

A Work Project, presented as part of the requirements for the Award of a Master's degree  
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The relationship of LMX with Innovative Behavior and Organizational  
Citizenship Behavior: the moderating role of Identity Leadership  
and the mediating role of Job Satisfaction

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## **ABSTRACT**

The aim of the present research was to analyze the impact of identity leadership on important work related employee behaviors. Furthermore, the goal was to examine the moderating role of identity leadership on the relationship between LMX and innovative behaviors and OCB. A sample of 176 participants was used. Results revealed that identity leadership maximizes the influence of LMX on employees' predisposition to engage in innovative behaviors and OCB, being a moderator of such relationship. Moreover, results demonstrated that identity leadership does not moderate the relationship between LMX and job satisfaction. Implications for practice are discussed in the end.

**Keywords:** Human Resources Management, Leadership, Identity Leadership, Leader-Member Exchange Theory (LMX), Innovative Behavior, Citizenship Behavior (OCB), Job Satisfaction, Shared Social Identity, Reciprocity, Social Exchange

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## **1.INTRODUCTION**

In the last few decades, organizations have started to realize the increasingly importance of intangible assets in their quest for competitive advantage. In fact, considerable research has proved the importance of innovative behaviors to the success and growth of an organization (Mumford 2000). Likewise, the importance of citizenship behaviors (OCB) is also well established (Wagner & Rush 2000).

An organization that allows its employees to be innovative and creative, and that rewards this mindset will have a better capability to adapt to new market and economic environment conditions. Likewise it will be able to grow and enhance its performance by adopting this openness to what is new and unknown as a culture. In fact, several research demonstrates that innovation is one of the most powerful drivers of growth, and that it enables organizations to succeed (Gupta and Singhal 1993; Sadowski 1995; Mumford 2000). Innovative behavior definition proceeds as follows: “intentional generation, promotion, and realization of new ideas within a work role, workgroup, or organization” (Janssen & Van Yperen 2004, 370).

On the other hand, citizenship behaviors (OCB) are the ones that employees within an organization can engage voluntarily, and that are not part of the specific requirements of their jobs, and neither are rewarded by the organization in any official way. Nonetheless, these behaviors are extremely important to the healthy environment experienced within an organization, and contribute enormously to the creation of a good and constructive atmosphere and the proliferation of states of satisfaction, commitment and happiness in the context of interpersonal relationships and the overall organization. OCB include 5 different types of behaviors: altruism, courtesy, sportsmanship, civic virtue and conscientiousness (Organ 1988). Diverse literature has established the extreme importance of OCB for the success of

organizations. Its consequences and effects on employees well-being and on the positive environment of an organization have been supported by extensive research (Organ 1988).

Employees that engage into innovative and citizenship behaviors usually are the ones that feel safe and protected in their ties with their employer (leader, organization), that feel nurtured and encouraged to explore new ideas, that feel confident in their job and position and experience the freedom to be autonomous. Several research investigated the link between the Leader-Member Exchange theory of leadership (LMX) and the tendency for employees to engage into innovative (Sparrowe & Liden 2005) and citizenship behaviors (Liden et al. 1997; Settoon et al. 1996; Wayne et al. 1997). The basic definition of LMX asserts that leaders tend to engage and develop different types of exchange relationships with each one of their subordinates, and the corresponding quality of each relationship affects important leader and subordinate attitudes and behaviors (Gerstner & Day 1997; Liden et al. 1997; Sparrowe & Liden 1997). LMX theory draws from the Social Exchange Theory — this theory proposes that there is a perceived obligation on the side of the subordinate to reciprocate high-quality relationships (Blau 1968; Gouldner 1960). Research has shown a positive correlation between high-quality LMX and the predisposition of an employee to reciprocate, through the display of innovative and citizenship behaviors (Sparrowe & Liden 2005; Dansereau et al. 1984). In fact, perceived organizational support and high-quality LMX create in the subordinate a feeling of gratitude or debt which will create the need to reciprocate in some way. This need to reciprocate can happen in an unconscious level, however it is a basic human condition — when someone feels supported and appreciated, there is an urge to reciprocate this. Likewise when someone experiences a positive emotional state the tendency to help, support others (OCB) or to be creative or innovative (deriving from the emotional state of safety and support) is enhanced. Fundamentally, when engaging into high-quality LMX relationships, subordinates recompense their leaders by

engaging in OCB and innovative behaviors, which will benefit the leader, the coworkers and, ultimately, the organization.

Job satisfaction is another outcome of LMX's high-quality relationships (Epitropaki & Martin 1999), which is easy to perceive — an employee who feels that he/she is getting a special attention from the leader, who receives resources and advantages as a result of the high-quality LMX, will naturally feel more satisfied with the job in general.

At the same time, when an employee enjoys high job satisfaction, he/she will naturally engage in behaviors such as being more supportive of others, less negative, being more innovative and creative, and more dedicated and committed with the overall organization. Based on this, diverse research has shown that job satisfaction is one of the predictors of innovative behavior and OCB (Ng and Feldman 2011; Bateman and Organ 1983).

A fundamental question that gives origin to this research proceeds — in order to be able to trigger important employee behaviors such as innovative and OCB and ultimately be a successful leader, should managers establish unique high-quality LMX relationships with each one of their followers (Graen & Uhl-Bien 1995), or should they relate to them in a depersonalized and collective way, as identical members of the group? The identity leadership (ILI), proposes the second (Hogg 2001a).

In the unique context of pandemic that has been lived, which has enormously affected people's relationship with their jobs, and therefore, with their coworkers and leader, it has never been more difficult to create and establish tight bonds between employees and with their leaders, and simultaneously, it has never been more necessary to do so, and ILI asserts itself as a response to this.

The Social Identity approach to Leadership has gave rise to the Identity Leadership Theory (ILI) (Steffens et al. 2014). This leadership theory sets apart from the most prominent ones — trait,

transactional or transformational theories generally focus on characteristics or resources of the leader, whilst the social identity approach suggests that what makes leadership an effective and successful process is the shared membership of a social group. Identity Leadership proposes that subordinates feel a clear and tight personal bond with the group's leader, but this bond is directly and strongly influenced and affected by the way the subordinate identifies with the group/team and also, the extent to which the subordinate identifies the leader with the group. In other words, it is the common connection to the group that brings about a sense of bond between subordinates within a group. In fact, this is where Identity Leadership sets the difference — it is not the qualities or resources that a leader may possess that allow him/her to influence his/her followers, the leader succeeds among his/her subordinates when he/she is an interpreter of social identity, i.e when he/she embodies *what it means* to belong to that group.

