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Different Gender-based Roles on Cooperation: Integrating differentiated leader member exchanges, communication, and trust in hotel organizations

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Abstract

This study aims to discover how the relationship between leader-members exchange (LMX) differentiation and cooperation can be moderated by the different gender-based roles. Different gender-based roles are investigated through communication, trust, and perceived fairness in this study. Specifically, this paper proposes that male employees/leaders will less care about (LMX) differentiation, due to their task-oriented characteristics, than female employees/leaders, who are more relationship-oriented. In addition, male employees/leaders are likely to develop cognition-based trust; whereas, female employees/leaders tend to build affective-based trust. Furthermore, this study predicts female employees/leaders represent more cooperation when they are involved with participation throughout the process.

Key Words: LMX differentiation, communication, trust, cooperation, gender effects.

Introduction

Service organizations (i.e., hotel and restaurant) improve their competitive advantage by providing beyond customers' expectations in service quality experience, when they are under the competitive business environment (Zeithaml, Berry, & Parasuraman, 1996). The nature of the hotel industry is a labor-intensive service industry; therefore, social and technical skills of its employees (i.e., cooperative behaviors, employees' commitment, and positive attitude) play important roles for the success of the organization (Nolan, 2002). Employees or management might not perform its job properly without any cooperation within the departments as well as between the departments, since many organizations are trying to develop employees' cooperative behaviors within departments as well as across business units to attain its goals. Different leadership styles, communication, and trust are all well identified as antecedents of cooperation. Since different gender is associated with different attitudes and behaviors in the workplace (Kidder, 2002), their orientation towards cooperation might be different.

Although there is abundant research on cooperation, not many studies have attempted to provide insight on different gender-based roles on cooperation, especially in the hospitality industry. Therefore, this study aims to conceptually propose a gender-based contingent model of cooperation in the context of the lodging industry. Responding to the scholars' (Erdogan & Bauer, 2010) call for attention, which is a need for further investigation of the relationships between leader member exchange (LMX) differentiation and employees' attitudes, as well as their behaviors, this study will discover how LMX differentiation influences group members' (i.e., employees as well as managers) cooperation moderated by the different gender-based roles. Different gender-based roles are identified, incorporating trust, communication, and their perceived procedural fairness (De Cremer & Knippenberg, 2002; Erdogan & Bauer, 2010).

Overview of Cooperation

For years, scholars (i.e., Barnard, 1968; March & Simon, 1958; McAllister, 1995) have recognized the importance of cooperation, a fundamental component for an organization's success. In this paper, cooperation is operationalized as enhancing the group members' collective interests to attain their mutual goals in the organization, between management (leaders) and employees (Smith, Carroll, & Ashford, 1995).

Katz (1964) emphasized cooperation, encouraging employees to become involved with the innovative and spontaneous activity, in addition to performing their responsibilities in order to enhance the organizational effectiveness. Cooperation might bring many different organizational benefits, described as follows: 1) organizational effectiveness (Chen, Chen, & Meindl, 1998; Smith et al., 1995), 2) organizational productivity and

economic performance (Katz, Kochan, & Weber, 1985), and 3) solutions for conflict between group members (Podsakoff, Ahearne, & MacKenzie, 1997). A more complete understanding of the contemporary cooperation research can be reviewed in Smith et al.'s (1995) study as well as Schalk and Curseu's (2010) study.

Classical vs. contemporary perspectives on cooperation
        Barnard (1968) significantly focused on the importance of cooperation in an organization. He proposed a broad concept of cooperation, which dealt with almost all functional activities of an organization, based on the behavioral approach. Influenced by Barnard, March and Simon (1958) also placed significant value on cooperation, suggesting the concept of "participate in" the organizations. In addition, Mary Parker Follet proposed the importance of coordination in the organization, even before Bernard's initiation of cooperation, proposing "participation" in the organization. For instance, her view on the main task of organization was to relate parts of the working units, which would lead to effective participation (Metcalf & Urwick, 1942). In addition, she emphasized the roles of participation and leadership style (i.e., power over vs. power with), influencing organizational outcomes.

