

THE ROLE OF PSYCHOLOGICAL OWNERSHIP IN THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LEADER-MEMBER EXCHANGE AND JOB SATISFACTION

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The purpose of this research is to expand previous work in the field of psychological ownership (PO) by introducing a model where PO plays a mediator role between leader-member exchange (LMX) and job satisfaction. The data were collected in a furniture manufacturing company located in Italy. Sample size was 442 participants. Results showed a positive relationship between LMX and psychological ownership and between job satisfaction and psychological ownership in an organizational context. The results are stable with respect to various tenure levels, but different depending on the job position in the organization: for staff employees, PO has a fully mediating role, whereas for line employees, it is a partial mediator.

Key words: Psychological ownership; Leader-member exchange; Job satisfaction; Organizational tenure; Job position in organization.

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When ownership is mentioned, society immediately thinks about formal ownership, which is specified and protected by the legal system (Pierce, Kostova, & Dirks, 2003). The focus of this research was to understand the construct of ownership as a psychological process and explain its association with the organizational context in a non-family organizational setting. Psychological ownership (PO) can be described as a feeling recognized by the individual who holds it. It can be defined as a state in which an individual feels as though the target of ownership, or a piece of that target, is “his or hers” (Pierce et al., 2003). The main question PO answers is “What do I feel is mine?” (Pierce & Jussila, 2011, p.16).

Psychological ownership is distinct from legal ownership in several ways. Specifically, a person can believe and feel that something is his/hers even though there is no legal right to the

material or non-material object in question (Pierce & Jussila, 2011). Furthermore, in the absence of legal ownership, the role of PO becomes important in creating a positive relationship related to the financial performance of the organization (Wagner, Parker, & Christiansen, 2003). In an organizational context, PO is a psychologically experienced phenomenon where an employee develops possessive feelings toward the target (Van Dyne & Pierce, 2004). The concept is important because it is a form of emotional attachment to the organization that exceeds the simple cognitive evaluation of the firm and can have both positive and negative consequences in the organizational context.

This research aims to expand on previous research in the field of PO. Based on the study by Bernhard and O'Driscoll (2011), who examined PO's mediation between the leadership style and different organizational attitudes and behaviors, this research explores new antecedents of their model. Thus, leader-member exchange (LMX) is added as a new antecedent in the mediation model, with one organizational outcome, affective job satisfaction. Moreover, it adds two moderators to the mediation model: tenure and the job position in the organization. The paper is structured in the following way: first, the literature review describes the construct of PO and its relationships with LMX and job satisfaction. In addition, the literature review contains the mediated model we propose. Then, we focus on the method and the results, followed by the discussion.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND HYPOTHESIS

Psychological Ownership

Psychological ownership has its origins in biological, social, and cultural factors (Dittmar, 1992). It develops to satisfy some basic human needs, such as efficacy and effectance, self-identity, the feeling of home, and a need for stimulation (Pierce & Jussila, 2011). Other factors that influence the development of PO are target factors, individual factors, and situational forces (Pierce et al., 2003). Employees who exert high levels of ownership will promote good citizenship behavior, the voluntary behavior that contributes to the community's well-being and is intended to be positive in nature and has no promised retribution (Organ, 1988). The sense of responsibility, stewardship, personal sacrifice, and risk acceptance will also be higher in employees with high levels of PO because they will see the organization as something that partly belongs to them. By contrast, several negative aspects, such as alienation, frustration, and stress, can arise from PO (Pierce et al., 2003).

Psychological ownership develops through three main paths: control of the target, intimate knowledge about the target, and investment of self. The feeling of control over things has been extensively researched in relation to the feeling of possession, which is the central feeling of PO (Pierce & Jussila, 2011); these things can include ideas, equipment, work, and the organization (Hall, 1966). Coming to know something intimately is a state that develops when things are in the individual's possession over an extended period of time and psychologically become his/hers. Moreover, the person develops a feeling of effectance, motivation, efficacy, and competence, and starts to consider his/her work as home, developing a sense of PO (Pierce & Jussila, 2011). In addition, investment of self is considered an important path to developing PO. It can be defined as an "investment of individual psychology, energy, time, effort, and attention in an ob-

ject that causes the self to become one with the object. This union between self and object emerges because the object has emerged from the self” (p. 84). All these paths have been empirically investigated and confirmed in relation to PO in the organizational context.

