

# EXAMINING LEADER MEMBER EXCHANGE PROCESS BY USING VERBAL AND NON-VERBAL ACTIONS: COMPARING TWO GROUPS AND ANALYZING WITH T-PATTERN

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## ABSTRACT

*In this study, two groups of academic and administrative personnel of the same university were interviewed; verbal and non-verbal actions through the program named THEME to obtain information about the leader-member relationship. The outcomes were evaluated according to the status of adaptation and the comparison between the two groups was made accordingly. Group A is from administrative staff; Group B comes from the academic staff. The video data of each participant was coded with behavior coder and sent to THEME and the results were compared between the participants in each group and afterwards between groups. Leader-member relations have been addressed in terms of respondents' responses.*

**Key Words:** *Leader-Member Exchange Theory (LMX), Verbal Actions, Non-Verbal Actions, T-Pattern*

## INTRODUCTION

Leader is the person who affects people to follow him and makes them believe in achieving common goals. However, it is not always possible to find this kind of leader in our daily lives. Managers are our leading figures we meet most often therefore they can build a dyadic relationship with their employees if they have the leading talent. According to Leader-member exchange theory (LMX); a leader can build a dyadic relationship with his employees to create a better work place and an organization to survive. In a dynamic changing world, firms have to find new strategies and solutions to make their life circle longer. To live longer, they need to have strong organizations which have strong relationships like the links of a chain that is why leader is the person who holds the chain and connects the links together. Because of this importance, organizations need managers who have leadership spirit and these managers have to build a dyadic relationship with their employees; establish strong ties; make them believe that they are very important for the firm and increase their commitment. If the leader does not have the talent to establish strong ties; it will be hard to keep the organization together. The question is how this kind of relationship occurs and if it is real or not. If there is a strong relationship and if it is very real, will anyone abandon the ship when it starts to sink or will anyone think about just for a second to leave the firm forever? To understand this process; first of all the leadership notion should be understood then LMX will be understood better. However LMX is not something for all leadership types. Inside the theory; it is also emphasizes which kind of leadership style is appropriate for the theory. In this study, the relationship between leader and follower was examined through verbal and nonverbal actions and the answers given to the interview questions were compared to see if they were harmonious or not. With this research, the aim is to determine if there is harmony or not between the leader and the member about same questions, according to that, LMX between them should be questioned.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

In future research, there will be more groups from different institutions to make a better comparison. The harmony or non-harmony between the participants will be examined to discover the background relations so it will be possible to say if it is clear to talk about LMX or strong ties between the leader and his member or not.

### Leadership

The leader is the person whose effect is to be followed in the direction of a specific purpose. According to the leadership literature, scholars have been trying to explain and find specific leadership characteristics which can be both physical and psychological. These theories start with “Great Man Theory”, which come up with some characteristics however these characteristics get more and more with time. After that scholars turn their direction into behavioral approach to find certain answers and they want to understand that which kind of behaviors can be better for a good leadership. A leader can have business-focused behavior or human-focused behavior unfortunately it is not quite easy to say which one can be more successful or be a good leader. There are examples for both of them that is why there is no standard answer for that. After this, scholars discover that leadership can change like situations. Situational approach gives more answers to us according to other theories because there are many parameters which affect leader’s behavior. According to Hersey & Blanchard, followers’ characteristics also affect leader’s behaviors. These theories give us the answer that there is not a certain leadership type to be successful and both leader and the followers affect each other nevertheless it is possible to say that a successful leader is the person who achieve common goals and motivate followers to work for them. To achieve common goals, leader has the different power resources in his hand like political, financial, psychological resources. Leader should use these resources for both his and followers’ expectations otherwise it will be hard to create a trust based organization. To understand the goals better, the leader should make a clear definition. By motivating the followers, the leader should increase the commitment.

