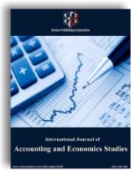
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Research paper



Conceptualizing The Impact of Benevolent Leadership on Task Performance: A Triadic Mediation Approach Through Work Engagement, Leader–Member Exchange, and Creativity in Relation to Leadership Style ROI

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Abstract

This conceptual article examines the impact of benevolent leadership on task performance, highlighting the triadic mediating roles of work engagement, leader–member exchange (LMX), and creativity within the framework of Social Exchange Theory (SET). Benevolent leadership marked by empathy, support, and concern for employee well-being fosters a positive and supportive work climate that promotes proactive and productive behaviors. Through SET, such leadership behaviors are reciprocated by employees via emotional commitment, high-quality leader–follower relationships, and innovative contributions. Together, these mediators reinforce the positive effect of benevolent leadership on performance. The article advances a humanistic, relational perspective of leadership and underscores its potential to enhance not only task out-comes but also the return on investment (ROI) of leadership by cultivating sustainable employee performance and innovation.

Keywords: *Benevolent Leadership; Task Performance; Work Engagement; Leader Member Exchange; Creativity and ROI.*

1. Introduction

Since the success of an organization is largely dependent on the quality of the leadership process, leadership is one of the most important aspects of context within organizations (Amabile et al., 1996). The interpersonal abilities of leadership are utilized to persuade staff members to fight for the organization's common good Ashforth et al., (2014);Blau, (1964). Benevolent leadership is one of the leadership styles that is currently becoming more popular and is still rarely thoroughly studied. Benevolent leadership has a big impact not only on creating environment humane work environment and giving love, love, and sympathy, but also towards various important aspects related to the organization (Karakas & Sarigollu, 2013). It is important to keep in mind the role that workers play in enhancing their responsibility and performance. A lot of studies have started looking at the effects of benevolent leadership. According to empirical research, benevolent leadership has a positive effect on followers in many ways. These include: job satisfaction (J.-L. Farh & Cheng, 2000) , organizational commitment (Karakas & Sarigollu, 2012), organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) (J. L. Farh et al., 2008), and performance (Chan & Mak, 2012; J.-L. Farh & Cheng, 2000; Karakas & Sarigollu, 2012). factors crucial to the functioning of the business (Karakas & Sarigollu, 2013). The term benevolent leadership may describe a style of management that prioritizes the well-being of subordinates on an individual and family level (J.-L. Farh & Cheng, 2000; J. L. Farh et al., 2008). Benevolent leadership tends to treat employees with kindness, which in turn creates a humane work environment that is pleasant, supportive, respectful of all people and things, and based on mutual belief in the good that can be achieved (Karakas & Sarigollu, 2012; Niu et al., 2009). However, in managerial practice, there remains doubt about the effectiveness of benevolent leadership styles when measured from a Return on Investment (ROI) perspective a crucial indicator in strategic decision-making at the organizational level. ROI in the context of leadership refers to the extent to which a particular leadership style generates economic value or strategic benefits that exceed the investment made to develop and implement it (No-fads et al., 2010). Therefore, it is important to examine how benevolent leadership styles contribute to ROI, both directly and through mediating pathways such as work engagement, leader-member exchange (LMX), and creativity.

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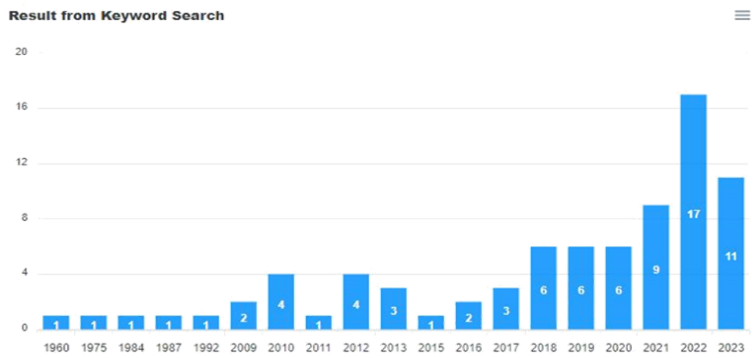


Fig. 1.1: Benevolent Leadership Research Trends

Source: Literature review from Watase Uake.

