organizations. These findings help in improving supervisors' understanding of the impact of leader-member exchange as well as organizational climate in the process of strengthening a high-quality relationship with employees with disabilities, which will, in turn, boost the employees' job embeddedness. In fact, through the mediation effect of organizational climate, these findings have deepened our understanding of the social exchange theory. The significant mediated relationship suggests that adopting a high-quality leader-member relationship could facilitate the job embeddedness of disabled employees in Malaysia. Disability policies and procedures may be evaluated to ensure organization-wide knowledge and implementation. Policy implementations should be monitored to show the value of hiring PWDs.

Despite theoretical and managerial contributions, this research has some limitations. First, the study respondents consisted of employees with disability with different disability types. Due to cognitive deficiencies, intellectually disabled employees were excluded from the study (National Academies of Sciences et al. 2015). These limitations limited functional, adaptive, intellectual, social, and practical abilities. This study collected data from disabled employees using quantitative methodologies, unlike most PWD studies. Employees could also fill out a questionnaire or meet with the researcher to optimise input. Another strategy may optimise, but bias and sub-optimisation may occur. Disability tenure descriptive findings were another restriction. The variance may have affected job impressions differently than unhappy employees who resigned within a year.

This study generated a number of suggestions for future research directions. Future studies may examine how demographic characteristics like duration of service and disability types influenced work embeddedness. To determine if the results are similar or not, the relationship between able and disabled coworkers should be examined. This cross-sectional study also raised causality concerns. Thus, longitudinal research might track job embeddedness development in disabled workers. Finally, semi-structured interviews can be used to replicate this research. Open-ended inquiries allow for follow-ups and discussions. Semi-structured interviews let respondents freely express their opinions.

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