A Cross-Level Study of the Relationship between Political Skill and Job Performance: LMX as a Mediator and LMXD as a Moderator

Cheng-Chiou Huang  Liang-Chieh Weng

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政治技能與工作績效之跨層次研究：主管與部屬交換關係為中介變項及主管部屬交換關係差異性為干擾變項

黃正秋* 翁良杰**

摘要

本研究以跨層次研究之觀點，主旨以政治技能對工作績效的影響為主軸，並以主管與部屬交換關係為中介變項及主管部屬交換關係差異性為干擾變項，探討政治技能、主管與部屬交換關係、主管部屬交換關係差異性與工作績效之跨層次關係。本研究以一家中日合資公司為研究對象，從主管與部屬兩個來源來蒐集樣本，共計發放 25 組，合計 140 人完成問卷填答。經配對確認及刪除不完整之問卷，共回收 124 份有效配對資料，有效回收率 88%。本研究以層級線性迴歸分析進行研究假設之驗證。研究結果發現：在個體層次方面，成員政治技能對成員績效有正向關係；成員政治技能對主管與部屬交換關係有正向關係；主管與部屬交換關係對成員政治技能和成員績效兩者間具有中介效果。而在群體層次方面，主管部屬交換關係差異性的確為主管與部屬交換關係與成員績效間的干擾變項。此結果意味著，當團隊處在主管部屬交換關係差異性愈高的環境時，主管與部屬交換關係和團隊成員的工作績效之間的影響會越強。

關鍵字：政治技能、主管與部屬交換關係、主管部屬交換關係差異性、成員績效、階層線性模式

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A Cross-Level Study of the Relationship between Political Skill and Job Performance: LMX as a Mediator and LMXD as a Moderator

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Abstract

We adopted a cross-level study to analyze the relationships among political skill, leader-member exchange (LMX), leader-member exchange differentiation (LMXD) and job performance. We proposed that LMX serves as a mediating mechanism through which political skill affects employee job performance. We further argued that the modeled relationship is moderated by LMXD. Data were collected from multiple sources, supervisors and subordinates, comprised 140 employees in a Taiwan-Japanese joint venture company. Hierarchical linear modeling analysis (HLM) was employed to test the proposed hypotheses. Our results indicated that political skill is positively related to job performance and LMX at individual-level. LMX mediates between political skill and job performance. At group-level, LMXD moderates the relationship between LMX and job performance. The results revealed that with higher LMXD, the impact of LMX toward job performance will be stronger. The study provides preliminary evidence of the mediation effect of LMX and the moderating effect of LMXD in the relationship between political skill and job performance.

Keywords: political skill, LMX, LMXD, job performance, hierarchical linear regression modeling

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I. INTRODUCTION

Studies have long argued that political skill is critical not only to personal job and career success but also to the performance of the organization as a whole and that it deserves more research attention (McAllister, Ellen, Parker, Perrewe, Ferris & Hirsch, 2015; Meisler & Vigoda-Gadot, 2014). As Ferris and his colleagues wrote in *Political Skill at Work: Impact on Work Effectiveness*, “Although the evidence is still limited, political skill still appears to play an important role in job performance” (Ferris, Davidson & Perrewe, 2010, p.83). Literature reviews conducted by scholars indicate an annoying situation that most of the studies overlooked the relationship between political skill and employee job performance (Kacmar, Andrews, Harris & Tepper, 2013) and suggested to direct future research to investigate the various effects of political skill on work outcomes (Bedi & Showroński, 2014). Ferris and Treadway (2012) argued that since Pfeffer introduced the political skill construct in 1981, a priority for future research in the field should be to develop a better understanding of its consequences. In their meta-analysis of political skill, Bing, Davison, Minor, Novicevic & Frink (2011) commented that although some studies put focus on the linkage between political skill and job performance, they offer only slightly understanding of the process between the two important variables and that “there have been a relatively limited number of studies which have investigated the relationship between political skill and performance” (p.574) and that “there is a need to more clearly specify the applicability of this construct to the prediction of performance” (p.564). The present study is to echo the needs to advance the understanding of political skill and its relationship with job performance.