        In terms of contemporary research perspectives on cooperation, the following areas are extensively investigated to identify cooperation according to the special issue of the *Journal of Managerial Psychology* (Schalk & Curseu, 2010): 1) the role of cultural differences, 2) virtual communications, 3) team processes, 4) leader behaviors, and 5) the impact of norms on cooperation. For instance, Chen et al.'s (1998) study investigated how cultural differences influence cooperation, proposing the idea of individualism and collectivism utilize different mechanisms to influence cooperation.

Review of Literature
Gender-based Roles in the organizational context
        Social scientists have been calling for attention on sex differences starting from the early 1900s (Connell, 1987); however, scholars have not attempted to propose any distinction between sex and gender until the late 1960s. According to the gender role theory, the different genders internalize cultural expectations differently to develop their behaviors in accordance with the prescribed gender roles, responding to external social influences (Eagly, Karau, & Makajhani, 1995). Sex is viewed as a biological category, related to a person's reproductive organs and hormones; whereas, gender is viewed as a complex set of social processes or "constructed" characteristics, establishing distinctive differences between females and males (Ely & Padavic, 2007).

        Gender roles are defined as "expectations about what is appropriate behavior for each sex" (Holt & Ellis, 1998, p. 929), generating different stereotypes of each gender. In terms of development of different gender roles in the workplace, different genders formulate their behaviors in the workplace, based upon the social interactions between each other (Cook, 1993). Specifically, it explains individual's behaviors are attributed to their differential sex role socialization, developed based upon culturally approved sex roles. These different sex role socializations expect different social behaviors from each gender in the workplace (Helgesen, 1990).

Leader member exchange (LMX) differentiation
        Research attention has shifted to understand the implications of coexistence of high- and low-quality exchanges within the same work group, referring to the LMX differentiation because LMX theory does not specify the effects of LMX differentiation (Liden, Erdogan, Wayne, & Sparrowe, 2006). In this study, LMX differentiation refers to "the degree of within-group variations that exists when a leader forms different quality relationships with different members" (Erdogan & Bauer, 2010, p. 1104).

        LMX differentiation is likely to impact not only employees' attitudes, but also their level of involvement (Martin, Epitropaki, Thomas, & Topakas, 2010) because resources of the organization (i.e., information, influence, and rewards) might not be always evenly distributed among employees when employees are in the circumstances of high LMX differentiation. For example, Hooper and Martin (2008) investigated the relationships between leader differentiation and an employee's perception. Results of their study identified negative relationships between leader

differentiation and employees' job satisfaction, as well as their well-being; on the other hand, positive relationships were identified between leader differentiation and team conflict.

LMX differentiation based on gender-based roles

LMX theory differentiates a high- or low-quality relationship between a leader and his/her employees; on the other hand, LMX differentiation focuses on the members' unequal access to their leaders. As different characteristics are represented between females and males, their perceptions towards LXM differentiation might be different. For example, female employees/leaders are more likely to focus on empathy, concern for others (Eagly & Karau, 1991), and helping (Gilligan, Ward, & Taylor, 1988); whereas, male employees/leaders are considered as competitive, independent, task-oriented, and ambitious (Schein & Mueller, 1992).

In terms of leadership behavior, women leaders tend to have a greater concern for interpersonal relationships and are more likely to place priority on fairness, when utilizing their power; on the other hand, male leaders utilize their power to achieve their maximized individual profits (Klenke, 2003). Based on these two distinctive characteristics for each gender, respectively, this paper proposes the following propositions:

P1: Female employees/leaders perceive LMX differentiation greater than male employees/leaders, due to their relation-oriented traits, influencing cooperation.

P2: Male employees/leaders will less focus on LMX differentiation, due to their task-oriented characteristics, influencing cooperation.

Importance of fairness perceived by employees

In addition to the LMX differentiation, perceptions of employees' fairness play significant roles, influencing cooperation in the organization. When fair procedures are utilized, a positive social evaluation (i.e., trust, respect, and belongingness) can be expected; on the other hand, disrespect might occur when unfair procedures are identified within the group or organization (Tyler & Lind, 1992).