(Bass, 1985) (Bennis, 1982) (Burns J. M., 1977) (Chong-Do & Bartol, 1983) (Fiedler F. , 1972) (Fiedler & Macaulay, 1998) (Howell, Bowen, Dorfman, Kerr, & Podsakoff, 1990) (Ingram, La Forge, Locander, MacKenzie, & Podsakoff, 2005) (Jung & Avoilo, 2000) (Seligman, 1980) (Burns J. M., 1979)

### Leader-Member Exchange Theory (LMX)

This theory focuses on three elements; these are the leader, the member and their dyadic relationship. Leader can build this dyadic relationship with every member and they both affect each other in this relationship. After this mutual effect, they establish ties. Their relationship and the processes are depends on these ties’ strength. To establish strong ties, there are three important factors. These are trust, responsibility and respect. Trust, is the basic condition to establish ties. There are different steps in the leadership life circle process. Firstly, leader and member are foreign for each other; after they start to know each other and the relation starts to develop then they become familiar to each other. The latest step is maturity which declares that there is a dyadic relationship so it is possible to talk about LMX at this step. According to LMX literature, there is an exchange process for both side that is why two different theories are important for its development which are “The Social Exchange Theory” and “The Role Theory”. LMX is a kind of process which is both interactive and transformational. Exchange is a process which flows from one side to the other one regularly so both sides affect each other.

(Bauer & Green, 1996) (Dinesch & Liden, 1986) (Erdogan, Liden, & Kraimer, 2006) (Graen, Chun, & Taylor, 2006) (Hochwater, LMX and Job Tension: Linear and Non-Linear Effects and Affectivity, 2005) (Hofmann, Morgeson, & Gerras, Climate as a Moderator of the Relationship Between Leader-Member Exchange and Content Specific Citizenship: Safety Climate as an Exemplar, 2003) (Jansen & Van Yperen, 2004) (Keller & Dansereau, 2001) (Kumar & Singh, 2011) (Liden & Maslyn, 1998) (Pellegrini & Scandura, 2006) (Wang, Law, Hackett, Wang, & Chen , 2005) (Sandy J. Wayne, 1997)

If it is possible to talk about LMX in an organization and if there are strong ties between the leader and the members, it means that there is a trust based organization which has employees, with high level of commitment and whose employees try to give their best performance for their firm. However, if the ties are not strong enough or if there are no ties, it will be hard to say that there is commitment or any special

attention to do their best because, in this situation the relationship depends on formal contracts so it is not permanent and there can be a new alternative for job if there is not a personal relation.

(Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995) (Sandy J. Wayne, 1997) (Hochwater, LMX and Job Tension: Linear and Non-Linear Effects and Affectivity, 2005) (Robert Liden, 1998) (Onne Jansen, 2004) (Manish Kumar, 2011) (George B. Graen, 2006) (Ekin K. Pellegrini, 2006) (Berrin Erdoğan, 2006)

According to literature, there are different dimensions of LMX. Graen & Uhl-Bien come up with three dimensions which are trust, respect to each other and responsibility. On the other hand, Dinesch & Liden come up with effect, commitment, respect to each other and contribution.

(Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995) (Dinesch & Liden, 1986)

## ***Trust***

Trust is one of the basic elements of this LMX process and the hardest thing to have. Employees have to work together in an organization and it is imperative to build trust in producing efficient processes. This is the duty of the leader who is responsible for overcoming trust in an organization. If the trust can not be ensured, individuals will hold their interests in front of the interests of the organization. This is a kind of situation which will undoubtedly harm the organization. Because with the LMX processes, a trust based organization will be born and gain power to survive. Otherwise, an individual does not have any reason to give his best or any sacrifice and it will be impossible to talk about organizational citizenship in this kind of organizations whereas LMX can persuade the employees and make them feel valuable inside that organization so they will be open for any sacrifice because this will be something real. This is the thing, we called commitment that every organization has to have, for long-living.

(Barney & Hansen, 1994) (Coleman, 1988) (Mayer, Davis, & Schoorman, 1995) (Shapiro, 1987) (Slemrod & Katuščák, 2005)

## **METHODOLOGY**

Individual interviews were conducted in Turkey to understand the relation's harmony between the leader and the member. The interviews were conducted with the academic and administrative staff from the same university. To make a comparison, focus groups were chosen from both administrative staff and academic staff. Interview questions were existed from the LMX literature and the questions are semi structured in order to understand the relations in background and the reasons better. The topics of the questions were from the LMX 7 survey of Graen and Uhl-Bien in 1995. From those questions, the main concepts were defined and the interview questions were decided according to the information of that questionnaire. In the groups, there were managers and their employees. In the first group, there was one manager and two employees and they were from the administrative staff. The second group was from the academic staff with one manager and three employees. The interviews were recorded with two cameras and the results were analyzed according to that data.

## **Results**

This research is a qualitative one and there are seven participants from a public university. There are two groups; one of them is from administrative staff and the other one is a group with academic staff. The data were collected by face-to-face interview method. There were two different cameras for both the researcher and the participant. After the data had been collected, the behaviors of the participants were coded by using behavior coder and a visual pattern program called Theme was used to analyze those coded data.