Based on research trend image related to Topic Benevolent leadership is still minimal, as shown in Figure 1.1 used in mapping previous research using the watase system. Where Benevolent leadership starts, 1960 – 2023 still there is amount of relevant research . Starting to show an increase in 2010-2020 by 6 studies, in 2021 by 9, in 2022 by 17, and in 2023 by 11. Topics study. This still very potential for development. Benevolent leadership is a type of leadership that is of interest to the Chinese state because the majority study. This is still carried out in that country. Therefore That several studies have previously recommended exploiting the connection between Benevolent leadership in different country contexts (Rich, 2016) and different objects (Öge et al., 2018). This is an opportunity for research that can bring up Research novelty with a draft research model, new accommodation based on future research.

Although this study has once done, the impact of Benevolent leadership on Task performance relatively not been sufficiently researched. In the environment organization, Task performance is very important for the development organization, generally viewed as the necessary foundation for the organization to reach superior competitive (Shalley, 1995). Therefore, that's important to study Benevolent leadership associated with results important organization like task performance.

For strengthening analysis that Benevolent leadership still needs to be exploited further and conceptualized with the following models and other variables. This displayed several results literature review study related to Benevolent leadership. Literature review Benevolent Leadership explains various connections in research that explores the connection between Benevolent leadership with different Dependent variables. Such as it is, Affective team commitment, Team creative performance, Job satisfaction, Perceived ethical climate, Turnover intentions, OCB, OCBI, Work engagement, and Leader-member exchange. In research that reveals a connection between Benevolent leadership with performance, the task was studied 3 times (Chan, 2017; Chan & Mak, 2012; Shen et al., 2023) with the results, there is influence positive and significant influence. The results of (A. C. Wang et al., 2013) showed Negative and no significant. Employees may interpret excessive benevolence as a sign of low performance expectations or as micromanagement disguised as care, which can inadvertently reduce intrinsic motivation and personal accountability. This perception may lead to reduced self-regulation, lower autonomy, and ultimately decreased task performance. In high-performance cultures or individualistic work environments, such leadership behaviors may undermine competence and perceived fairness, leading to disengagement. (Huang, 2022) note that in some team contexts, the effects of benevolent leadership can be negative, particularly when the leader's behavior is perceived as overprotective and reduces subordinate autonomy. [65] reported that benevolent leadership has a dual effect: it influences subordinate performance through the level of ostracism, even though it has been controlled for by LMX quality and authentic leadership. Then, based on the literature review that made into an empirical gap was identified that is worthy For investigated more in again. Moreover, this paper seeks to integrate the ROI perspective into leadership theory by articulating how investment in benevolent leadership practices may yield returns in the form of improved employee performance, reduced turnover, and enhanced innovation capability. This integrative approach provides both theoretical and practical insights into the value proposition of benevolent leadership, particularly in knowledge-intensive and human-capital-driven organizations. In addition, the results of the literature on Benevolent Leadership with a performance task. There is research that has a connection with negative and no significant so, which leads to inconsistent results. study study needs to be explored and researched more, continue to use the research model concept, different from the use of grand Social exchange Theory.

1.1. Social exchange theory (SET)

The social theory of exchange has extensive applications in business and is based on anthropology and sociology (Yamao, 2024). In their 2011 article, "Gift Existential," Frémeaux and Michelson argued that there is more to social and corporate experience than what they term "logic dominant exchange." They stressed that not all giving is based only on reasoning and reason. Better understanding emotional dynamics may enhance business, according to (Goss, 2008), who studies these dynamics in the context of entrepreneurial activity. According to (Emerson, 1976), SET provides a framework that helps explain how a person relies on the helpful actions of others. Social interactions, according to the central premise of the theory (Zafirovski, 2005), may be seen as an interchange of material and immaterial goods and services, as well as of power.