Perceptions of fairness can be explained, employing different types of justice climate. Procedural justice is related to an employee's perceived fairness of the procedures used to make pay decisions (i.e., organizational rewards); whereas, distributive justice is associated with the perceived fairness of the pay outcome (Lee & Farh, 1999). According to Lee, Murrmann, Murrmann, and Kim's (2010) study, both distributive and procedural justice mediated the relationship between LMX and employees' turnover intentions, emphasizing the important role of employees' justice perceptions in the lodging industry. In addition, Sweeny and McFarlin's (1997) study identified that women and men emphasized differently between the procedural and distributive justice. Their study identified that women were more likely to focus on the relationship of procedural justice and organizational outcomes than men, and men tended to more focus on distributive justice than women. Therefore, this paper posits the following propositions.

P3: Male employees/leaders are more likely to focus on distributive justice than procedural justice, when influencing cooperation.

P4: Female employees/leaders are likely to focus more on procedural justice than distributive justice, when influencing cooperation.

Communication

Communication has been well identified, which positively influences interdependence (Lusch & Brown, 1996), cooperation (Mohr, Fisher, & Nevin, 1996), and trust (Doney & Cannon, 1997). Communication can be defined as a formal way of exchanging information, as well as an informal sharing of meaningful information among employees in the organization (Anderson & Weitz, 1989). Communication refers to information sharing or activities of information exchange between management and group members in this paper (Chen & Komorita, 1994).

Females are more likely to become involved with process-oriented issues, emphasizing the importance of their participation throughout the process (Rosener, 1990); on the other hand, male employees focus more on outcome-oriented issues (Sweeny & McFarlin, 1997). Therefore, the following propositions are proposed:

P5: Female group members/leaders are likely to represent a higher level of cooperation when they have more opportunities to participate from the beginning, due to their process-oriented characteristics.

P6: Male group members/leaders are inclined to show a higher level of cooperation when they are required to participate in outcome-oriented issues, due to their task-oriented characteristics.

Trust

Trust has been well identified as an important factor leading to organizational cooperation (De Cremer & Dewitte, 2002; McAllister, 1995). As trust has been a core construct in the organizational behavior study, many scholars examined different dimensions of trust in their study. Lewicki, McAllister, and Bies (1998) viewed trust and distrust as separate dimensions, derived from the perspective of "relationships are multifaceted or multiplex (p.442), arguing trust and distrust might be present in the same relationship. On the other hand, trust and distrust are also viewed coexisting in the same construct, arguing at the lowest level of trust, as the same as distrust, represents the complete lack of trust (Jones & George, 1998).

Furthermore, trust is viewed affective- and cognitive-based (Lewis & Wiegert, 1985). Cognition-based trust is developed, based on the knowledge of role performance; whereas, affect-based trust is formed, based on individuals' emotional attachments (Lewis & Wiegert, 1985). Considering different characteristics for each gender, this paper proposes the following proposition.

P7: Female employees/leaders are more likely to develop affective-based trust, based on their relation-oriented characteristics; whereas, male employees/leaders tend to develop cognition-based trust, based on their task-oriented characteristics, influencing cooperation.

Based on the propositions proposed above, this paper proposes the following conceptual framework as shown in Figure 1. LMX differentiation influences cooperation, moderated by different gender-based roles, which incorporates perceived fairness, communication, and trust.
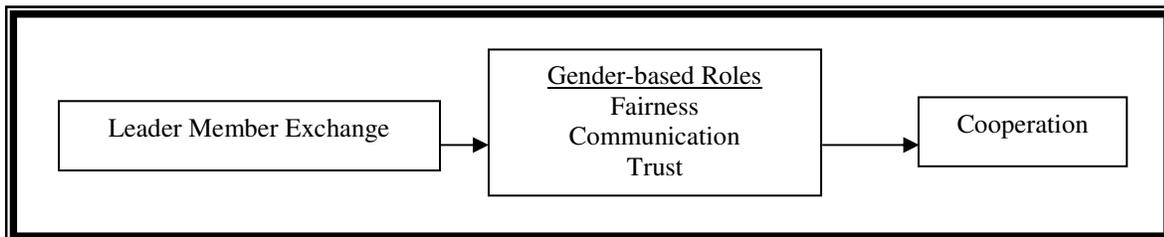

Figure 1.   Proposed Model of Cooperation Contingent on Gender-based Roles

Method

Study design plan

Target participants of this study are employees and managers in the hotel industry. Hotels located in the New England states will be contacted to participate in this study, emphasizing the importance of this study that leads to a sustainable organization. In accordance with the research questions proposed in this study, gender of employees and managers will attempted to be balanced among participants. Data will be collected, based on the convenience sampling method. An invitation email will be sent to hotel managers located in the New England states. Once hotel managers agree to participate in this study, emails will be sent to employees and management of the hotels that include the link to an online survey instrument, Qualtrics.