## **Theme**

THEME is a computer program that is developed and implemented with a matching algorithm. The proposed model typology and perception algorithm is based on the identification and perception of a particular relationship between event pairs in a time series called critical interval relation. T-pattern is a hierarchical time-based pattern type. One reason for this pattern focus is that it is widely seen in various behavioral streams at very different timescales, which suggests its importance in the

organization of behavior. Proposed T-pattern detection algorithm; It is based on a more precise and limited definition of the T-pattern, such as a competition by doing so in a particular data structure and including the critical gap relation. This program was both invented and still has been improving by Magnus S. Magnusson. (Magnusson M. S., 2000) (Magnusson S. M., 2016)

### 3.3. Coding the Behaviors

For analyzing the data; the participants’ behaviors were code with the behavior coder according to verbal and non-verbal actions. While coding the behaviors, there are some categories under both for verbal and non-verbal actions. The code begins with the identity of the actor who has the action and the secondly it is important to define if the actions begins or ends. The last part is the definition of the action’s category. For example; a code like ( m,b,smile) is read ( manager begins to smile) or a code like (e,e,look,right) means employee ends to look right. While watching the video records, every action was tried to coded carefully from second to second. There are two different charts which show categories under the actions. Non- verbal action category chart depends on the gesture, mimics and body movements.

**Table 1: Non-Verbal Action Category Chart**

actor	b_e	looking	postures	vocalization	head	direction	hands	target	eyebrow	lip	eyes	talking
ma	b	look	lean	laugh	tilt	left	point	mouth	scowl	lick	close	talk
em	e		rock	breathe	nod	right	touch	chin	browlift	squeeze	wider	
x			rotate	cough	shake	up	scratch	cheek		smile		
me			move	okey	rotate	down	spin	nose		pout		
				throat		back		eye		stretch		
						forth		eyebrow				
								forehead				
								ear				
								neck				
								head				

These categories are defined by the researcher and Theme works according to your codes. After the data had been coded, all codes were sent to THEME to analyze and THEME found repeated sequential patterns. This kind of analysis was done for every actor and both verbal and non-verbal actions.

**Table 2: Verbal Action Category Chart**

Actor	b_e	Personality	Love	Respect
x	b	Positive	Loving	Respect
y	e	Negative	Not Loving	No Respect

Trust	Behave	Support	Expectation	Change
Trust	Own	Support	Expected	Change
No Trust	Not Own	No Support	Not Expected	No Change

Opennes	Honesty	Labor	Commitment	Justice
Share	Honest	There is	Commit	fair
Hide	Not Honest	There is not	No commit	unfair

Responsibility	Status	Equality	Out Of Group	Being Valued
Responsible	Admit	Equal	Yes	Value
No Responsible	Believe	No Equal	No	No Value

