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MEDIATING MECHANISM OF LMX IN THE ASSOCIATION OF AMBIDEXTROUS LEADERSHIP AND CHANGE-ORIENTED OCB

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Abstract

In the current study, the relationship between ambidextrous leadership and change-oriented organization citizenship behavior (CO-OCB) was tested through a mediated mechanism of leader-member exchange (LMX). To test the hypothesized association, the study took a sample of employees from small and medium enterprises in the textile sector of Pakistan. Their respective supervisors were also taken as respondents. The responses from 175 respondents were collected at two different points in time while maintaining an appropriate time interval. SPSS 24 and AMOS 24 were used for data analysis purposes. The study applied confirmatory factor analysis and structural equation modeling for model fitness and direct effects, respectively. The mediated mechanism was tested by applying PROCESS macro. The study found a positive and significant association between ambidextrous leadership and CO-OCB. The study results also supported the mediating role of LMX in the hypothesized relationship. It is suggested, based on the study findings, that leaders promote risk-taking behaviors by establishing quality relationships with their subordinates to achieve innovative development goals.

Keywords: Ambidextrous Leadership, LMX, CO-OCB, SMEs, Contextual Changes.

Introduction

The business ecosystem has evolved over the years and embraced dynamic environmental, cultural and contextual changes. In the era of growing science and technology and the demand for innovative products and services, the role of employees in the innovation process has become significantly important (Frese & Fay, 2001; Ma, Zu, & Jain, 2023). Small and medium enterprises (SMEs) need employees who can be more vibrant and risk-takers, as these firms are key contributors to innovative products and services. Empirical research indicates that organizational success is attributed to creative inputs from employees at all levels (Crant, 2000; Ghitulescu, 2013; Junça-

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Silva, Duarte, & Santos, 2024; Yang & Wang, 2010). During this day and age, employees show distinct behavior as they are more inclined towards trying new things themselves, which in turn motivates them to think creatively and act innovatively. Most businesses expand into either related or unrelated industries to remain competitive by mitigating risk factors emerging from the competitive environments (Tushman & O'Reilly, 1996; Vuori & Tushman, 2024). According to Coccia (2016), the persisting problem in the environment brings either incremental or radical innovation and change to organizations.

Many organizations are caught in the dilemma of innovating or not innovating. This situation leads to catastrophically dangerous outcomes for businesses, such as closing or layoffs. Organizations take input from the systems in which they operate and respond to environmental changes accordingly. The role of employees is important as no organization can run without the creative input of employees in day-to-day operations (Gui, Lei, & Le, 2024). In modern organizations, employees have various modes of working and have ample opportunities to contribute innovatively. They have flexible options to work from home and go to the office only when needed. This gives employees an opportunity to think outside the box, work independently, and have peace of mind at their own pace. Employees demonstrate various behaviors at work, which may be broadly classified as in-role and extra-role (LePine & Van Dyne, 2001). Voice behaviors are also important antecedents of creativity and innovation. Employees think out of the box and challenge the prevailing practices to innovate effectively and contribute to the profit maximization of the organization, along with brand repute and customer satisfaction, for sustainable competitive advantage (Tidd & Bassant, 2018; Vuori & Tushman, 2024).

There is mounting pressure on the organizations arising from different stakeholders to continuously innovate and stay competitive, preferably through incremental innovation, as compared to radical innovation (Warrick, 2023). Radical innovation is riskier than incremental innovation, and organizations tend to improve existing products and services to gain a competitive advantage (Gu, Tang, & Jiang, 2015; Srivastava & Agrawal, 2020). According to Morrison (2011), employees' voice behavior can be stated as, "I offer the following integrated conceptualization of voice: discretionary communication of ideas, suggestions, concerns, or opinions about work-related issues with the intent to improve organizational and unit functioning" (p. 375). Similarly, Morrison and Phelps (1999) stated that change is subject to risk, and any behavior within the organization that falls into supportive behavior is not sufficient for creativity and innovation. Hence, the need for innovative behavior, which is also called change-oriented behavior, emerges where employees can take personal initiatives, raise their voices and go beyond the call of duty to bring change.