Although only a limited number of studies have examined the role of leader-member exchange (referred to as LMX) in the relationships between political skill and employee work outcomes (Jha & Jha, 2013), they help illuminate the way in which the two variables may interact to predict work outcomes (Breland, Treadway, Duke & Adams, 2007). For example, Kimura’s study showed the interactive moderating effects of political skill and quality of LMX on the relationship between perceptions of organizational politics and affective commitment (Kimura, 2013). In his study, Brouer (2007) found that employees high in political skill can adjust their behavior more readily to meet their supervisors' needs. This leads to higher-quality, leader-follower (LMX) relationships, enhancing the joint efforts of employees-supervisors in achieving mutual goals. Scholars call for more studies to theoretically integrate political skill and leader-member exchange literatures (Brouer, Douglas, Treadway & Ferris, 2013). Apparently, there is still a gap in the understanding of the precise mechanisms that explain the mediating relationship of political skill and LMX. Therefore, we argue that LMX plays
an important possible mediating role in translating political skill into job performance in the present study.

Leader-member exchange differentiation (referred to as LMXD) has recently attracted more attention to examine its implication for both individual and team performance (Caliskan, 2015; Li & Hui, 2014). Tse argued that although LMXD has been discussed, the research has not yet led to a firm conclusion as to its relationship with employee performance (Tse, 2014). In an influential review of leadership theories, House and Aditya (1997) noted that a key limitation of LMX theory was the failure to specify the effects of LMXD. Research examining the surrounding context of LMX and LMXD in work outcomes has not been thoroughly investigated (Kim, Liu & Diefendorff, 2015). Thus, this study is one of the rare to test LMXD as a moderator to influence LMX and employee job performance relationship.

The present study aims at investigating the relationship between political skill and job performance. The paper using LMX as the mediator variable and LMXD as the moderator variable discusses how the political skill influences employee job performance and tries to unravel its impact mechanism. We propose that LMX serves as a mechanism through which political skill affectsemployee job performance. We further argue that the modeled relationship is moderated by LMXD. Figure 1 depicts our theoretical model

![Figure 1. A hypothesized theoretical model](image)

**II. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND HYPOTHESES**

**A. Political Skill**

Politics in organizations are a fact of life and have been regarded as such for decades by organizational scientists and practitioners alike because organizations are made up of different interests that need to be aligned (McAllister et al., 2015). Political skill is
defined as: “The ability to effectively understand others at work, and to use such knowledge to influence others to act in ways that enhance one's personal and/or organizational objectives” (Ahearn, Ferris, Hochwarter, Douglas, & Ammeter, 2004, p. 311). Therefore, individuals high in political skill combine social astuteness with the capacity to adjust behavior to changing situational expectations in a way that appears to be sincere, inspires support and trust, and effectively influences and controls the responses of others (Ferris et al., 2010).

Employees who are politically skilled are socially aware, are able to network with their supervisors and peers effectively and are able to make their purposes get done (Solga, Betz, Dusenberg, Moritz & Ostermann, 2015). Researchers view the use of politics in a favorable light and see it as an effective way for work to be accomplished (Mintzberg, 1985). Employees with political skill are socially astute, and can adjust their behavior according to the situation (Kacmar et al., 2013). Researchers have found that individuals who are high on political skill are more effective at their jobs or at least in influencing their supervisors' performance ratings of them. Further, these individuals are able to adapt their behavior to others around them to appear sincere and genuine. They manage interactions in ways which promote the accomplishment of organizational goals (McAllister et al., 2015). Today, work in organizations requires skill in handling conflicting agendas and shifting power bases. Effective politics is about maintaining relationships while achieving results.

B. Political Skill and Employee Job Performance

Due to the claim made by Porter “Political skill is critical to performance and it serves as one effective predictor of performance across a broad array of jobs” (Porter, Angel & Allen, 2003, p. 403), increasing attention has been paid to the issue of political skill and its impacts on work outcomes (Meisler & Vigoda-Gadot, 2014; Solga et al., 2015). Previous studies have found considerable evidence on the favorable effects of political skill on a variety of work outcomes. For example, Bedi and Skowronske (2014) conducted a meta-analysis to correlate relationships between political skill, its predictors and outcomes. The results show that political skills associated with career success, job satisfaction and better work results. Some other researchers explore the effects of political skill and other variables on managerial performance for employee work outcomes and claim that political skill demonstrates strongest predictability to the expected work performance (Yang and Zhang, 2014; Sunindijo, 2015). Ferris and his colleagues promote one principal direction for future research on political skill is that political skill should be a main effect predictor of job performance (Ferris et al., 2010; Ferris & Treadway, 2012). Regarding the relationships between perceived political skill and job performance, previous literature has not paid enough attention to these domains.
Given the relevance of political skill as a positive factor for work outcomes, we believe it is pertinent to examine the impact of political skill on employee job performance. Based on the above, we suggest the following:

Hypothesis 1: Political skill is positively related to job performance.