Leader-Member Exchange and Psychological Ownership

In a recent review of leadership theory and research, Avolio, Walumbwa, and Weber (2009) stated that it is necessary to carry out studies to research the causal mechanism linking leadership to work-related outcomes. Because most of the research related to antecedents of PO is concerned with work and job design (Pierce, Jussila, & Cummings, 2009), this study aimed to enrich the field by adding a new antecedent, leader-member exchange (LMX). LMX is a leadership framework that assesses the quality of the relationship between a leader and a subordinate, based on the dimensions of respect, trust, and obligation (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). It is based on social exchange theory, which claims that in a high-quality exchange, parties provide valuable assets to each other (Blau, 1964). High satisfaction of the follower in this relationship will have many positive impacts, such as the overall satisfaction of the follower with the leader, increased follower performance, and followers’ positive organizational citizenship behavior (OCB; Zacher, Rosing, Henning, & Frese, 2011). By contrast, if there is low-quality LMX, where the leader only gives the follower basic information necessary for job performance and fulfillment, the follower’s performance and organizational citizenship will be lower (Zacher et al., 2011).

Leader-member exchange was found to have a positive relationship with job satisfaction in several studies (see Baranik, Roling, & Eby, 2010; Larsen, Marnburg, & Øgaard, 2012; Scandura, 1999). In the present study, we wanted to find out whether this direct positive relationship is mediated by the intervening process of PO.

The explanation of the connection between LMX and PO comes from the PO theory by Pierce and colleagues (2003), who argue that investment of self in a target is one of the paths that develops ownership feelings. However, the investment of self takes a long time to develop. For a follower, it will take a long time to trust the leader and develop a sense of the way the leader invests in him or her. When this happens, the follower will tend to develop a sense of investment of self while building a better relationship with the leader. Moreover, in the absence of legal ownership, a sense of PO is more likely to develop, establishing the basis for an LMX-PO relationship. On the other hand, employees who receive less attention and fewer rewards are managed by formal rules and policies, and not through direct communication with the leader (Lunenburg, 2010). Thus, they do not feel that the leader is investing in them, or feel the obligation to give something back. In fact, it is quite unlikely that they will invest in the relationship or develop a sense of PO. Based on the literature review, we formed our first hypothesis.

Hypothesis 1: the quality of the LMX relationship will have a positive effect on PO.

Job Satisfaction and Psychological Ownership

In 1976, Locke defined job satisfaction as “a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one’s job or job experience” (p. 1300). This response can be related

to the job (organization) as a whole or to any job/organizational context (job security, supervision, amount of work, etc.). In other words, if any aspect of the work provides an employee with a feeling of pleasure or displeasure, he/she will consequently be satisfied or dissatisfied with that job facet. This research is particularly interested in the affective component of job satisfaction and its relationship with PO. If the job as a whole provides an employee with a feeling of pleasure or displeasure, he/she will be satisfied or dissatisfied with the job in general (Pierce & Jussila, 2011). In fact, research has shown that a high level of job satisfaction will produce self-identification with the organization (e.g., Marletta et al., 2014). According to this argument, the theoretical basis for the positive relationship between PO and job satisfaction is built on the sense of possessiveness that develops toward the organization. Supporting this, a corpus of research states that it is logical to expect employees to like or feel satisfaction with their jobs when they feel PO over them (e.g., Mayhew, Ashkansay, Bramble, & Gardner, 2007). This relationship was also found in Southeast Asian countries (e.g., Md-Sidin, Sambasivan, & Muniandy, 2010). Based on the literature presented, the second hypothesis was formed.

Hypothesis 2: there will be a positive effect of PO on job satisfaction.