A significant amount of research conducted in the past highlighted the nature of voice behaviors and concluded that any behavior that challenges the status quo is risky (Iqbal, Ghazanfar, Hameed, Mujtaba, & Swati, 2022; Liu, Zhu & Yang, 2010). Displaying risk-taking behavior does not mean harming individuals or organizations but simply contributing something positively (Bettencourt, 2004; Jia, Liu, Zhang, & Luo, 2024; Zeng, Zhao, & Zhao, 2020). Among all other voice behaviors, CO-OCB is regarded as a significant behavioral trait that advocates for innovation (Fuller, Marler, Hester, & Otondo, 2015; Kataria, Rashmi, & Rastogi, 2023; Shin, Kim, & Lee, 2016). Despite the potential benefits of CO-OCB for organizations, it is equally

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important to disclose it as risky behavior with potential negative outcomes for individuals (Shipton et al., 2024). The fear of being rejected is the key hindrance to developing new ideas, which generally stems from employees. Voicing change with creative insights can bring sustainable benefits to the organization because the business ecosystem does not permit any organization to remain unresponsive to change. This implies that change is imperative, and employees at all levels are the source of advocating and bringing change.

Previous studies have explored multiple antecedents of CO-OCB at various levels, i.e., organization, group and individual (Kim, Lee, & Byun, 2020; Krefft, Marcus, & Weigelt, 2024; Pycli, 2019). These studies have found that job demand, personality, and leadership styles are significantly related to CO-OCB. Studies have also found that CO-OCB may take any form of voice behavior, such as taking charge, voluntary extra-role behavior and job crafting (Botero & Van Dyne, 2009). Among all these antecedents, one of the most important antecedents of risk-taking behavior or CO-OCB is leadership. The researchers have paid significant attention to the role of leadership in fostering voice behaviors among employees (Bettencourt, 2004; Detert & Burris, 2007). Leadership research has gained momentum over the past few years (Johns, 2024; Liden, 2012; Oc, Chintakananda, Bashshur, & Day, 2023). Numerous studies in the past have emphasized the significant role of different leadership styles in fostering risk-taking behaviors (Avolio, Bass, & Jung, 1999; Detert & Burris, 2007; Gu et al., 2015; Iqbal et al., 2022). Therefore, it is argued that leadership is a significant contributor to various constructive behaviors.

In the most dynamic and competitive environment, one of the most dynamic ways to lead is that the leader could be transactional and transformational (Rosing, Frese, & Bausch, 2011). The argument is that during the cut-throat competition, organizations not only have to innovate but also implement or commercialize the innovation. Hence, a recent leadership style developed ambidextrous leadership. If the employees keep thinking creatively and no conversion takes place into innovation, then the whole exercise will be futile. Hence, the leaders must keep the balance right, i.e., create, innovate and commercialize. Ambidextrous leadership (AL) has recently made a presence in the extant leadership literature. This construct has its roots in organizational ambidexterity literature, which describes the organizational ability to respond to the volatile operating environment and ever-evolving business ecosystem. Notwithstanding, organizations that fail to respond to market trends, customers' preferences, and legal and cultural issues usually face the dismay of being wiped out of the competition. In this scenario, an ambidextrous manager or a leader can decide to drive the organization in the right direction. Ambidextrous leadership consists of opening, closing and temporally flexible behavior. These characteristics of ambidextrous leadership set this leadership apart from others because the leader takes action according to the situation. The leader provides an environment for creative thinking and pushes individuals to turn their ideas into reality within a specified timeframe, i.e., neither too early nor too late (Vuori & Tushman, 2024; Zuraik & Kelly, 2019).