Indeed, ILI derives from the assumption that shared social identity is the foundation for shared perceptions of reality and coordinated measures to shape or reshape social identity. ILI resides on the capacity to mould and sculpt this social identity, and therefore to regulate and shape the essence of shared reality and coordinated action. Evidently, this depends on diverse leader's capabilities, such as to embody the prototype of the ideal group member, representing what it means to be a member of that certain group, standing up for the group, its interests and needs, promoting and advancing its core goals, creating a shared sense of group identity, defining core values, increasing cohesion and inclusion within the group and by promoting structures that make the group matter not only to its members but also to the reality outside the group. Subsequently, the dynamics within the group and its interactions depend upon the consonance and equilibrium between leaders and followers in determining a shared identity, a shared reality and collaboration efforts and processes. It is important to understand to what extent can this

leadership theory also trigger a social exchange process and how it impacts the aforementioned relationships with LMX.

## **2.LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1.Innovative behavior, OCB and LMX theory**

In a constantly developing and growing world, organizations struggle to gain and maintain competitive advantage. Only by promoting and stimulating innovative and creative attitudes and behaviors will organizations be able to remain healthy and prosper (Gupta and Singhal 1993; Sadowski 1995; Mumford 2000). In fact, creativity and innovation are pointed out as the necessary conditions for organizational success in an always changing dynamic economic context (Mumford and Simonton 1997). Furthermore, Amabile (1997) advocated that adaptability and capacity to change in order to fulfill the always changing requirements and needs of a dynamic environment are essential for any organization. Diving into the concepts of dynamic economic environment, according to Drucker (1985), innovation and creativity have the capacity to create a profusion of new useful resources for organizations, and market changes have the potential to create new growth opportunities, that can be explored through creative thinking and innovative behaviors (Sexton and Bowman-Upton 1991). In fact, Stenholm (2011) showed that innovative behavior on its own has a positive effect on growth, and Drazin et al. (1999) proved that the capacity to embrace and generate innovation is extremely important, since it eventually results in better solutions to any situations or problems that may emerge.

The definitions of what constitutes innovative behaviors has changed, but Kanter (1988) and Scott and Bruce (1994) described it as complex behavior residing in three types of tasks — idea generation, idea promotion, and idea realization. Idea generation consists in creating new solutions, either unprecedented or based on existing ones (Kanter 1988; Woodman, Sawyer, & Griffin 1993). Idea promotion relates to the process of gathering supporters to help on the

promotion of the project (Kanter 1988). Lastly, idea realization essentially means turning the idea into a tangible solution (Kanter 1988; S. G. Scott & Bruce 1994).

Innovative behavior encloses a broad scope of processes in which creativity can be seen as the genesis, the trigger for the complex innovation process (Janssen 2000; Kanter 1988; Van der Vegt & Janssen 2003).

Another important work related behavior is organizational citizenship behavior.

Organ (1977) presented the term *organizational citizenship behavior* (OCB), adding that it is a component of job performance. The original definition is as follows: “organizational citizenship behaviors are behaviors of a discretionary nature that are not part of employees’ formal role requirements, but nevertheless contribute to the effective functioning of an organization” (Organ 1988). In fact, OCB concerns the behaviors an employee can practice that go beyond the call of duty, that extrapole the universe of rules or obligations, behaviors that are not explicitly requested or formally rewarded (Smith, Organ, & Near 1983). It has been shown that organizations cannot succeed without its employees engaging into positive behaviors. Organ stated that OCB altogether contributes to the successful and productive performance of an organization, being able to maximize its efficiency. Furthermore Murphy, Athanasou and King (2002) stated that it is extensively accepted among researchers that OCB has an accumulative positive effect on organizational functioning (Wagner & Rush 2000). OCB can enhance organizational success through boosts in productivity, greater usage of resources, coordination, stability, employee recruitment, less turnover and greater adaptability to changes.

The Leader-Member Exchange theory (LMX) is one of the most prominent predictors of both innovative behavior and OCB.

The LMX theory describes the process in which a leader and a follower engage, cultivate and maintain a dyadic relationship through reciprocal social exchanges (Graen & Uhl-Bien 1995).

The LMX theory states that leaders differentiate amongst their followers through the development of distinct exchange relationships with each one of them (Liden & Graen 1980). These can either be poor and strictly based on employment contracts (low-quality LMX) or constituted by feelings of mutual trust, esteem and reciprocal influence (high-quality LMX) (Graen & Uhl-Bien 1995). In the latter, leaders share and trade strategic counselling, social support, feedback, responsibility and exciting tasks with followers, whom in exchange engage into reciprocity by providing to their leaders relevant information, performing successfully, and manifesting commitment (Liden, Sparrowe, & Wayne 1997). Since, in this context, the follower experiences higher support and more resources from the leader, he/she will tend to engage into innovative behaviors.

In fact, high-quality LMX has a positive influence on the three stages of innovative behavior. First, on idea generation, considering that high-quality LMX employees have greater chances to attain relevant knowledge from the leader, as well as his/her experience and expertise. This knowledge sharing will enhance these employees' intellectual stimulation, encouraging them to produce more creative solutions (Mumford, Scott, Gaddis, & Strange 2002). Furthermore, high-quality LMX employees will have better odds of persuading other employees to embrace their new ideas (S. G. Scott & Bruce 1994). Balance theory (Heider 1958; Newcomb 1961) states that when group members have the perception that a certain individual has a good relationship with a prestigious person (e.g. the leader), they will have a higher tendency to develop a positive perception of this individual, thus, enhancing his/her reputation and credibility (Kilduff & Krackhardt 1994; Lau & Liden 2008). Moreover, he/she will be recognized as more powerful because of the preferential access to important information and resources (Sparrowe & Liden 2005). The respect and confidence of other group members, along with the support of the leader,

will make that individual feel confident and safe to generate, advance and realize new ideas (Sparrowe & Liden 2005). Therefore, our first hypothesis is as follows:

*H1a - LMX is positively associated with innovative behavior.*

The leader represents the organization in the mind of the employee, therefore, he/she has a crucial position in the process of influencing and “causing” OCB (Podsakoff et al. 2000). Leader support was reported by Lepine et al. (2002) as the most powerful predictor of OCB.

As previously discussed, LMX relationships are embedded in social exchange and on the reciprocity effect (Graen & Scandura 1987) — subordinates experiencing a high-quality LMX will feel an implied and tacit obligation to reciprocate (Blau 1964; Gouldner 1960). The quality of the LMX will influence and dictate employee outcomes such as absenteeism (Van Dierendonck et al. 2002), satisfaction and commitment.