Opinion	Harmony
consistent	Harmonius
paradoxial	No Harmony

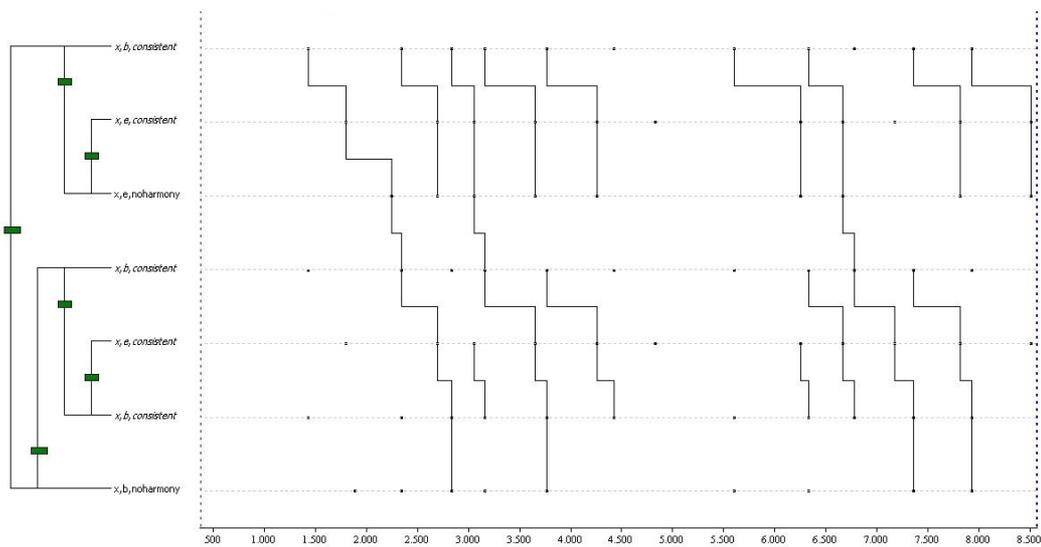
## Analysis

There are two groups of people (Group A and Group B) in the research who are the members of the same university. Group A occurs from the administrative staff of that university and Group B occurs from the academic staff. These groups are defined to compare the academic side with the administrative side of the university because they have the same organizational culture because of the same institution however educational and occupational differences cause different results. Managers answered thirty interview questions and the employees answered twenty nine interview questions. The questions' aims were to understand the managers' personality, the relations with the employees (according to LMX literature), employees' commitments to both the managers and the institutions.

### Verbal Action Results

According to Verbal Action Categories, the data were coded and sent to THEME to analyze. The analysis was completed for every person in each group.

**Table 3: THEME Results for Employee A1 from Group A for Verbal Actions**



THEME gave us the most repeated actions in a specific order and this order happened three times under .005 significance level. The system gave us actions and their occurrences taking minimum three as a number of occurrences. According to results, it is possible to see below, which actions happen how many times and which actions have the most occurrences.

**Table 4: Group A- Verbal Actions Occurrences**

Group A				
Manager A	Consistent (10)	No Harmony (8)	Harmonious (5)	Paradoxial (5)
Employee A1	Consistent (11)	No Harmony (9)	Harmonious (5)	Paradoxial (3)
Employee A2	Consistent (13)	No Harmony (9)	Harmonious (5)	

When Group A was examined, which consisted of one manager and two employees from the administrative staff, different answers were detected. The actions were coded according to the participants' answers. In this group, the manager's and the employees' answers were not harmonious about the same questions. Manager A also had more paradoxical answers than the employees. These

differences welded because of the questions which were about the manager’s leadership and the relation with the employees and the manager’s personality. In Table 4, the number of occurrences can be seen.

**Table 5: Group B- Verbal Actions Occurrences**

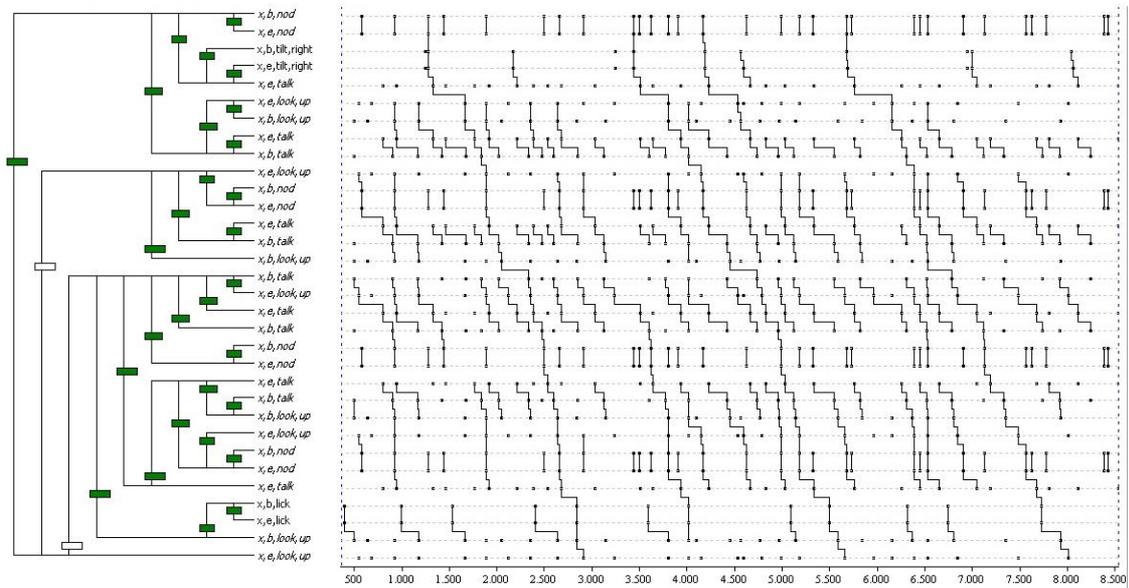
Group B				
Manager B	Consistent (15)	Harmonious (11)	No Harmony (3)	
Employee B1	Consistent (14)	Harmonious (11)	No Harmony (3)	Positive (3)
Employee B2	Consistent (13)	Harmonious (12)	Positive (3)	No Harmony (2)
Employee B3	Consistent (14)	Harmonious (11)	No Harmony (3)	Positive (3)

In Table 5, it is possible to see the results for Group B. Group B members’ answers were more harmonious than Group A members and three of these members also gave answers in a positive way.