Since ambidextrous leadership involves leaders' opening and closing behavior, or in other terms, ambidextrous leaders exhibit both transactional and transformational characteristics of leadership. Hence employees need to form a working relationship through LMX (Lin & Du, 2024, Wang, Law, Hackett, Wang, & Chen, 2005). The

superior relationship of LMX reflects the level of relationship between leaders and subordinates (Gerstner & Day, 1997). High-quality relationships yield high-quality results. Although LMX received criticism as far as cronyism is concerned, most recent research describes LMX as the dyadic relationship between leader and subordinate without favoring the in-groups. Previous studies have shown that LMX has positively influenced OCB under various circumstances (Van Dyne, Kamdar, & Joireman, 2008; Wang et al., 2005). When the employees feel that they have a strong positive bond with the leader, they can easily exhibit risk-taking behavior. The quality of the relationship between leaders significantly affects the desired outcomes at the workplace. Therefore, the study proposes that LMX mediates the relationship between AL and CO-OCB. The study relied on LMX theory to explain the hypothesized model. The study has examined both direct and indirect relationships between predictor and criterion variables. One of the most unique approaches in our study is that it has been conducted in an Asian context, whereas a plethora of previous studies were conducted in Western cultures.

Rationale of the Study

AL is a double-edged leadership approach that has recently attracted considerable interest owing to the fact that it promotes both innovative and systematic behavior within organizations (Rosing et al., 2011). In the context of SMEs and especially the textile sector of Pakistan, there seems to be a continuing tension between creativity and the operational imperative, which is why the role of AL in shaping change-oriented OC-B has been examined. Thus, this study seeks to address this gap by examining how leader-member exchange (LMX) exercises a mediating effect in this link.

Problem Statement

Some issues cause problems in the Pakistan textile industry, such as increasing competition from other countries, new technology, and dynamic consumer demand. Consequently, while employee-generated innovation is central to service organizations, organizational leadership behaviors that support such initiatives are still largely uncharted. This paper fills the gap with respect to understanding how ambidextrous leadership can benefit CO-OCB yet manage the complexities of innovative behaviors.

Research Questions

1. In what way does ambidextrous leadership affect change-oriented OCB?

2. What is the role of mediating variable, leader-member exchange, in this relationship?

Research Objectives

- To examine the direct impact of ambidextrous leadership on CO-OCB.

- To investigate the mediating role of leader-member exchange between ambidextrous leadership and CO-OCB.

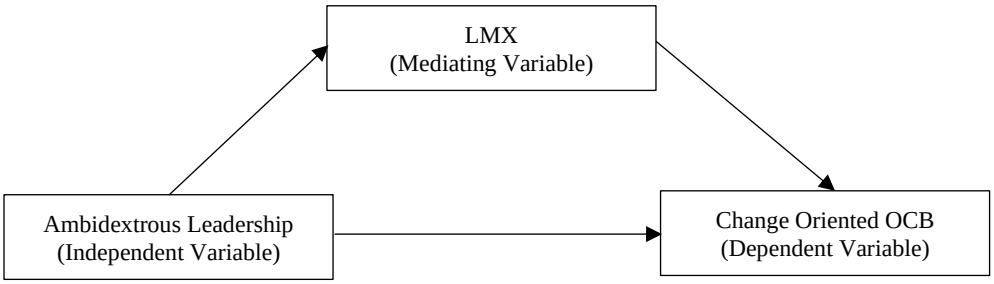
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Theoretical Framework

This study adopts the LMX theory, which describes a quality relationship between a leader and a member that leads to trust, respect, and obligation (Dansereau, Graen, and Haga, 1975). By extending LMX with the theory of ambidextrous leadership, the study supposes that such relationships moderate the connection between leadership and innovation ushered in by employees.

Conceptual Framework

Ambidextrous leadership is conceptualized as the independent variable, CO-OCB as the dependent variable and LMX as the intervening/mediating variable. This triangulated relationship provides the theoretical framework for hypothesizing the interactivity of the constructs.