In addition to monetary gain, this issue encompasses social incentives such as friendship and emotional fulfillment, as well as the beneficial effects of trade contacts on relational norms that govern actor relationships (Emerson, 1976; Lambe et al., 2001). As part of the social exchange, according to (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005)One party might trigger a response from another. The target's well-being might be positively or negatively affected by the party's activities (Cropanzano et al., 2017). According to Social Exchange Theory, opportunism is a deviant response, a violation rule implicitly or explicitly believed to arrange interaction, which ultimately weakens the integrity of the role parties that interact and leads to a response negative emotions and behaviors.

1.2. Benevolent leadership

According to, paternalistic leadership styles represent both harsh (authoritarianism) and soft (goodness and morals) components. Employees may be inculcated with other-oriented values by paternalistic leadership (Chen et al., 2014; J. L. Farh et al., 2008) and given assistance

and advice (Chen et al., 2014) about how to act in line with the organization's strategy and objectives. Method of leadership According to (Chen et al., 2014) and (J. L. Farh et al., 2008), this is composed of three distinct elements: morality, compassion, and authoritarianism.
An example of a good leader shows concern for his subordinates as people and for their well-being as a whole (Chen et al., 2014). A strong leader cares for his followers on a personal level, whether they're working in the field or somewhere else (J.-L. Farh & Cheng, 2000). According to (J.-L. Farh & Cheng, 2000; J. L. Farh et al., 2008; Pellegrini & Scandura, 2008)A good leader's heart shows concern for his followers' career development in the workplace by offering coaching and mentoring, trying to understand why his followers aren't performing well, and providing opportunities to fix mistakes.
Benevolent leadership creates a more open and welcoming work environment for workers, by the notion of social exchange (Emerson, 1976). Leadership that is kind acts as a coach, helping employees fix mistakes, highlighting how they are exceptional, and guiding their professional growth. A leader like this is great at getting to know their staff on a personal level. Workers will take the initiative to achieve higher performance levels when they get individualized attention from a boss with a good heart. There has been a surge in interest in research on benevolent leadership styles in recent years, particularly in Asia (J.-L. Farh & Cheng, 2000). To generate a response from their staff, leaders should show compassion. Research by (C. H. Cheng & Osman, 2023) among others, shows that benevolent leadership has a favorable effect on a variety of employee performance indicators. According to (J.-L. Farh & Cheng, 2000; Pellegrini & Scandura, 2008)He showed genuine concern for the well-being of his coworkers, family members, and employees.
In terms of workers' ability to carry out their assigned tasks, this is characterized by the settlement responsibilities and roles that workers must accomplish (Williams & Anderson, 1991). According to (Pellegrini & Scandura, 2008)Benevolent leadership can fulfill its duty position in front of workers by assisting them in building more productive groups. In most cases, workers will gladly take on a role in completing a certain job. As a result, employees' task performance was positively correlated with the expectations of benevolent leadership.
Proposition 1: Benevolent leadership affects task performance.

1.3. Work engagement

Engaged employees are a great asset for any company that wants to stay ahead of the competition. People are one of the few things that rivals can't copy or replicate, making them a potentially invaluable asset if handled properly. Work engagement is the most significant element for measuring a company's strength, as highlighted (Harter et al., 2020).
(Kahn, 1990) Introduced draft Work Engagement, with given definition famous quoted in the introduction, namely, " utilization of self member organization to in role Work they; in involvement, people use and express self they in a way physical, cognitive, and emotional during show role ". The relationship between benevolent leadership and work engagement has clear implications for Return on Investment (ROI) in leadership development can Productivity Gains to Engaged employees are more focused, proactive, and less likely to experience burnout, leading to higher output per labor cost unit, a measurable ROI contributor (Saks, 2006). Leadership is a criterion main both identified as a fundamental factor in influencing employee involvement. Leadership effectiveness is multi- multi-dimensional construction level height consisting of self-awareness, information processing, interpersonal honesty, and internalized moral principles (Walumbwa et al., 2008). When leaders inspire their followers, participation occurs naturally (MacLeod & Clarke, 2010). The leader responsible answer For to communicating that employees play a main role in the success business in a way overall. Just as kind leadership has a favorable effect on work engagement, according to research (Chuang et al., 2022). Using a multilevel structural equation model, this study examines the impact of compassionate leadership on employee engagement in light of the social exchange theory (Blau, 1964; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). This study's findings contradict those of earlier research (Tuan, 2018; Xu et al., 2018), which found that benevolent leadership had the opposite impact on employee engagement (an inverted U shape). (Sendawula et al., 2018) Work Engagement influences Task Performance. In the results, mutually supportive research intersecting and still in the same theory , then Work Engagement can be conceptualized as a mediating variable.
Proposition 2: Work Engagement mediates Benevolent leadership on task performance