The Mediation Role of Psychological Ownership

The basis of our model and the most similar research to date comes from the research conducted by Bernhard and O'Driscoll (2011). In their research, the two authors proposed a model consisting of two mediators (organization-based and job-based PO), three types of leadership styles (transformational, transactional, and passive), and several outcomes (extra-role behavior, in-role behavior, affective commitment, job satisfaction, and turnover intention).

Bernhard and O'Driscoll (2011) proposed an explanation for the relationship between leadership style and job satisfaction, indicating that this association operates through the mediating effect of PO. The researchers found that leadership styles (transformational and transactional) had a significant positive relationship with organization-based PO. Their finding confirmed the role of transformational and transactional leadership as contextual factors in the development of PO. Passive leadership did not show a positive relationship with PO; therefore, the aim of the present study is to find out whether the quality of the relationship can provide additional insight into the antecedents of the emergence of a state of PO. The second important finding relevant to the current research is that organization-based PO mediated the relationship between transformational and transactional leadership and job satisfaction. Based on their research, the authors concluded that family-owned businesses can benefit from the recognition of the favorable effects of PO on individuals' attitudes and behaviors.

One of the main reasons for looking at PO as a mediator stems from Avolio et al. (2009), who stated that "determining the causal mechanisms that link leadership to outcomes will be a priority" (p. 442) for future research. We also believe that a positive relationship between LMX and job satisfaction fosters a sense of attachment toward the job and, consequently, tends to reinforce the development of a sense of PO toward the organization.

Hypothesis 3: PO will mediate the relationship between LMX and job satisfaction (see Figure 1).

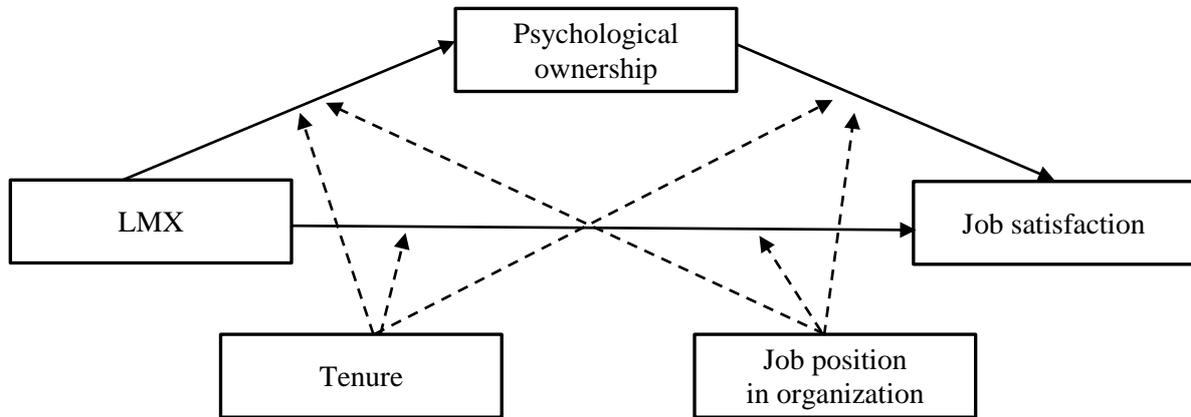


FIGURE 1
The hypothesized model.

An additional research question in this study is whether the tested mediation model is stable when adding variables such as tenure and the job position in the organization. The literature shows that tenure and working hours have an influence on the path of investment of self and, therefore, on PO (e.g., O’Driscoll, Pierce, & Coghlan, 2006; Pierce et al., 2003). Furthermore, the job position in the organization is also found to be associated with PO. Generally, senior employees or those with high positions may experience a strong fit and PO because of long-term integration of organizational and personal values (Han, Chiang, & Chiang, 2013). So, the research questions are: is the mediation role of ownership depending on the participants’ tenure and job position in the organization?