One of the ways employees can reciprocate the high-quality LMX relationship is to expand their behaviors beyond formal job requirements, or, in other words, engage into OCB (Dansereau et al. 1984) — subordinates engaged into high-quality LMX reciprocate in performing extra role behaviors (OCB) (Liden et al. 1997; Settoon et al. 1996; Wayne et al. 1997).

Reciprocity is the key mechanism to explain this link — a leader might offer autonomy and responsibility to an employee, and he/she, in exchange, might show enhanced work effort and investment. Settoon and colleagues (1996) provided evidence that LMX predicted the tendency of employees to display OCB. Therefore, our second hypothesis proceeds as follows:

*H1b - LMX is positively associated with OCB.*

## **2.2. Mediation by job satisfaction**

Being part of a high-quality LMX relationship provides an employee with diverse benefits and positive socio-emotional experiences (Epitropaki & Martin 2005) that, all combined, positively influence job satisfaction. Since the level of job satisfaction results from the difference between

what is the reality and what was expected or perceived as deserved (Locke 1976), and employees in high-quality LMX relationships feel favoured in comparison to their colleagues who are not engaged into high-quality LMXs, they will consequently experience higher job satisfaction.

Moreover, positive correlations between LMX and job satisfaction have also been suggested in diverse research literature (e.g. Epitropaki & Martin 1999; Golden & Veiga 2008; Stepina, Perrewe, Hassell, & Harris 1991; and Liden et al. 1997 confirmed a strong positive relationship between both variables).

Several interviews to important creative people from diverse fields and contexts, were performed by Csikszentmihalyi (1996). Analysis of the mentioned interviews showed that most of them experienced a state of “flow” when involved in creative activities and projects. This state of “flow” is associated with consequent emotional states of happiness, resulting in feelings of optimism towards life and the surrounding world, and eventually in lesser fatigue, and therefore more engagement in their creative projects. Nonetheless, for an individual to be able to experience a state of “flow” regularly, he/she needs strong intrinsic motivation, or, in other words, job satisfaction, which can be defined as a form of intrinsic motivation (Han-Jen Niu 2014). Thus, focusing on intrinsic motivation, it can be considered that job satisfaction is one of the catalysts that enhances innovative behavior amongst employees. Job satisfaction was suggested by Robbins (1996) to be seen as the general behavior and attitude taken by an employee towards his or her job, being an important work-related attitude (Pfeffer 1994). An employee with high levels of job satisfaction will feel more involved with his/her job, have more connection to the job, greater job embeddedness, which consequently will enhance his/her motivation and stimulus to create, expand and execute innovative ideas on the context of his/her team and organization (Ng and Feldman 2011).

Cribbin (1972) defined job satisfaction as an employee's overall feeling and affective response toward his/her work environment, constituted by the job itself, the leaders, teams and related organizations. Hage and Aiken (1967) found that when employees experience satisfaction towards their jobs, they will be more committed to their work performance and consequently to the organization, engaging in more positive behaviors. Likewise, they will look for diverse ways to improve their work performance, and will be more willing to accept innovative ideas and approaches (Pierce and Delbecq 1977). Thereby, we expect that the relationships between LMX and innovative behavior to be partially mediated by job satisfaction.

*H2a- The relationship between LMX and innovative behavior is mediated by job satisfaction*

The link between job satisfaction and OCB is a well established positive relationship in the literature (Bateman and Organ 1983; Koys 2001). It is unquestionable that when an individual is overall satisfied with his/her job, he/she will have a greater tendency to reciprocate, engaging in OCB, as a social exchange mechanism (Bateman and Organ 1983; Graham 1986; Kemery *et al.* 1996; Moorman 1993; Motowidlo 1984; Motowidlo *et al.* 1986; Organ and Konovsky 1989; Puffer 1987; Scholl *et al.* 1987; Smith C.A. *et al.* 1983; Wagner and Rush 2000). If the social dynamic that unwinds in a work environment is considered an exchange, employees that benefit from satisfying jobs and work contexts, will be more likely to reciprocate. In other words, when an employee perceives he/she is receiving positive resources or experiences on the part of the organization (the immediate leader being perceived as the representation of the organization in the mind of the employee), which can happen when the level of job satisfaction is high, he/she will engage in OCB, thus completing the cycle of the social exchange.

Based on the above-mentioned relationships it is plausible to expect that the relationship between LMX and OCB is in part mediated by the experienced levels of job satisfaction.

*H2b - The relationship between LMX and citizenship behavior (OCB) is mediated by job satisfaction*

### **2.3. Identity Leadership and LMX**

In order to succeed and be efficient, should leaders connect with their followers in a individualized way, as different from other members of the group and distinct individuals, or in a depersonalized and collective way, as identical members of the group? LMX theory suggests the first (Graen & Uhl-Bien 1995). The social identity approach to leadership, or identity leadership (ILI), proposes the second (Hogg 2001a) — the most successful relationships between leaders and followers, depend on how strong the group identity is, and to what extent do the members identify with the group's concept and identity.

Leadership is the social process that enables followers to be influenced to welcome a new culture, new principles, purposes and behaviors as their own, and to dedicate efforts to achieve and embrace those values and goals. The leader influences and stimulates the followers to adopt the principles, culture and objectives that suit and assist the group as a community, and that characterize the identity of the group. This way, the leader converts individual activity into group activity. In fact, it is not possible to reflect or discuss the concept of a social group without discussing leadership — every group has someone who leads or manages it. And it is based on this notion that identity leadership constructs upon — the place of group membership and group life dynamics in leadership literature (Chemers 2001).

LMX approach lacks to contemplate the fact that these individual leader-follower relationships materialize in the wide, dynamic and complex context of a social group and with social-network dynamics (Hogg & Martin 2003; Hogg, Martin, & Weeden 2003). LMX theory considers leader-member relationships as if they unroll and evolve isolated from other leader-member relationships, and from the group itself. LMX theory presumes that individuals assess their

LMX relationships in a pure and absolute judgement, instead of in comparison to other group members' LMX relationships with the leader. The social group establishes the guidelines and boundaries for sustainable comparisons, and the classification of LMX relationships as high or low will be affected by notions of what is perceived as just within the context of that specific group.