1.4. Leader member exchange (LMX)

Leader-follower connections are the central emphasis of LMX theory, which sets it apart from other leadership theories (Gerstner & Day, 1997). The LMX theory's guiding principles state that leaders should not treat their followers uniformly but should instead cultivate and sustain excellent interpersonal connections with each follower (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 2010). Many studies, both theoretical and empirical, have shown a favorable correlation between LMX and creative output (Amabile et al., 1996; Liao et al., 2019). In a bipolar context, LMX is often gauged as an attitude's cognitive level, specifically as its positive or negative rating (i.e., its quality LMX) (Lee et al., 2019). People might have both good and negative opinions on the target at the same time, which is indicative of an ambivalent attitude (Ashforth et al., 2014; Thompson et al., 2018). (Chan & Mak, 2012) Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) influences task performance. So that the proposed variable LMX mediates the influence of Benevolent Leadership on task performance. Thus, we think that LMX mediates the connection between Benevolent Leadership and task performance employees. The link between benevolent leadership and LMX provides a strategic pathway for realizing Return on Investment (ROI) in leadership development, Reduced Turnover, and Associated Costs. there LMX quality is negatively related to turnover intentions. Benevolent leadership, by cultivating strong relational bonds through LMX, enhances employee retention. This reduces the financial burden of recruitment, training, and lost productivity, positively impacting ROI (Erdogan & Enders, 2007).
Proposition 3: LMX mediates the connection between Benevolent Leadership and Task Performance.

1.5. Creativity

In contrast to innovation, which entails successfully putting these ideas into action, (Jaiswal, Neeraj Kumar dan Dhar, 2008) state that draft creativity is the capacity to generate novel and significant ideas. In today's competitive business environment, innovation, the capacity to create new products, services, and processes, is essential to survival (Zhou & Shalley, 2010). Ideas such as these are associated with modern product development, service offerings, and the introduction of new methods (Gilson & Shalley, 2004). Making little adjustments to existing concepts to introduce a brand-new, original one is an example of creativity (S. Wang et al., 2022).
(Lin et al., 2016) Benevolent Leadership with creativity relates to positive and published literature about how good-hearted leadership good heart associated with creativity in employees. Findings This suggests that leaders should prioritize their well-being, as well as that of their families and friends, to foster high-quality leader-follower connections, which in turn encourage followers to be creative. From an ROI perspective, fostering creativity through benevolent leadership leads to measurable organizational value. Creative employees contribute to

process improvements, product differentiation, and problem-solving, all of which are linked to increased productivity, market adaptability, and cost efficiency. These outcomes directly contribute to a positive return on leadership investment, especially when creativity transitions into tangible innovation. Put simply, a leader with a good heart is a vital tool for facilitating high-quality LMX, promoting innovation, and maintaining a high degree of followership, as well as an increase in both productivity and originality (Gilson et al., 2013). Therefore, in this conceptual model, creativity functions as a critical mediator linking benevolent leadership to task performance. It also serves as a pathway through which organizations can realize leadership ROI, as the nurturing of creative behaviors contributes to both operational excellence and competitive differentiation. So in this research, this conceptualized Creativity mediates the connection between Benevolent Leadership on task performance.
Proposition 4: Creativity mediates the connection between benevolent leadership with task performance