METHOD

Participants and Procedure

The data were collected using a questionnaire in a furniture manufacturing company located in the northeastern part of Italy. The sample contained 442 participants. A group of participants came from staff management, with a percentage of 28.3%. The second group was classified together, and they were all in charge of production, as part of line management, with a percentage of 71.7%. Regarding the average time working in the organization, 53.3% had worked in the organization for more than six years, and 46.7% had worked there from zero to six years. A structured anonymous questionnaire was used to collect the data. The study guaranteed respondents’ anonymity and confidentiality. The questionnaire included a statement about personal data treatment, in accordance with the Italian privacy law (Legislat. Decree DL-196/2003). The workers authorized and approved the use of anonymous/collective data for possible future scientific publications. After completion, the questionnaires were handed in at “ballot boxes.” All questionnaires were filled in and collected in one week in order to control threats to validity from external events that may affect participants’ responses. Age and gender were not requested in order to guarantee the anonymity of the participants.

Instruments

To measure ownership, the Psychological Ownership Scale, developed by Van Dyne and Pierce (2004), was used. There are two versions of the scale, one with seven items and one with four items. The second version was adopted because it shows better psychometric quality (Mariani, Martuscelli, & Curcuruto, 2015; Van Dyne & Pierce, 2004). Therefore, the Italian version of the 4-item scale, validated by Mariani et al. (2015), was used. Items such as “This is MY organization” or “I feel that this is MY company” are rated on a 5-point Likert scale with responses ranging from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*. Cronbach’s alpha was .84 for the entire scale.

The LMX-7 scale for subordinates (Scandura & Graen, 1984) was used to evaluate the subordinates’ relationship with their supervisor (dyadic exchange). According to Graen and Uhl-Bien (1995), the scale was developed from several levels of analysis: “from focus on differences within groups (group-level effect), the focus on dyads regardless of groups (dyad-level effect), to the focus on the combination of dyads into groups and networks (dyads within group effect)” (pp. 220). The scale consists of seven questions rated on a 5-point Likert scale with responses ranging from *not at all* to *a great deal*. LMX is both transactional and transformational, and the scale was used to assess the quality of the relationship between the leader and the follower from the follower’s point of view. Some of the questions were: “How well does your leader understand your job problems and needs?”; “I have enough confidence in my leader that I would defend and justify his/her decision if he/she were not present to do so”; and “How would you characterize your working relationship with your leader?”. Cronbach’s alpha was .92.

The Michigan Organizational Assessment Questionnaire-Job Satisfaction Subscale (MOAQ-JSS; Cammann, Fichman, Jenkins, & Klesh, 1979) was used to measure employees’ job satisfaction. The subscale consists of three items rated on a 5-point Likert scale with a response range from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*. The scores on the MOAQ-JSS are computed using the average scores on the following three items: “All in all, I am satisfied with my job”; “In general, I don’t like my job”; and “In general, I like working here.” Cronbach’s alpha was .92.

An exploratory factor analysis (EFA) with principal axis factoring was performed on all 14 item-variables on the three scales to test discriminant and convergent validity. The Kaiser method suggested a 3-factor solution that explained 70% of the variance and showed, using oblimin rotation, that all the loadings were above .64 in the original factor (convergent validity). All loadings in different factors were lower than .15 (discriminant validity).

The adaptation of the LMX-7 scale for subordinates and the Michigan Organizational Assessment Questionnaire to Italian was performed taking into account the international methodological standards recommended by the International Test Commission (ITC) when adapting an instrument to a foreign language (Hambleton, 2005). However, a qualitative pilot study was carried out with six employees from the company to evaluate the language forms and ensure proper understanding of all the scales. We added some socio-organizational variables such as the work sector and the years an employee had worked in the organization.

Data Analysis

The statistical analysis plan consisted of the following steps: 1) calculation of the descriptive statistics and correlation indexes of the variables, 2) examination of the common meth-

od effect, and 3) mediation analysis and moderated mediation analysis. The degree to which common-method variance could be a threat to our analyses was analyzed because a one-wave self-report design was used. Harman's single-factor test through confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was performed to check the hypothesis that a single factor can account for all of the variance in our data (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003). Moreover, the latent method factor approach recommended by Podsakoff et al. (2003) was adopted to further analyze this issue. Hence, a CFA was conducted in which an unmeasured latent method construct (ULMC) was added to the measurement model. Items were allowed to load on their theoretical constructs and on a latent common method variance factor. The structural parameters were examined, both with and without the latent common method variance factor. This further analysis made it possible to isolate the variance of the measures into theoretical, methodological, and random error components.