Moreover, the social structure of most groups is constructed around diverse subgroups, not around secluded individuals — e.g. work teams within an organization. On that account, social comparisons will more probably be between groups, than between individuals. Employees might try to compare and understand how is the leader's relationship and how does he act to their specific group, comparing to other groups — us vs. them. This attitude towards the group will sometimes result in intergroup behavior, with consequences such as in-group favouritism, out-group denigration, amongst others. Evidently, these behaviors culminate in wide-ranging outcomes and repercussions for employees' relationship with each other, with the leader and the job — which LMX theory lacks to consider and address.

Summing up, all of the fragilities discussed above come down to the same notion: leadership and the essence of leader-follower relations, have to be analyzed and considered in the context of the complex and profound mechanisms that compose group dynamics, group identity, belongingness and intergroup behavior.

Furthermore, differentiated LMX relationships with each member, may result in feelings of frustration, and perceptions of the leader as unfair, and unjust, thus, deteriorating other employees' own LMX relationship (Brockner & Grover 1988). Indeed, the leader's differential treatment is noticed by all employees within the work team, and may trigger conflicts among them (Weick 1995). Evidently, these influence colleagues' mutual communication, collaboration, dedication and commitment (Maslyn & Uhl-Bien 2005; Sias & Jablin 1995; Van

Breukelen et al. 2002). Social identity approach to leadership suggests that leaders should avoid engaging in personalized leadership styles, specially in the context of united groups, sense members will judge the leader's efficacy with regard to the group's prototypicality, meaning that members should not receive a differentiated treatment, since this would be perceived as unfair (Hogg et al. 2005). In fact, Tyler (1997) suggested that members of a group experience more satisfaction and commitment if they perceive their leader as fair in his/her actions (Tyler 1997; Tyler, DeGoey, & Smith 1996; Tyler & Lind 1992; Platow et al. 1998). Leaders who are perceived to relate to team members with inequity will eventually exclude and put aside some members, thus compromising the group's integrity and consolidation, team member's cooperation and solidarity with each other, deteriorating the overall group identity and its members identification with it. Consequently, the leader's respect, validity and authority will be compromised in the eyes of the followers.

Identity Leadership (Hogg 2001a, 2001b; Hogg & van Knippenberg 2003) appear as a response to these issues. With roots on the social identity perspective, this theory suggests that the cognitive foundation for leadership acceptance and validation is dependent on how deeply group members identify with the group as a crucial component of their own self-identity and self-perception.

LMX theory focuses on the individual bond between each follower and the leader, whereas identity leadership proposes that this bond is dependent of how much the followers identify and connect with the group, and also how much the followers identify the leader with the group.

In fact, ILI affirms that the extent to which a leader is successful within the group of followers depends upon his/her capacity to be an interpreter and a decipherer of social identity.

Identity leadership theory divides four dimensions of what constitutes an identity leader: identity prototypicality, identity advancement, identity entrepreneurship, and identity impresarioship (Steffens et al. 2014).

Identity prototypicality suggests that the leader should embody the prototype of an ideal member of the group, not just an average one. He/she should represent the unique characteristics and the essential attributes that define the group's identity. The leader should be able to portray the qualities that make that group remarkable and distinctive from other groups (Steffens et al. 2014). The members of a specific group need to identify with that group in order to feel a sense of belonging, and therefore, they need to identify with their leader. Their awareness of self and others is regulated by the group's prototypicality. Prototypical members incarnate the core of that in-group in relation to out-groups, and thus, become the object of unanimous collective group respect and esteem. Therefore, it is easy to deduct that individuals who are recognized as the group's ideal member prototype will more probably be embraced as successful leaders. As more deeply individuals identify with the group, their support and acceptance for the leader, and the capability of the leader to succeed become bonded with the extent to which the leader is perceived to be the group's prototype.

Identity advancement relates to the leader's efforts to boost and promote key group interests. To do so, the leader should stand up for and defend group interests and goals. He/she should advocate and support the purposes, intentions and aspirations that are crucial to the group. His/her mindset should be focused on avoiding group failures and on surpassing any complications that may emerge on the path to achieve group goals (Steffens et al. 2014).

Identity entrepreneurship proposes that a leader should be able to define what it means to be a member of that specific group, making all members feel part of the same collective identity,

emphasizing what unites them, instead of what sets them apart. This will be possible through the definition of fundamental values, principals, rules and culture. (Steffens et al. 2014).

Lastly, impresarioship describes the need to develop structures, activities and occasions that give relevance and meaning to the group's existence and that allows members to experience fully their membership. By creating a tangible context for the group, through the creation of shared visions, joint actions, palpable group outcomes and results, the leader will make the group matter in a way that guarantees its relevance not only for its members but for out-group members too (Steffens et al. 2014).

Prior research has suggested that follower's job satisfaction is influenced by identity prototypicality, the first dimension of identity leadership (Pierro, Cicero, Bonaiuto, van Knippenberg, & Kruglanski 2005). And in 2014, N.K. Steffens et al. supported that all four dimensions of identity leadership are positively correlated with job satisfaction.

Meta-analytic research proposes that when individuals perceive themselves and others to share the same concept of group identity, this is the foundation for job satisfaction (Lee, Park, & Koo 2015; Ng 2015). In other words, when people interiorize the essence of a collective group identity, this reflects on a personal change in the psyche that will be the origin for diverse organizational and personal outcomes such as job satisfaction (Ashforth & Mael 1989; Ellemers 2012; Turner 1982). Literature on the subject states that an efficient management of a shared notion of group identity should be a key determining factor of employee's work related attitudes and behaviors (Ellemers, De Gilder, & Haslam 2004; Haslam 2004). Employee's identification with their team and the overall organization is, therefore, a crucial determinant of important variables, not only for individuals' welfare and satisfaction, but also for organizational success.