Measurements

Measurements of each construct will be based on previous studies to ensure validity and reliability issues. Measurements will be based on 7-point Likert-type Scale, 1 being "strongly disagree and 7 being "strongly agree." Each item will be modified, based on expert review and pretests to apply to the hotel industry. Leader member exchange will be measured, based on Scandura and Graen's (1984) study, which contains seven items. A sample item of LMX is " My supervisor understands my problems and needs." Fairness will be measured, based on procedural justice and distributive justice. Perceptions of procedural justice will be measured, based on Niehoff and Moorman's (1993) study, which contains six items. A sample item of procedural justice is "At my work, all job decisions are applied consistently across all affected employees." Perceptions of distributive justice will be also measured, based on Niehoff and Moorman's (1993) study, which encompass five items. A sample item of distributive justice is "Overall, the rewards I receive here are quite fair." Manager-employee communication will be measured, based on Zeffane and McLoughlin's (2006) study. This construct includes eight items and a sample item is " I am encouraged to contribute my ideas and suggestions."

Trust will be measured, based on affect-based as well as cognition-based trust. Both measurements will be based on McAllister's (1995) study. Affect-based trust includes five items and a sample item is as follows: "We have a sharing relationship. We can both freely share our ideas, feelings, and hopes." Cognition-based trust has six items and a sample item includes, "If people knew more about this individual and his/her background, they would be more concerned and monitor his/her performance more closely." Cooperation will be measured, based on De Cremer, van Dijke, and Mayer's (2010) study, including three items. These three items are as follows: 1) wanted to help the other, 2) wanted to cooperate with the other, and 3) would display a cooperative attitude during the discussion. Gender will be asked from each participant and gender orientation will be also asked, based on Kidder's (2002) study, measuring masculine or feminine orientation. Each orientation has four items. A sample item for masculine is "I defend my own beliefs" and a sample item for feminism is "I am sensitive to the needs of others." As suggested by previous studies (i.e., Liden et al., 2006), employee organizational tenure as well as managers' organizational tenure will be controlled because respondents' tenure might relate to understanding norms of the organization. Therefore, managers and employees' organizational tenure will be measured in months.

Conclusion
Theoretical contributions

Leadership behaviors, communications, and trust have long been recognized as influencing factors of cooperation in an organization (Barnard, 1968). However, the relationships between LMX differentiation and group members' attitudes and their behaviors still require more insight (Erdogan & Bauer, 2010) and gender-based roles on cooperation is scarce in organizational studies, especially in the context of hotel organizations. Based on this gap, this paper aims to develop a conceptual model that focuses on the interplay among LMX differentiation, communication, and trust, which have effects on cooperation, contingent on different gender-based roles.

A series of propositions are derived, by combining insights from research on gender-based roles as well as on cooperation. In spite of abundant research in both areas, few studies have attempted to incorporate both areas by addressing the issues proposed in this paper in the context of lodging industry. Based upon social learning theory perspectives, different gender roles represent different patterns, when influencing cooperation. Integrating two mainstreams of organizational behavior literature, this paper attempts to develop a theoretical framework, explaining how gender-based roles can be associated with different motives of cooperation mechanisms in the lodging industry. This paper proposes that female-based gender roles are heavily associated with motives of relation-oriented; whereas, male-based gender roles are linked with motives of task-oriented.

Practical implications

This study provides important considerations to managers in the lodging industry with insight into how relationships between leaders and employees might more effectively influence cooperation, contingent on different gender-based roles. As both sexes are equally prevalent and play important roles in the lodging industry, it is

important to know how each sex represents more cooperative behavior, in terms of different types of communication, trust, and perceived fairness. One of the most important goals for hotel organizations is to provide beyond expected services to its customers, by arranging pleasant and memorable experiences; thus, cooperation between employees and management is critical to achieve the hotel organizations' goals. By understanding the different needs between female and male employees/leaders leading to cooperative behaviors, hotel management might enhance its organization goals, by providing memorable experiences to guests as well as returning more guests to the property.

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