Before we could analyze the mediating role of ownership, the three conditions suggested by Baron and Kenny (1986) were tested. Mediation analyses were performed on SPSS 22 using PROCESS (Model 4), provided by Hayes (2013). PROCESS was conducted using one independent variable (LMX), one mediator (PO), and one dependent variable (job satisfaction). The variables in the proposed model were mean-centered to minimize multicollinearity. Mediation was tested using the contemporary bootstrapping technique described by Hayes, 5,000 resamples with replacement. Bootstrapping was used because it provides a more reliable estimate of indirect effects, and it does not make the often unrealistic assumption of normality in the sampling distribution. Therefore, it is appropriate for data with skewness and kurtosis values greater than two standard errors, probably showing a significant difference compared to normal distribution (Table 1). In addition, the bootstrapping method also has higher power and better Type I error control than other mediation analyses (Preacher & Hayes, 2008). Significance was determined by examining the 95% confidence interval produced by the bootstrapping mediation analyses. In order to consider the mediation model significant, the confidence interval must not include zero. Furthermore, the indirect effect size was estimated by Fairchild, MacKinnon, Taborga, and Taylor's (2009) R^2_{med} formula, which measures the proportion of variance in Y attributable to the indirect effect of X on Y through M. Finally, the Kappa-squared index by Preacher and Kelly (2011) was used to compute the ratio of the indirect effect, compared to its maximum possible value in the data. K^2 is bound between 0 and 1, with a value closer to 1 representing a greater indirect effect. Finally, a moderation-mediation model was tested with the PROCESS procedure (Hayes, 2013), considering two control variables: participants' tenure and job position in the organization. In this case, the 76° PROCESS model was adopted.

RESULTS

Table 1 shows descriptive statistics and correlation indexes for LMX, PO, and job satisfaction. Results show strong positive relationships among the three variables. Before testing our hypotheses, and considering the one-wave self-report study design, common-method variance bias was analyzed. Harman's single-factor test of common-method variance showed fit indexes that were not adequate for a one-factor model (CFI = .68; RMSEA = .16). Then, the ULMC method was used to analyze common-method bias. Two CFAs were performed, one where the CFA broke down the variance of the measures into theoretical, methodological, and random error

components. The results showed that 54% of the variance was explained by the three theoretical constructs, 22% by the ULMC, and the remaining 24% by random errors. Both model fits were adequate (model with ULMC: CFI = .96; RMSEA = .06; model without ULMC: CFI = .95; RMSEA = .07). Thus, the hypothesis that common method variance could explain a substantial amount of covariance among the variables was rejected.

TABLE 1
 Descriptive statistics, reliability, and intercorrelations for scores on three scales ($N = 442$)

Scales	Items	Min-Max	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Skewness	Kurtosis	Alpha	1	2
LMX	7	1-5	3.56	1.10	-0.63	-0.49	.92	-	
PO	4	1-5	3.16	1.04	-0.20	-0.71	.84	.47	-
Job satisfaction	3	1-5	4.16	0.92	-0.16	-0.45	.82	.39	.44

Note. LMX = leader-member exchange; PO = psychological ownership; Standard error (*SE*) is .12 for skewness and .23 for kurtosis; all correlations are significant at $p < .001$.

The correlations met the three conditions for mediation analysis (Baron & Kenny, 1986). There was a significant association between the predictor and the dependent variable ($r = .39$), the predictor and the hypothesized mediator ($r = .47$), and the hypothesized mediator and the dependent variable ($r = .44$). According to these prerequisites, the mediating role of PO could be studied. We tested whether PO mediated the effect between LMX and job satisfaction (see Table 2).