Established before the positive correlation between LMX and job satisfaction, and now, the positive correlation between ILI and job satisfaction, the following hypothesis is formulated:

*H3a - Identity leadership moderates the relationship between LMX and job satisfaction*

Furthermore, research has also emphasized the importance of identity leadership on predicting employee's behaviors and behavioral outcomes (Lee et al. 2015; Ng 2015), such as innovative behavior and OCB (Rolf van Dick et al. 2018) — when employees experience a strong connection to a shared group identity, their motivation, and well-being will result in a tendency to reciprocate this by engaging into OCB, and at the same time, the feeling of safety and security that derives from feelings of belongingness to a tight group, will empower employees and supply them with the tools and mechanisms needed for the generation of innovative ideas and behaviors. Therefore, we hypothesize the following:

*H3b - Identity Leadership moderates the relationship between LMX and innovative behavior*

*H3c - Identity Leadership moderates the relationship between LMX and OCB*

Furthermore, we intend to explore the interplay between the individual and the collective dimensions of leadership and, given the above-mentioned relationships, we aim at understanding to what extent the indirect effects of LMX on employees' behaviors are conditional upon the levels of the collectiveness side of leadership. Therefore, we expect that:

*H4a- The mediated relationship between LMX and innovative behavior through job satisfaction is conditional upon the levels of collective leadership*

*H4b- The mediated relationship between LMX and OCB through job satisfaction is conditional upon the levels of collective leadership*

### **3.METHOD**

#### **3.1.Sample and Procedure**

This study was part of an international collaboration carried out by the Department of Social Psychology at Goethe University Frankfurt (Germany) together with academic entities of diverse countries, to investigate people's perceptions of their job context and their supervisors

and leaders. The data collected was in the Portuguese context, only from people working in Portugal. The method to collect data was the snowball sampling method — in which the author uses his/her personal contacts, and subsequently asks respondents to send the questionnaire to their own contacts, creating a “snowball effect” (Emerson 2015).

All of the respondents were informed of the anonymity of their identity, and about the purposes of the study.

Data collection started in November 2020 and lasted until February 2021. In order to complete the subsequent surveys as well as to allow for the organisation of questionnaires per participant across time, participants were asked to include their email.

176 employees composed the final sample. Out of these 176, 4% had been employed for less than 1 year, 13.6% had work experience from 1 to 3 years, 18.2% from 4 to 10 years, 30.1% from 10 to 20 years, and 34.1% had been employed for more than 20 years.

Regarding participants’ work experience in their current employer, 9.7% had been working there for less than 1 year, 31.3% from 1 to 3 years, 9.7% from 4 to 6 years, 8% from 7 to 10 years and almost half of the sample (41.5%) have been working for the same company for more than 10 years.

In terms of demographics, the sample had 119 female respondents (67.6%) and 57 male (32.4%).

### **3.2.Measures**

**Innovative Behavior** was measured with 9 items developed by Janssen (2000). Sample item is: “do you generate original solutions for problems?”. Participants responded in a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 which means “Never” to 7, which means “Always”. Responses yielded acceptable internal consistency (Cronbach’s alpha = 0.93).

**OCB** was measured with 5 items developed by Van Dick, Grojean, Christ, and Wieseke (2006). Sample item is: “I help colleagues who have heavy workloads”. Participants responded in a 7-

point Likert scale, ranging from 1 which means “Disagree Completely” to 7, which means “Agree Completely”. Responses yielded acceptable internal consistency (Cronbach’s alpha = 0.77).

**Job Satisfaction** was measured with 6 items developed by Van Dick, Schnitger, Schwartzmann-Buchelt, and Wagner (2001). Sample item is: “Generally speaking, I am very satisfied with this job”. Participants responded in a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 which means “Does not apply” to 7, which means “Applies fully”. Responses yielded acceptable internal consistency (Cronbach’s alpha = 0.85).

**LMX** was measured with 6 items developed by Graen and Uhl-Bien (1995). Sample items are: “How well does your leader understand your job problems and needs?”. Participants responded in a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 which means “Not at all” to 7, which means “Very”. Responses yielded acceptable internal consistency (Cronbach’s alpha = 0.94).

**ILI** was measured with 15 items developed by Steffens, Haslam, Reicher, Platow, Franssen, Yang, Ryan, Jetten, Peters and Boen, F. (2014). Sample item is: “embodies what the team stands for”. Participants responded in a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 which means “Disagree completely” to 7, which means “Agree Completely”. Responses yielded acceptable internal consistency (Cronbach’s alpha = 0.98).

### **3.3. Control Variables**

In this study we used gender and work experience (in the work and in total) to control for potential confounding effects. Correlations between gender and predisposition to display innovative behavior have been demonstrated (Pfeifer, & Wagner 2014) as well as to display OCB (Morrison 1994). Likewise, work experience has been proved to be correlated with innovative behavior (Liu, Ge & Peng 2015) and OCB (Mohammad, & Habib 2010). Gender was assessed in the form of 3 items (female, male, other).

### **3.4. Statistical Analysis**

To test the hypotheses we used Process (a SPSS software macro; Hayes 2012; Preacher, Rucker, & Hayes 2007) that allows the test of the indirect effects  $ab$ , with a normal theory approach (e.g., the Sobel test) and with a bootstrap approach to calculate Confidence Intervals (CI). We computed Model 8 in PROCESS using 10000 bootstrap samples, 95% bias-corrected bootstrap confidence intervals for all direct, indirect and moderation effects. Predictor variables were mean-centered (Aiken & West 1991), and the conditional indirect effect was analyzed at different values of the moderator variable: the mean, one standard deviation above, and one standard deviation below the mean. Control variables were included all analysis. With Model 8 we integrated ILI (moderator variable) into the model and empirically tested the possibility of a statistically significant indirect effect on how LMX gets carried through job satisfaction on OCB and Innovative behaviors being contingent on the value of ILI.

## **4.RESULTS**

Table 1 in the Appendix presents the means, standard deviations and the intercorrelations of the researched variables.

### **4.1.Test of mediation and moderated mediation**

We proposed that LMX was positively associated with innovative behaviors (H1a) and OCB (H1b) and that these relationships were mediated by Job satisfaction (H2a and H2b respectively). Table 1 shows that LMX was positively associated with innovative behaviors ( $r=0.32$   $p<.001$ ) and with OCBs ( $r= 0.24$   $p<.001$ ), thereby supporting H1a and H1b. In addition, we found that LMX (Table 2) was positively associated with job satisfaction ( $B=.48$ ,  $t=6.16$ ,  $p<.001$ ), which in turn was positively associated with innovative behaviors ( $B=.23$ ,  $t=2.76$ ,  $p<.01$ ) and OCBs ( $B=.17$ ,  $t=2.72$ ,  $p<.01$ ). Furthermore, in the mediation analyses, LMX showed non-significant direct paths to innovative behaviors and to OCBs (Table 2:  $B=.01$ ,  $t=0.17$ ,  $p=0.88$ ; and  $B=.09$ ,  $t=1.31$ ,  $p=0.19$ ), whereas we observed a significant indirect effect of LMX through job satisfaction in innovative

behaviors and OCBs (Table 2: indirect effect = .11; 95% CI from .03 to .19 and indirect effect = .08; 95% CI from .02 to .17, respectively). Therefore, results supported hypothesis H2a and H2b.