Significance of the Study

The current study advances the existing leadership research by establishing the moderating effect of ambidextrous leadership on CO-OCB. In fact, it offers communications techniques and relationship management tools that SMEs can use in order to foster effective leader-member exchange relationships that enhance employees' willingness and ability to engage in idea generation and experimentation, thereby protecting and creating an advantage in a volatile business environment.

Literature Review

Ambidextrous Leadership and Change-Oriented OCB

Ambidextrous leadership (AL) is the amalgam of two conflicting leadership styles, i.e., transactional and transformational leadership. AL entails the leader's ability to effectively use both innate leadership traits (Jia et al., 2024; Rosing et al., 2011) and to effectively swap between the two, which is also called temporal flexibility. Ambidextrous leaders typically show three distinct types of behaviors, i.e., opening, closing and temporal flexibility. AL concept was derived from organizational ambidexterity, which refers to an organization's ability to respond to a dynamic environment and business ecosystem. Similarly, ambidextrous leaders tend to respond to environmental dynamics, changing business ecosystems, legal and cultural factors and changing demographics. In any organization, creativity and innovation are desirable factors for survival and competition. Ambidextrous leaders can foster creativity through opening behavior and ensure implementation through closing

behavior. The etymological meaning of ambidextrousness is one's ability to use the right and left hand with equal strength (Ma et al., 2023; Tuan, 2017). This means that these leaders can react to situational factors effectively so that employees can act innovatively.

Change-oriented OCB refers to discretionary, extra-role behavior aimed at fostering changes within an organization and opposing the current situation (Choi, 2007; Van Dyne et al., 2008). Voicing within the organization has never been an easy choice. However, it is an important factor for innovation. Also, Morrison and Phelps (1999) stated that extra role or innovative behavior contributes significantly to innovation processes. Similarly, LePine and Van Dyne (1998) and Javed, Fatima, Khan, and Bashir (2021) described these change-oriented behaviors as "voice behaviors," highlighting their functional role in driving organizational change and innovation. It has been argued that any challenging behavior is a voice behavior in nature that objectively seeks positive input for the operational and procedural efficiency and effectiveness of the organization. When employees exhibit such behavior by choice, the leaders can benefit from these employees by building a quality relationship with them. While innovation is crucial for an organization's survival in a dynamic and competitive environment (Smith & Tushman, 2005), employee contributions toward constructive change are equally essential (Chughtai, Syed, Naseer, & Chinchilla, 2024).

However, leadership has been identified as a key precursor of productive behavior (López-Domínguez, Enache, Sallan, & Simo, 2013), a concept referred to as CO-OCB in this research. In any organization, without a leadership vision and risk-taking behavior, creativity and innovation lie in the grey area. It is the leader's responsibility to create such an environment where employees can challenge their skills and abilities and contribute to the betterment of their respective organizations.

To effectively explore and exploit ideas, employees require robust leadership support. AL combines transformational and transactional leadership. At the transformational level, leaders exhibit "opening" behaviors, encouraging creativity and exploration, while at the transactional level, leaders display "closing" behavior, monitoring employees to ensure efficient goal achievement (Baškarada, Watson, & Cromarty, 2016; Luu, 2017; Zacher & Rosing, 2015; Zacher & Wilden, 2014). Ma, Zhou, Chen, and Dong (2019) emphasized that the interplay between opening and closing behavior enables individuals to think differently and adapt their actions relative to the prevailing situation. However, past research also suggests that neither transactional nor transformational leadership styles alone are adequate to elicit voice behavior from employees. This underscores the importance of ambidextrous leadership in contingent situations. By balancing opening and closing behavior, ambidextrous leaders foster employee creativity, build trust, and ultimately stimulate CO-OCB (Martínez-Climent, Rodríguez-García, & Zeng, 2019). The business ecosystem puts immense pressure on organizations to adapt and stay abreast to gain and maintain competitive advantage. Mom, Van Den Bosch, and Volberda (2009) stated that AL can enhance organizations' abilities to respond to business dynamics, customers preferences and even local and global changes in the industry when employees effectively demonstrate CO-OCB.