TABLE 2
 Total, direct, and indirect effects of mediation model ($N = 442$)

Effects	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Effect of LMX on PO	.482	0.043	11.283	.000
Effect of PO on job satisfaction	.270	0.039	6.961	.000
Total effect LMX on job satisfaction (path c)	.322	0.037	8.798	.000
Direct effect LMX on job satisfaction controlling for PO	.192	0.039	4.854	.000

Note. LMX = leader-member exchange; PO = psychological ownership; *B* = unstandardized regression coefficient; *SE* = standard error.

The total effect of LMX on job satisfaction was significant ($B = .322$, $SE = 0.037$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .14$), as was the effect of LMX on PO ($B = .482$, $SE = 0.043$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .24$) and the effect of PO on job satisfaction ($B = .270$, $SE = 0.039$, $p < .001$). The effect of LMX on job satisfaction remained significant when PO was included in the model ($B = .192$, $SE = 0.039$, $p < .001$). The Sobel test of the indirect effect, which assesses whether the total effect of LMX on job satisfaction is reduced by the addition of PO to the model, was significant and indicated mediation ($z = 5.908$, $p < .001$).

The bootstrapping method by Hayes (2013), previously presented, was used to compute a confidence interval around each estimate of the indirect effect. Using 5,000 bootstrapped samples, the estimate of the indirect effect again indicated mediation, with a point estimate of 0.130, $Boot SE = 0.023$; 95% CI [.089, .176]. Evidence for mediation is present because these confidence intervals do not include zero. Results showed an R^2_{med} of .11 and a K^2 of .16. The formula by Fairchild et al. (2009) estimates that the proportion of variance in Y attributable to the indirect effect is about 11%. These are medium-effect sizes according to Cohen's (1988) guidelines.

Finally, we tested the model considering two control variables: participants' tenure and job position in the organization. A moderated mediation model was performed, precisely the PROCESS 76° procedure (Hayes, 2013), which considered LMX as the independent variable, job satisfaction as the dependent variable, PO as the mediation variable, and both tenure and job position in the organization as moderators in every relationship. Results showed that a mediation effect is almost always constant, whereas the direct effect is verified only for production line sectors (Table 3). For staff employees, PO plays a more important role in this model: it is a full mediator between LMX and job satisfaction.

TABLE 3
 Moderated mediation analysis with control variables ($N = 442$)

Tenure	Job position	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	Boot <i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	LLCI	ULCI
Conditional direct effect(s) of X on Y at values of the moderator(s):								
0-6 years	Staff	.173	0.103		1.683	.093	-.029	.375
0-6 years	Line	.210	0.073		2.879	.004	.067	.354
7-32 years	Staff	.156	0.116		1.353	.177	-.071	.383
7-32 years	Line	.194	0.058		3.317	.001	.079	.308
Conditional indirect effect(s) of X on Y at values of the moderator(s):								
0-6 years	Staff	.177		0.065			.084	.343
0-6 years	Line	.128		0.039			.063	.216
7-32 years	Staff	.174		0.065			.068	.331
7-32 years	Line	.126		0.039			.063	.214

Note. SE = standard error; LLCI = lower level confidence interval; ULCI = upper level confidence interval.

In conclusion, the results found that PO fully mediated the relationship between LMX and job satisfaction in staff job position and partially in line job position. Thus, Hypotheses 1, 2, and 3 were supported.

DISCUSSION

In today's organizational settings, companies are concerned with new ways and constructs that can enhance organizational performance and increase financial revenue. Therefore, we believe that exploring new antecedents and expanding the research on the PO construct can provide additional insight into this relevant question.

In fact, the objective of this research was to extend the work done in the field of PO by exploring a new antecedent of PO, LMX. An additional research question was whether the relationship between LMX and job satisfaction is mediated by PO, and if this model remains stable when adding control variables such as tenure and job position in the organization.

Therefore, we tested a new mediation model in which PO mediates the relationship between LMX and job satisfaction. We also tested the model considering two control variables: participants' tenure and job position in the organization (staff and line). Results showed that a mediation effect is almost always constant, whereas the direct effect is found only for line job position.