1.6. Task performance

Performance has become a field of significant attention . Good for academics and practitioners because performance clarity is an element in successful organizations (Vosloban, 2012). In the literature, work, employees, tasks, and achievements everything have the same meaning (Kell et al., 2014). To make it easier, we will use task performance. (Viswesvaran & Ones, 2000) define it in the terms " action, behavior, and results measured that is done or generated by related employees and contribute to the goals organization. However, in Study Here, our focus is on Task Performance because performance work in a way that overall depends on several factors behavior where Task Performance stands out and can be recognized (Motowidlo & Kell, 2012). TP is defined as " skill" holder position in doing recognized activities formally as part of his work, activities that contribute to the technical core organization Good in a way direct with apply part from the technological process, or in a way No direct with provide material or services needed. (Kell et al., 2014). Task Performance, which is traditionally focused on the performance of individuals (Koopmans et al., 2011) (, with thus focus on doing work that has been determined by the supervisor or leader of employees (Viswesvaran & Ones, 2000). In other words, this is related to skill or competence where an employee does assigned roles (Koopmans et al., 2011). (J., 2014), (Markos Solomon & Sridevi M Sandhya, 2010) They are among the researchers who found that employee engagement positively affects task performance. Participating workers are more likely to have a high level of energy, focus on their tasks at hand, and persevere through challenges.

2. Methodology

This study employs a quantitative cross-sectional survey design aimed at empirically testing the proposed hypotheses and examining the relationships between benevolent leadership, work engagement, leader–member exchange (LMX), creativity, task performance, and perceived return on investment (ROI). Following the guidance of (Sekaran & Bougie, 2013)This research adopts a structured approach for collecting primary data through a self-administered questionnaire, allowing for the systematic examination of latent constructs within a natural organizational setting without experimental manipulation. The unit of analysis comprises individual employees working in corporate travel service businesses located in East Java, who interact directly with leaders and are thus positioned to evaluate leadership behavior and its influence on their work performance. The sample size will be determined using the recommendations of (Hair, J. F., Black, W., Babin, B., & Anderson, 2018), ensuring an adequate ratio of indicators to sample size for structural equation modeling (SEM) analysis.
For further research development, it can be tested empirically with the variable measurement construct. The study's unit of analysis is the person's target is the employee business that currently provides travel services in the developing country. All constructs in this study will be measured using validated multi-item Likert-type scales (ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). Benevolent leadership will be assessed using a modified version of the scale developed by (B. S. Cheng et al., 2004), capturing dimensions of empathy, moral concern, and supportiveness. Work engagement will be measured using the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES-9), developed by (Schaufeli et al., 2006), while LMX quality will be assessed using the LMX-7 scale from (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 2010). Employee creativity will be measured using the creativity scale from (Zhou & George, 2001), which evaluates the extent of innovative and original contributions at work. Task performance will be assessed using the Individual Work Performance Questionnaire (Koopmans et al., 2011), focusing on goal achievement and job-specific efficiency. Additionally, perceived ROI will be operationalized through employee ratings on leadership effectiveness in generating innovation, retention, and performance outcomes, based on frameworks adapted from (No fads et al., 2010).

3. Result

Conceptual article. This in a way, an innovative merge principles psychological and social in investigate the connection between BL and TP through a mediation process, WE, LMX, and Creativity at the individual level. The principles base Social Exchange Theory (SET) are that a leader who shows empathy, protection, and personal support is seen as an investment in social capital that encourages employees to repay with behavior Work positive. Task performance, as an indicator of main effectiveness employee in operating his job, no only influenced in a way directly by benevolent leadership, but also through complex psychological and relational. Work engagement, leader-member exchange (LMX), and creativity . functioning as track mediation simultaneous bridging influence the.
In general Simultaneously, benevolent leadership creates emotional engagement through work engagement, building quality connection Work through LMX, as well as facilitate expression of innovative ideas through creativity. Caring leaders capable to awaken Spirit work, increasing the sense of attachment employee to tasks, and strengthen the sense of mutual believe in connection work. In addition , the environment safe work in a way psychological consequence supportive leadership push emergence relevant creativity with task . Third mediation This is form of " reply " to treatment positive from leader , as explained in SET framework . With However, benevolent leadership is not only contribute in a way direct on task performance, but also strengthen it through influence integrated psychological and social in self employee. Organizational investments in developing benevolent leadership styles not only change employee behavior, but also provide real economic returns in the form of productivity, efficiency, and innovation core components of ROI. The ROI of a benevolent leadership style increases when combined with factors such as high team commitment, quality LMX, and a trusting work culture.
Furthermore, an ROI Matrix-Based Leadership Policy can Integrate ROI Leadership Assessment into the Performance Management System. Organizations are advised to develop an ROI-based leadership evaluation system that measures not only financial output but also non-financial performance indicators such as employee retention, creativity, and work engagement. This ROI matrix should incorporate qualitative and quantitative metrics of benevolent leadership, such as trust index, employee well-being, and team innovation. Strategically Allocate Human Resource Investments to Benevolent Leadership Training Programs. To improve the benefit-cost ratio of leadership,