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CO-OCB is called an extra role behavior that is purely at the discretion of employees. In her seminal work, Choi (2007) highlighted supportive leadership and argued that an innovative climate could promote such behavior within organizations. Considering the AL theory, it is argued that a leader's conflicting behavior is prone to situational factors. Leaders must exhibit opening or closing behavior as per the circumstances (Luo, Zheng, Ji, & Liang, 2018). Transformational aspects of AL motivate personnel to take risks, share ideas, and offer practical and operational changes. Meanwhile, the transactional aspects focus on goal-oriented, formal approaches, with relationships often based on mutual benefits. Transactional leaders rely on mechanisms of incentive and penalty to drive goal accomplishment (Kara, Uysal, Sirgy, & Lee, 2013). Golla (2012) highlighted that transactional leadership facilitates the implementation of creative initiatives, while transformational leadership enhances organizational performance via novelty and implementation of creative ideas stemming from employees working at different levels. Similarly, Oke, Munshi, and Walumbwa (2009) argued that transactional leadership safeguards effective execution through prescribed procedures because timely execution of innovative ideas is a key success factor. These findings indicate that the integration of transformational and transactional leadership styles, commonly referred to as AL, plays a critical role in promoting CO-OCB within organizations. Based on this, it is anticipated that AL will have a positive influence on CO-OCB. Consequently, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H_1: Ambidextrous leadership is positively related to change-oriented OCB.

Mediating Role of Leader-Member Exchange

Employees often perform complex tasks that require equally complex leadership approaches, such as ambidextrous leadership (Zacher, Robinson & Rosing, 2016). Jia et al. (2024) argued that innovation-driven intentions necessitate specific leadership styles, while Agarwal, Datta, Blake-Beard, and Bhargava (2012) emphasized the significant role of leader-member exchange (LMX) in pursuing innovation. Thus, ambidextrous leadership emerges as an approach capable of influencing CO-OCB through its impact on LMX. Ambidextrous leadership incorporates both opening and closing behaviors. Through interactions with leaders and the cultivation of trust, employees are encouraged to engage in both exploration and exploitation activities. Choi (2007) identified leadership support, an innovative climate, and a strong vision as key predictors of CO-OCB. While much research highlights leadership as critical to innovative work behavior, others argue that creativity stems from an individual's innate personality traits (Mumford, Scott, Gaddis, & Strange, 2002). However, empirical studies have consistently demonstrated a positive correlation between leadership and followers' creative behaviors (Rank, Nelson, Allen, & Xu, 2009).

High-quality LMX relationships are indicated by reciprocal respect, trust, and a sense of obligation between leaders and subordinates (Botero & Van Dyne, 2009). When the employees enjoy a quality relationship with the leaders, they go the extra mile to show commitment and a sense of ownership, which is a citizenship behavior. According to LMX theory, relational dynamics within organizations vary based on the material and emotional resources that are exchanged between leaders and members (Dansereau Jr., Graen, & Haga, 1975). Low-quality relationships often align with

formal employment contracts, while high-quality relationships transcend these boundaries, fostering deeper collaboration. If employees feel like having formal job-related relationships, they may not engage in behavior that can be beneficial for the organization. Therefore, leaders tend to show support and visionary input.

The transformational aspects of ambidextrous leadership can strengthen high-quality LMX relationships, enhancing their impact on employees' creative input. This implies that the AL-LMX quality relationship can potentially have a positive impact on contemporary organizations. Most managers tend to be ambidextrous because they must respond to various stakeholders within and outside the organization. No organization can survive without innovation, and leadership is the key ingredient in the innovation process. Extensive research in the past has confirmed a significant positive link between LMX and extra-role behaviors. For example, Janssen and Van Yperen (2004) identified a positive association between LMX and innovative work behavior. Similarly, Bettencourt (2004) found a significant positive link between LMX and CO-OCB in a study of 183 retail sales employees. Lin, Kao, Chen, and Lu (2015) also reported that LMX positively influenced "taking charge" behaviors. Based on this body of research, it is anticipated that ambidextrous leadership will positively influence LMX, which further has a positive effect on CO-OCB. Accordingly, the following relationship is proposed:

H_2: Leader-member exchange mediates the relationship between ambidextrous leadership and change-oriented OCB.