Finally, results indicated that the cross-product terms between LMX and ILI on innovative behaviors and OCBs were significant ( $B=.08$ ,  $t= 2.63$ ,  $p<.01$ , and  $B=.05$ ,  $t= 2.28$ ,  $p<.01$ , respectively), but not on job satisfaction ( $B=.03$ ,  $t= 0.98$ ,  $p=.33$ ). Therefore, results support H3b and H3c, but not H3a, H4a and H4b. The interaction effects are represented in Figure 1 and 2. Results indicate that when employees are engaged in high-quality LMX relationships, having an Identity Leader, their predisposition to display innovative behaviors and OCB will be extremely high. In fact, the direct effect of LMX on OCB and innovative behaviors was not verified, only an effect of LMX combined with ILI. On the other hand, the indirect effect of LMX on innovative behavior and OCB mediated through job satisfaction is not affected by ILI, it is not dependent of it.

## **5.DISCUSSION**

### **5.1.Findings and theoretical implications**

The present study was developed to better understand the importance of ILI and its effects on LMX's relationship with job satisfaction and strategic work related behaviors, more specifically, innovative behavior and OCB. In our study, results indicated that being part of a team with an identity leader — who is able to define and advance a shared sense of identity for the team, making team members feel part of something beyond their individual identity, and that the leader represents, embodies and defends their ideals, principles and interests (Steffens et al. 2014) — allied with being part of a high-quality LMX relationship, strengthens the association with employees' innovative behaviors and OCBs (Rolf van Dick et al. 2018). Indeed, we found that, as expected, LMX was positively associated with job satisfaction (Liden et al. 1997), which in turn mediated the relationship between LMX and innovative behaviors and OCBs (Ng and Feldman 2011; Koys 2001). In addition, we found that LMX alone was not directly related to

these behaviors (no direct effect in the mediation model), but instead when combined with ILI, it was found to be associated with these behaviors. Results point in the direction that just as important as feeling privileged and favoured by the team's leader, it is important to feel that the leader is able to represent the culture and ideals of the group, that he/she protects its interests and acts for and with the group (Hogg 2001a, 2001b). LMX's relationships may create differentiated relationships between each member and the leader, which potentially can lead to feelings of unfairness and inequality, which eventually can deteriorate group's collaboration and cohesion (Brockner & Grover 1988). Social groups and team dynamics are in the root of human nature — human beings are social animals, that feel accomplished and fulfilled when they are embedded in a group that they identify with, and the leader is the main enabler of this (Hogg & van Knippenberg 2003). It depends on the leader to understand this and thus to create this group identity, to make sure that all team members relate to it and to embody this identity, being the ultimate representative of the group and its interests (Steffens et al. 2014). So, it is reasonable to state that the results of this study support the idea that a leader will be more effective when he/she takes into account individual dyadic relationships and also the group dynamic where they unfold. Leaders must try to find mechanisms to not only establish high-quality LMX relationships, but also to establish a solid group identity and enable team members to live out their membership.

As discussed before, innovative behavior is divided in three stages: idea generation, idea promotion and idea realization (Kanter 1988). It is comprehensible that when an individual has an identity leader, which results on he/she being part of a tight and cohesive group, the stages of idea promotion and idea realization, are easier to accomplish. At the same time, the stage of idea generation is also more likely to occur on the context of a strong group identity, since this environment will foster feelings of acceptance, belongingness, safety and security within team

members, which will eventually make them feel safer to risk and take chances, without fear of being rejected or excluded, which is the basis for creativity (Sparrowe & Liden 2005). OCB on the other hand, is more likely to materialize in groups with identity leaders, since individuals that experience a strong connection and identification with the group and with the leader as an embodiment of the group's identity will have a propensity to reciprocate this, engaging into OCB (Rolf van Dick et al. 2018).

The fact that results didn't support H3a (ILI as a moderator of the relationship between LMX and job satisfaction) can be interpreted in light of the following: the context of pandemic the world is facing, has forced a lot of organizations to send their employees to work from home. In this condition, group dynamics and its importance in individuals' lives has possibly faded, or at least partially dissolved. In fact, working alone from home may have strengthened the importance of the relationship between employee and leader, since one-to-one relationships are easier to consolidate in a technological context, and faded away the importance of collective relationships and dynamics, which are limited — and not to mention unreplicable — in a digital context. Therefore, the importance of LMX to employees' job satisfaction may have been empowered, and ILI's influence diminished, thus explaining this results.

Furthermore, the pandemic may help to explain this results in another perspective: the context of many jobs has completely changed, causing a lot of employees to move out of their comfort zone and adapt. Feelings of instability, disorientation, loneliness, insecurity and uncertainty were taking over society and individual's minds — as they normally do in periods of crisis. It is plausible to deduct that these feelings caused employees to need and depend more on their leader, strengthening the importance of their leader-member relationship in their lives and therefore, it became the main influencer of employees' job satisfaction — if their LMX's relationship is high, job satisfaction is high, if their LMX's relationship is low, job satisfaction is low.

## **5.1.Limitations and Future studies**

This study was conducted in an extremely unique context — the covid-19 pandemic sent most employees to work from home, and in the specific period of November to February (when responses were collected) most individuals were working from home almost for a year. This has affected social dynamics within teams and organizations in a drastic way, since a lot of co-workers had been working together for almost a year without seeing each other in person. In this context, where it is presumably more difficult for individuals to experience a strong and solid group identity and to live the group's membership, it is at the same time, more important than ever, that leaders find mechanisms and tools to allow this to happen, to make their teams' identity more salient, to make sure that every member feels included and part of a greater purpose, and to define what it means to be a part of that group in a way that enables every individual to understand it clearly and to feel less solitary and isolated.

However, the fact that this study was performed during the unique period of pandemic, has to be faced also as a limitation. Feelings of isolation and detachment from the social context of a team, could have been augmented and reinforced by the social isolation people were experiencing. Moreover, the fact that this situation has been unprecedented could have affected leaders' capacity to adapt and create new tools and mechanisms to deal with their teams from a distance. Therefore, it is extremely recommended that this study, and similar ones that might emerge, are conducted in the future, in periods where societies have returned to normality or at least, adapted to this new normal.

Finally, it has to be pointed as a possible limitation the fact that this study was not performed in any specific context, industry or field. Different contexts and specificities of different sectors can widely affect leaders' relationships with their teams and followers, and also, followers' demands, necessities and dynamics.