**Non- Verbal Action Results**

The data were sent to THEME after coding. The data were examined under .001 significance level because there were more actions under this category. Under the below, there is the chart from THEME results of non-verbal actions.

**Table 6: THEME Results for Employee A1 from Group A for Non-Verbal Actions**



There three T-Patterns can be seen from the chart which are according to the repeated actions.

**Table 7: Group A-Non Verbal Actions Occurrences**

<b>Group A</b>				
Manager A	Nod (48)	Look Down (40)	Talk (32)	Browlifting (21)
Employee A1	Nod (30)	Talk (29)	Look Up (27)	Lip Licking (12)
Employee A2	Talk (30)	Look Up (22)	Nod (19)	Rotate(13)

These were the most frequent actions. Some differences can be seen from Table 7 between the participants.

**Table 8: Group B-Non Verbal Actions Occurrences**

<b>Group B</b>				
Manager B	Nod (59)	Look Down (39)	Talk (36)	Look Left (25)
Employee B1	Nod (41)	Look Left (31)	Talk (30)	Look Up (12)
Employee B2	Nod (31)	Talk (30)	Look Left (13)	Tilt Head Down/Look down (11)
Employee B3	Talk (32)	Look Down (22)	Nod (20)	Look Left (14)

In Table 8, some similarities according to categories between the actions of participants can be seen.

## **CONCLUSION**

In this research, the main aim is to see differences in answers or actions of two groups of people. It is not focused on figuring out who was lying.

**Table 9: Questions from the interview of Group A which answers have no harmony**

Employee	Manager
Do you trust your manager? Why?	Do you trust your employees? Why?
What are the dimensions of trust/ mistrust?	What are the dimensions of trust/ mistrust?
What kind of manager did you dream of working with?	What kind of working team did you dream of working with?
Does your manager meet your expectation?	Do your employees meet your expectation?
Is your manager open to you?	Are you open to your employees? Would not you share information?
Can not share information?	Why do you need such a thing?
Will your manager be honest?	Are your employees honest to you?
Are the words and behavior harmonious with each other?	Do you believe in what they say without question?
Do you feel any obligation to keep working with your manager for many years?	Do you feel an emotional attachment to your employees?
Do you have emotional attachment?	Can you work together for many years?
Is your manager fair and consistent in his decisions?	Do you think you are fair and consistent in your decisions?
Are all the rules just fair for anyone?	Are you able to receive such feedback from your employees?
Do you see support from your manager on behalf of your performance?	Do you support the performance of your employees? What kind of support?
What kind of support?	
What do you attribute the reason for not being supported?	What is the reason that you don't support your employees?

When we look at those questions, they are for LMX and the relation between manager and the employee better. However, Group A members' answers are not harmonious about these questions that is why we are questioning their ties strength and their commitment to each other. These are the question try to measure and figure out if we can talk about LMX or not. There are some specific dimensions like trust, openness, honesty, justice, support, loyalty. This is a kind of research aims prove the differences by using THEME. An inquiry has been made which was based on whether or not it is compatible. The harmonious answers or the no harmony ones will be examined in details in further researches. Group B members' answers are not harmonious about these questions. In sum, it can be said that, according to verbal actions, Group B has harmonious group members so they have the same opinions about those questions and their relation but Group A is not the same way. From the non-verbal actions, it can be said that, Group B members' non-verbal actions are more harmonious than Group A members'. But it is not possible to explain their relations or who is lying or not from those non-verbal behaviors. But these results will guide us in our future research.

### Limitations

There were only two groups of people as participants in this research and it was not enough to have a complete result. From this stage, it was possible to say the differences between the answers of the participants however it was not so easy to tell that who was lying or not. For future research, there will be more participants from more than one university for comparison. The answers will be examined deeply to understand the real relations and the liars. The research will expand with more concepts.

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