Research Methodology

This research aimed to examine the mediating role of LMX between AL and CO-OCB. Data for this research were collected from Pakistan's textile sector. The textile sector was chosen due to its critical reliance on innovation to address changing fashion trends, seasonal variations, and increasing competition, including the competition from international brands selling online and rapid technological advancements. These pressures underscore the need for employees across all levels to contribute innovative ideas to sustain competitive advantage. CO-OCB, which is a voice behavior seeking to improve organizational processes, bringing change and advocating for novel ideas, plays a vital role in achieving this goal (Carmeli, Reiter-Palmon, & Ziv, 2010; Iqbal et al., 2022). The sample was drawn from employees working in small and medium enterprises (SMEs) within the textile sector of Pakistan. HR departments provided lists of potential participants, including both employees and their immediate supervisors. Randomly selected employees received questionnaires, which they could complete during programmed work hours at their convenience. To mitigate social desirability bias, data were collected in two waves with a two-month lag. At T1, employees responded to ambidextrous leadership. At T2, supervisors rated employees on CO-OCB, and employees reported on LMX. A distinctive recognition coding system was used to match the dyads. The respondents were also briefed about the research ethics and were free to withdraw from the research process of their own free will. Further, they were briefed that data would be used for academic purposes only and that no information would be shared with anyone whatsoever.

Structured questionnaires were used to collect survey data. The items of each construct were translated into Urdu to avoid difficulty in understanding the meaning

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of the questionnaire items. The questionnaire items of AL were adapted from the study of Rosing et al. (2011). This scale contained 14 items with a scale reliability of 0.95. The sample item included, "How often does this leader allow different ways of accomplishing a task'. To collect data on LMX, a seven-item scale was adapted from Janssen and Van Yperen (2004), and the sample item included 'My working relationship with my supervisor is effective.' The scale reliability of this construct was 0.82. The items of CO-OCB were adapted from the work of Bettencourt (2004) with a scale reliability of 0.90. There were 9 items, and the sample item included 'This employee tries to bring about improved procedures for the organization/company.' The responses to this construct were collected from the supervisors. The responses on each construct were collected on 5 5-point Likert Scale. The data were collected from both supervisors and subordinates to avoid common method bias, and a total of 260 questionnaires were distributed among respondents. 175 responses were received, which yielded a response rate of 67.30%. The data analysis was carried out using SPSS and AMOS 24 versions. The basic data properties were first checked with the help of descriptive statistics and correlation analysis. Model fitness was then established with the help of confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), and direction relationships were checked using structural equation modeling (SEM). Hayes's model was finally applied for mediation analysis.

Analysis and Interpretations

Descriptive statistics were calculated to examine the response patterns, and the results are summarized in Table 1.

Table 01: Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Min.	Max.	Mean	SD
AL	1.00	5.00	3.40	0.63
LMX	1.00	5.00	3.08	0.72
CO-OCB	1.00	5.00	3.38	0.74

The results suggest that participants generally rated all variables slightly above the midpoint of 3 on a 1-5 scale, indicating that respondents largely agreed with the statements of items. Further, the study performed correlation analysis to determine the variables' associations. The results are presented in Table 2.

Table 02: Correlation Analysis

Variables	AL	LMX	CO-OCB
AL	1.00		
LMX	0.40**	1.00	
CO-OCB	0.25**	0.41**	1.00
** p<0.01			

The findings indicate a significant positive correlation of AL with CO-OCB ($r = 0.25$, $p < 0.01$) and LMX ($r = 0.40$, $p < 0.01$). LMX is also positively correlated with CO-OCB ($r = 0.41$, $p < 0.01$). The correlational analysis typically provides a baseline for regression analysis. The study then applied CFA to determine the mode fitness. The CFA technique is used to testify to the structure of the observed variables. CFA helps

ascertain the measurement models for further robust analysis. CFA was conducted using SEM to evaluate the model's fitness prior to testing the hypotheses. AMOS 24 was utilized, and the results of CFA are in Table 3.