## **5.2.Implications for Practitioners**

Diverse implications for managers and leaders can derive from this research. According to the present results, it is essential that leaders find ways to define strong and solid group identities. It is crucial that employees understand what the team stands for, its identity, and that they are an extremely important part of it. Leaders need to set the example for the group, and incarnate every characteristic and principle of the group, acting actively as its defender, ideal member and protector. In a practical way, leaders must have a clear vision for the group and be able to define its vision clearly for every member. They must create regular occasions, in which team members are able to experience what it means to be a part of that group and live out their shared membership. This can happen in team-building events, regular daily moments, such as meetings, coffee breaks, or any other type of collective initiatives. Likewise, it is crucial to educate leaders (training lectures) about the importance of the collective group identity.

## **6.CONCLUSION**

The present study revealed that ILI augments widely the effect of LMX on employees' predisposition to engage into innovative behavior and OCB. In other words, when engaging into each unique LMX relationship with each employee, a leader should consider the group identity of the team and each employee's identification with the group and the leader as an interpreter of group identity, since this combination will enhance the possibilities of employees displaying innovative behavior and OCB. Identity Leadership is opening new doors in the leadership field, and has uncovered new perspectives for leaders and followers in the context of group dynamics.

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## 8. APPENDIX

**Table 1 - Correlations**

	Mean	S.D.	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.
1. Gender (a)	1.32	.469							
2. Work Experience (b)	3.77	1.175	-.101						
3. Work Company (c)	3.40	1.513	.072	.571**					
4. LMX	4.8474	1.44243	.234**	-.070	-.036				
5. ILI	4.6174	1.59549	.187*	-.049	-.072	.815**			
6. Job Satisfaction	4.9347	1.21263	.141	-.016	-.034	.712**	.644**		
7. OCB	6.0773	.74123	-.164*	.006	-.003	.240**	.186*	.315**	
8. Innov behavior	4.9167	.99894	.177*	.032	.108	.317**	.311**	.374**	.412**

Note. LMX = Leader-Member Exchange; ILI = Identity Leadership; OCB = organizational citizenship behavior (a) Gender was coded with 1 for female and 2 for male; (b) work experience was coded as an ordinal variable where 1 means “less than 1 year”, 2 “between 1 to 3 years”, 3 “between 3 to 5 years”, 5 “Between 5 to 10 years”, and 5 “more than 10 years”.

\*\*\*  $p < .001$ ;

\*\*  $p < .01$ ;

\*  $p < .05$

**Table 2 - Regression results for mediation and mediated moderation**

Step 1 DV: Job Satisfaction R2= .52 p<.001					Step 2: DV: Innovative Behaviors: R2 = 0.21 p<.001					OCB: R2 = .18 p<.001			
	B	SE	t	p	B	SE	t	p	B	SE	t	p	
Constant	4,84	0,3	15,92	<.001	3,13	0,51	6,11	<.001	5,63	0,39	14,53	<.001	
LMX	0,48	0,08	6,16	<.001	0,01	0,09	0,15	0,88	0,09	0,07	1,31	0,19	
ILI	0,16	0,07	2,2	<.05	0,23	0,08	2,76	<.01	0,17	0,07	2,72	<.01	
LMX*ILI	0,03	0,03	0,98	0,33	0,13	0,08	1,69	0,09	0	0,06	0,02	0,99	
Gender	-.05	0,14	-34	0,73	0,08	0,03	2,63	<.01	0,05	0,02	2,28	<.01	
Work_com	0,04	0,07	0,62	0,54	0,23	0,15	1,49	0,14	-0,36	0,12	-3,12	<.001	
Work_exp	-0,01	0,05	-0,27	0,79	-0,03	0,07	-0,43	0,67	-0,03	0,05	-0,46	0,65	
					0,10	0,06	1,79	0,07	0,03	0,04	0,67	0,50	
Conditional Direct Effect of LMX on DV	Effects (1)	SE	LLCI	ULCI	Effects (1)	SE	LLCI	ULCI	Effects (1)	SE	LLCI	ULCI	
- 1 SD (-M)	-0,11	0,1	-0,31	0,09	0,01	0,08	-0,14	0,16	0,01	0,08	-0,14	0,16	
M (0.00)	0,01	0,09	-0,17	0,2	0,09	0,07	-0,05	0,23	0,09	0,07	-0,05	0,23	
+ 1 SD (+M)	0,14	0,11	-0,07	0,35	0,17	0,08	0,01	0,33	0,17	0,08	0,01	0,33	
Conditional Indirect Effect of LMX through Job satisfaction	Effects (1)	SE	LLCI	ULCI	Effects (1)	SE	LLCI	ULCI	Effects (1)	SE	LLCI	ULCI	
- 1 SD (-M)	0,10	0,04	0,02	0,19	0,07	0,04	0,01	0,16	0,07	0,04	0,01	0,16	
M (0.00)	0,11	0,04	0,03	0,19	0,08	0,04	0,02	0,17	0,08	0,04	0,02	0,17	
+ 1 SD (+M)	0,12	0,05	0,03	0,21	0,09	0,04	0,02	0,18	0,09	0,04	0,02	0,18	

Note. N=176. (1)- Unstandardized Effect. Bootstrap sample size = 5.000. FSSB = Family-supportive supervisor behaviors; LL = Lower limit; CI = confidence interval; UL = upper limit.