For staff job position, PO plays a more important role in this model: it is a full mediator between LMX and job satisfaction. The results show that PO fully mediated the relationship between LMX and job satisfaction in staff job position, and partially in line job position.

Theoretical Implication

Stringer (2006) thought that the greater the level of mutual respect, trust, and obligation between a supervisor and a subordinate (LMX), the greater the level of job satisfaction perceived by the subordinate would be. In addition, Bernhard and O'Driscoll (2011) proposed and found that PO also emerges from leadership styles and influences job satisfaction. Therefore, PO can play a mediation role between leadership style and job satisfaction. Moreover, as mentioned above, according to Graen and Uhl-Bien (1995), LMX incorporates both transformational and transactional leadership. Our research presents evidence supporting this theoretical framework.

Practical Implication

Practical evidence shows that when employees work to support their colleagues, and not only directly on the core activities, the quality of the relationship between leader and members does not directly influence job satisfaction, but does through members' feelings of PO. The development of PO seems to be more important for staff job position than for line job position. From a practical perspective, this is an interesting finding because it sheds light on the importance of the development of PO in the organizational context, especially in staff job position. The literature reports practical ways to improve ownership. For instance, Pierce and Jussila (2011) suggest enhancing job control and knowledge about the organization because they are related to the feeling of possession. Another way to increase the level of ownership is to support the employee's perception of the workplace as his/her home, for example, by encouraging the placement of a photo of his/her family in the office.

Finally, it is in the interest of an organization to have its employees score high on job satisfaction because it produces increased motivation and commitment to their jobs (Guglielmi et al., 2016). Based on the findings from the proposed mediation model, more importance should be placed on the development of ownership, as well as on developing a high degree of respect, trust, and obligation between employees and their leader.

Limitations

There are some limitations in this research. First, self-report data was used to measure all the variables. The literature provides support for doing so; for example, Spector (1997) argued that when measuring constructs of emotional and psychological states, self-report methods are appropriate because they describe individuals' subjective states, which shape their behaviors.

Self-report data raised the possibility of common method bias. In order to control for potential common method bias, we followed the recommendations of Podsakoff, MacKenzie, & Podsakoff (2012). First, we assured respondents that their participation was anonymous and that only the researchers would have access to their answers. Second, we adopted reliable measurement scales with reversed items; third, proximal separation between the predictor and criterion variables was adopted in the questionnaire. Moreover, the fact that these dimensions are evidently dissimilar, both conceptually and in terms of their underlying factors, also decreases the risk of common method bias (Brannick, Chan, Conway, Lance, & Spector, 2010). Finally, we used two statistical strategies to control common method bias: Harman's single factor test and the latent method factor approach recommended by Podsakoff et al. (2003). Both analyses found consistent findings, and so we consider common method variance bias to be a limited problem in this study.

The data were collected using a cross-sectional survey. In our case a longitudinal survey would be more interesting because we are hypothesizing causal relationships among the dimensions of LMX, PO, and job satisfaction.

Another drawback is that we did not add additional moderators such as age and gender that could affect the mediation. It could be important to investigate this in the future. In addition, it would be interesting to conduct research in companies located in other countries in Europe that are developing forms of legal ownership in order to see how legal ownership is related to the level of PO and whether our mediation remains the same in organizations where legal ownership is developed.

CONCLUSION

We can conclude that this research is a good starting point for some further investigation, and that it also has potential practical implications. In fact, if organizations decide to promote PO they can obtain many benefits, such as: enhancement of the overall quality of organizational performance, productivity, and increased satisfaction and performance among employees.

Taking this into consideration, on a practical note, companies could promote the development of PO in order to achieve beneficial outcomes for the organization. However, we have to be cautious about the negative aspects of PO, such as overall possessiveness, alienation, frustration, and stress (Pierce et al., 2003). In conclusion, further investigation should be carried out in order to explore other antecedents of PO and its potential in the organizational context.

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