Table 03: Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Model	χ^2/df	RMSEA	IFI	TLI	CFI
Three factors model	1.62	0.06	0.91	0.90	0.91
Two factors model	5.72	0.14	0.68	0.65.	0.68
One factor model	6.63	0.19	0.41	0.39	0.41

Table 3 shows the baseline three-factor model, which demonstrated a good model fit (χ^2/df = 1.62, RMSEA = 0.06, IFI = 0.91, TLI = 0.90, CFI = 0.91) as compared to the alternative models. Hence, the results of the CFA confirmed the goodness of fit indices for further analysis. The preliminary analysis laid the groundwork for hypothesis testing. The study then examined the direction relationships, and its results are presented in Table 4. The alternative models (two and one-factor models) were rejected due to higher values of χ^2/df, RMSEA, IFI, TLI and CFI.

Table 04: Path Coefficient Indirect Relationships

Structural Path	Path Coefficient
AL → CO-OCB	0.25**
AL → LMX	0.40***
LMX → CO-OCB	0.42***
**p < 0.01. ***p < 0.001	

H_1 proposed a positive relationship between AL and CO-OCB. The results confirmed this hypothesis, as shown in Table 4 ($\beta = 0.25$, $p < 0.01$). Hence, H1 is accepted. The findings of the current study are consistent with previous research (Bettencourt, 2004; Iqbal et al., 2022; Jia et al., 2024; Oke et al., 2009; Zacher & Wilden, 2014). Relying on the findings of our study, the study argues that AL is an important precursor of challenging behavior, which is also called CO-OCB. Employees can take risks when leaders exhibit ambidextrous behavior. The study also found a positive and significant association between AL and LMX, as well as LMX and CO-OCB. Next to this, Hypothesis 2 of the study was empirically tested, which stated that LMX mediates the relationship between AL and CO-OCB. The results related to this hypothesis testing are in Table 5.

Table 05: Mediation Analysis

Structural Path	Indirect Effect	BC (95% CI)
AL → LMX →CO-OCB	0.17**	(0.11, 0.32)
p < 0.01		

As indicated in Table 5, the indirect effect or mediating effect is significant, and zero does not lie between the lower and upper confidence intervals. Hence, it is confirmed that LMX is a significant mediator between AL and CO-OCB. The results

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and findings are consistent with past research (Bettencourt, 2004; Gu et al., 2015; Iqbal et al., 2022; Lin & Du, 2024; Lin et al., 2015).

Discussion

The present research indicates that ambidextrous leadership (AL) is positively and significantly related to change-oriented organizational citizenship behavior (CO-OCB). These findings are consistent with prior studies highlighting the contribution of leadership to generating innovative and proactive employee behaviors (Rosing et al., 2011). Leaders who possess both transformational and transactional leadership initiate conditions for creativity and good goal accomplishment. This dual approach allows employees to participate in activities that contribute to organizational innovation that are not mentioned in the descriptions of their positions.

Moreover, the results provided evidence for the moderation of leader-member exchange (LMX) and truly revealed that high-quality exchanges between leaders and employees are essential for developing CO-OCB. These results align with the LMX theoretical framework, which assumes that exchange quality characteristics such as trust and respect fundamentally explain employees' participation in extra-role behavior (Dansereau, Graen, & Haga, 1975). Such findings indicate that when the leaders foster structural mast dyadic exchange, the employee provides creative ideas and even takes risks, hence leading to organizational gains.