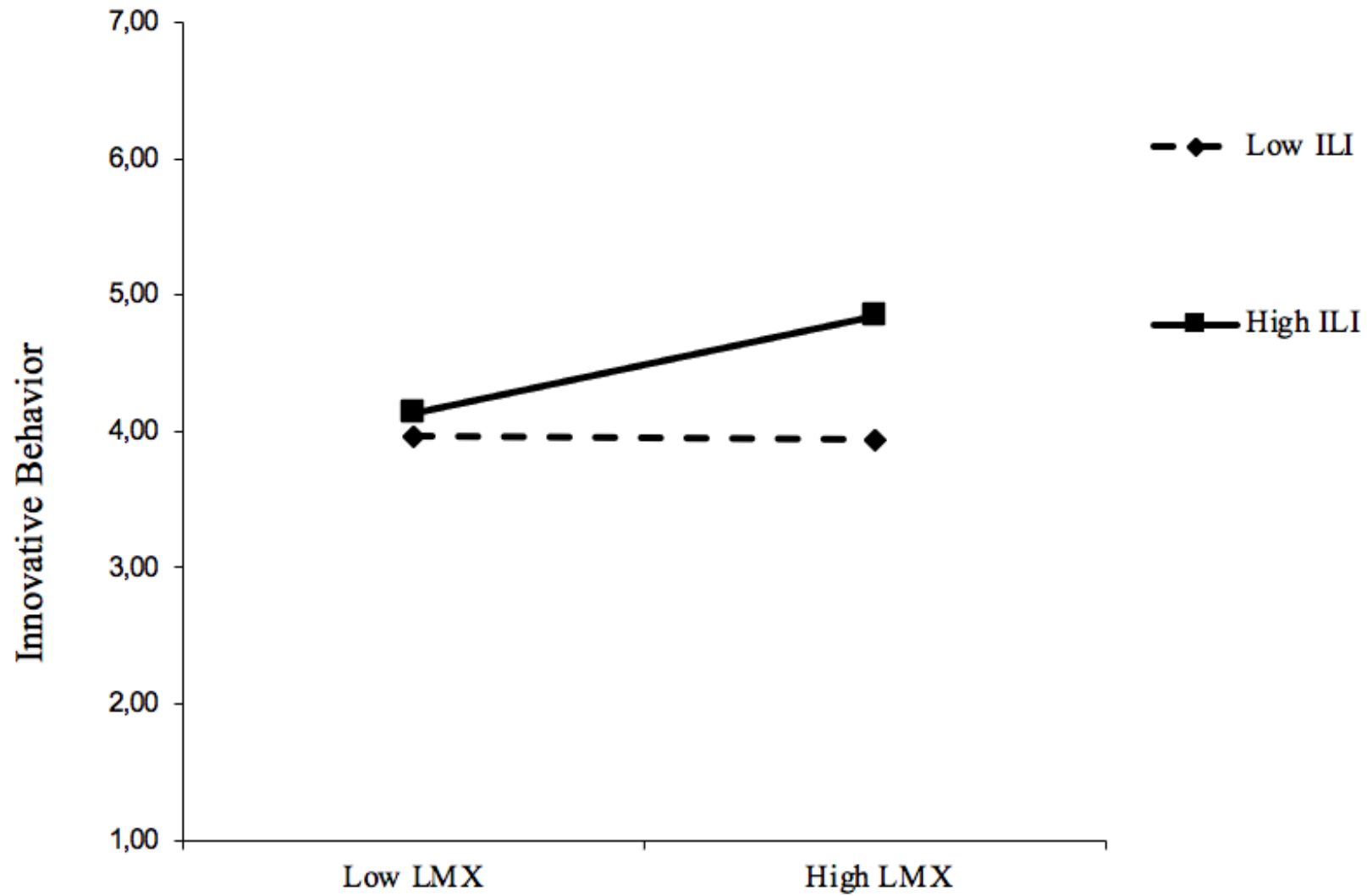


Figure 1 – Interaction of LMX and ILI on Innovative Behavior

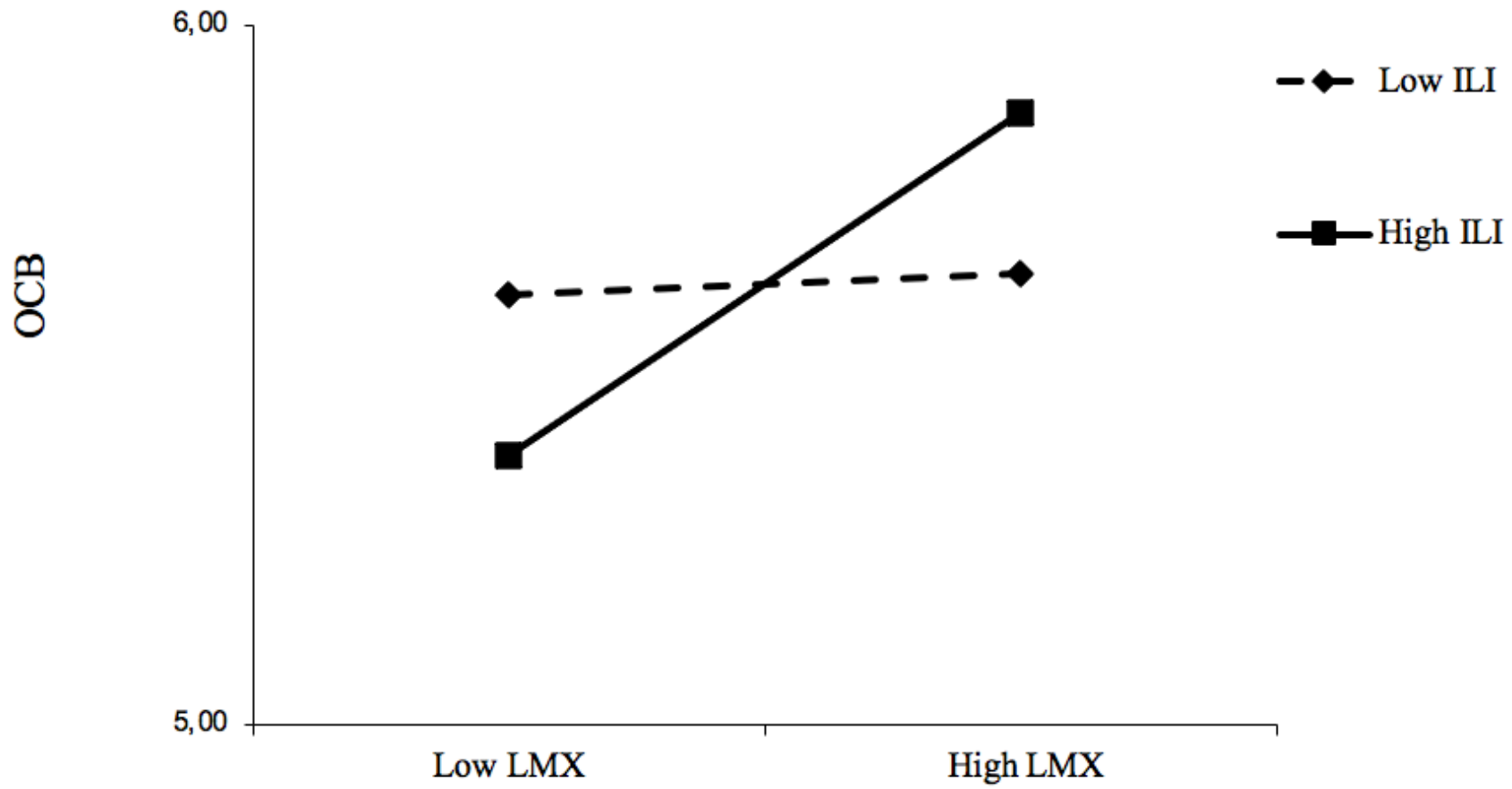


Figure 2 – Interaction of LMX and ILI on OCB