organizations need to allocate training budgets to programs that instill the values of empathy, moral support, and long-term relationships. This ROI-based training should include coaching, active listening, and relational ethics in leadership.

4. Discussion

The application of benevolent leadership (BL) within organizations should not merely be perceived as a moral or humanistic approach, but rather as a strategic investment capable of generating substantial Return on Investment (ROI). This leadership style, characterized by empathy, personal care, and protection toward employees, has both direct and indirect effects on enhancing task performance (TP). Grounded in the framework of Social Exchange Theory (SET), benevolent leadership fosters reciprocal relationships, where employees, feeling valued and supported, are more likely to respond with positive work behaviors. Importantly, the influence of BL on TP is not merely linear; it operates through complex psychological and relational mechanisms, specifically via the mediating roles of work engagement (WE), leader-member exchange (LMX), and creativity.

Work engagement reflects the degree of emotional and cognitive involvement an employee has toward their tasks, often resulting in higher levels of enthusiasm, persistence, and productivity. LMX, representing the quality of the dyadic relationship between leader and follower, contributes to mutual trust and facilitates smoother communication and collaboration. Creativity, on the other hand, enables employees to produce innovative ideas and problem-solving strategies that add significant value to organizational outcomes. From an ROI perspective, investing in the development of benevolent leadership through targeted training programs, leadership coaching, and cultural transformation can yield high organizational returns in the form of improved individual performance, reduced turnover, and enhanced innovation capacity. Therefore, benevolent leadership should be recognized not only as a morally commendable leadership philosophy but also as a strategically sound and economically beneficial approach. Organizations aiming to sustain long-term effectiveness and competitive advantage would benefit from integrating benevolence into their leadership development frameworks as part of a high-impact, human-centered investment strategy.

5. Conclusion

Based on the SET principle, the mediation model proposed a simultaneous represent perspective comprehensive about BL's role as TP catalyst in place work. When the leaders implement BL on their employees, WE employees will improve and contribute to the organization in TP form. This model fill in important gap thing that exists in existing literature. The proposed model also offers recommendations practical for leaders of organizations in the matter of fostering and developing TP. In a theoretical paper, this shows a connection between BL, SET, and TP are additive knowledge. This highlights the strength of transformational style leadership outside characteristic exchange based on transaction, with a focus on employee TP that creates a supportive atmosphere for innovation. This study especially presents a conceptual model without testing empirically, which shows that implementation practice and validation of the model are Still Not yet confirmed. In addition, with consideration behavior complex human beings, the proposed model can also obtain benefits from other additional variables that can function as variable moderation. Therefore, future research can verify the proposed model and incorporate culture and climate organization as a variable moderation in the model.

To guide future empirical investigation, several testable hypotheses are proposed based on the conceptual model linking benevolent leadership to task performance through mediating mechanisms grounded in Social Exchange Theory. First, it is hypothesized that benevolent leadership has a direct positive effect on employee task performance. Furthermore, this relationship is expected to be mediated individually and simultaneously by work engagement, leader-member exchange (LMX), and employee creativity. Specifically, benevolent leaders are believed to enhance employees' emotional attachment to work (work engagement), foster high-quality reciprocal relationships (LMX), and stimulate creative contributions, each of which independently and collectively leads to improved task performance. To integrate the practical value of leadership investment, it is also hypothesized that benevolent leadership contributes positively to perceived organizational ROI, with stronger effects under conditions of high innovation demand or in larger organizational settings.

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