The findings also reflect the Pakistani textile industry. Only within this framework is it possible to consider specific aspects of managing and organizational development. The nature of this industry enhances the call to apply AL and LMX to improve workers' CO-OCB since situations such as intense global competition and the push for more innovations are common. Based on these results, it can be stated that leadership interventions need to be designed separately based on the requirements of certain industries and cultural contexts, which adds to the practical relevance of the study.

This evidence justifies the call for organizations to adopt ambidextrous leadership and establish high-quality LMX relationships to enhance change orientation behaviors. More research could also examine other potential moderation variables, including the organizational culture of the firm's top levels or the personality attributes of employees that may affect this relationship.

Conclusion

Organizations have a different ecosystem nowadays as compared to the past. The emergence of technological advancements creates a challenging situation for businesses to remain competitive. Organizations face mounting pressures from key stakeholders regarding creativity and innovation. Pakistan's textile industry is a major contributor to Pakistan's employment and exports. This study explored the relationship between ambidextrous leadership (AL) and change-oriented organizational citizenship behavior (CO-OCB), with leader-member exchange (LMX) serving as a mediating variable. The study took a sample of employees from Pakistan's textile sector. The study sample comprised dyadic respondents from various positions and departments. The hypotheses of the study proposed a positive relationship between AL and CO-

OCB and mediation of LMX in the relationship between AL and CO-OCB. The findings support all the proposed hypotheses, confirming the significant roles of ambidextrous leadership and LMX in fostering CO-OCB. The results clearly demonstrated that AL, characterized by the ability to balance exploration and exploitation behaviors, significantly influences employees' engagement in extra-role behaviors aimed at improving organizational outcomes. Leaders who exhibit both transformational (encouraging creativity) and transactional (ensuring efficiency) behaviors create an environment conducive to innovation and motivate employees to engage in change-oriented actions that go beyond their formal job descriptions.

The study highlighted that leaders who provide an opportunity to foster healthy dyadic relationships basically enable employees to take risks, voice new ideas, and challenge the status quo, all of which are critical elements of CO-OCB. This mediation of LMX underscores the importance of creating a supportive climate where employees feel secure in contributing innovative solutions without fear of negative repercussions by establishing high-quality relationships. Further, high-quality LMX relationships, characterized by mutual trust, respect, and support, enhance employees' commitment to organizational goals and increase their willingness to engage in extra-role behaviors. Leaders who cultivate strong, individualized relationships with their employees foster a sense of belonging and obligation, which in turn motivates employees to demonstrate proactive behaviors that are beneficial for the organization. Overall, this research emphasized the pivotal role of AL and LMX in promoting CO-OCB.

These discernments are worthy of academic research as our study contributes to the literature pertaining to leadership research. The study also contributes to practical applications, particularly in industries where continuous innovation is critical for maintaining competitive advantage in the ever-changing business ecosystem. The findings suggest that leadership behaviors that balance creativity and efficiency, combined with high-quality leader-member relationships, can significantly drive innovation and change within organizations. Further, employees can be motivated through AL to exhibit voice behaviors by establishing a relationship that is mutually beneficial in promoting creativity and innovation. Future research should investigate how AL influences CO-OCB across different organizational contexts, with a focus on moderating mechanisms such as organizational culture.

Recommendations

Training the leaders within organizations, especially SMEs, should ensure that they display ambidextrous leadership behaviors, which incorporate, on the one hand, creativity and, on the other hand, more structured, goal-oriented behaviors. Organizing the LMX relationships by enhancing the levels of trust, being open with communication, and ensuring that the subordinates are supported helps create innovative behaviors. A breakthrough requires time, and an organization that encourages innovative thinking is also one that accepts ideas from all levels of the firm. Finally, the inclusion of ambidextrous leadership practices in policies will help cover organizational departments.

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Limitations of the study

It should be noted that this study's conclusions and recommendations are based only on the textile sector in Pakistan; therefore, they may not reflect broader trends. The cross-sectional design restricts the levels of causality, while the data collected through questionnaires has a natural bias. However, the study has limitations in that it has a relatively small sample size and the omission of potential mediating variables, including organizational culture.

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