A. Leader-Member Exchange (LMX)

LMX is defined as the dyadic exchange relationship between an immediate leader and a subordinate (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). The LMX theory is distinct from other leadership theories since it emphasizes a relationship-based approach to leadership and focuses on the dyadic relationships between a leader and each subordinate based on long-term relationship development. The LMX theory is based on the social exchange theory. When leaders and their subordinates have closer relationships, the latter will tend to receive better performance evaluations, more promotion opportunities, mutual trust, respect and care; in return, subordinates will show more loyalty and respect for the leadership, resulting in effectiveness and positive work outcomes (Kim et al., 2015; Liden and Maslyn, 1998).

In the past more than 25 years, substantial research has been done to understand the nature of exchanges in employee supervisor relationships (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995; Tastan, 2014). The roles of LMX on different kinds of work outcomes were the main topics considered by many scholars as well as the different antecedents of the domain. Many studies have been performed for investigating the individual and organizational consequences (Gerstner & Day, 1997) of LMX. Researchers have found LMX to be positively related to work outcomes such as job performance (Tastan, 2014), career development (Maslyn & Uhl-Bien, 2001) and work productivity (Lian, 2014). Meta-analytic evidence suggests that the quality of the relationship with a leader is positively related to employee work attitudes and performance levels (Gerstner & Day, 1997). Accordingly, LMX is an important topic to investigate because it helps explain key work outcomes. A better understanding of LMX may lead to improved supervisor/subordinate relationships and thence to improved performance outcomes.

B. Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) as a Mediator

Political skill behavior is a fact of life in organizations and is probably necessary to their effective operation (Shi, Johnson, Liu & Wang, 2013). Kilduff and Day (1994) claim that individuals who are high on political skill know there are chances that they can influence an outcome because their usage of their political skill behaviors to get more resources and then they would spend their valuable time and efforts working to achieve better performance and make effective change.
Researchers treat LMX as a mediating variable in their study and find supporting results. Using employee identification with leader and LMX as two mediators to explore the relationship between moral leadership and employee creativity, Gu and his colleagues found that the relationship between moral leadership and employee creativity is mediated by not only employee identification with leader but also by LMX (Gu, Tang and Jiang, 2015). Using LMX as a mediator to analyze the role of job characteristics on the relationship between transformational leadership behaviors and members’ task performance, Piccola and Colquit (2006) found that members perceiving high LMX were more affected by transformational leadership behaviors. However, researchers made little effort to study the potential mediating effect of LMX between subordinates’ political skill and job performance.

Broucer et al., identified a variety of job environment factors that serve as antecedents for perceived politics. Among which, the interactions and exchange behaviors between subordinates and supervisors, which mean LMX, have been associated with differential levels of perceived politics. This is an important finding due to it is consistent with social exchange theory as that individuals with political skill will influence behaviors of others in terms of social exchange (Broucer et al., 2013). Social exchange theory posits that social exchange is the foundation for the construction and maintenance of relationships. Political skill allows employees to more successfully integrate with supervisors and peers and thus it supports the importance of political skill for enhancing feelings and thoughts via the LMX relationship (Breland, Treadway, Duke & Adams, 2007). Because the influence of political skill is promoted, supervisors are likely to exhibit superior guidance and to provide more resources. As a result, the employees who perceive high LMX and who receive positive job resources from their supervisors may perform their jobs more effectively (Shi et al., 2013). Empirical research and investigation have provided support for these predictions that political skill enhances LMX quality, which then ultimately affects leader and follower effectiveness relationships. Positive and effective LMX relationships tend to actively empower subordinates to achieve better job performance (Brouer et al., 2013; McAllister et al., 2015). Accordingly, we argue that LMX serves as an important mediator translating the effects of political skill into employee job performance. The present study attempts to address these concerns by exploring the relationship between political skill and LMX and by examining the predictive power of LMX on employee job performance. The present study therefore proposes the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 2: Political skill is positively related to LMX.

Hypothesis 3: LMX mediates the positive relationship between political skill and
job performance.

A. Leader-Member Exchange Differentiation (LMXD) as a Moderator

Criticized by scholars that although researchers of LMX theory put their efforts focusing on the study of how having a high- or low-quality relationship with the leader affects employees for the last 30 years, these studies treated each dyadic relationship in isolation (Erdogan & Bauer, 2000). It is noted that recently research attention has shifted toward understanding the implications of high- and low quality exchanges that coexist within the same work group. This is known as Leader-member exchange differentiation (referred to as LMXD) (Caliskan, 2015; Li & Hui, 2014).

LMX differs from LMXD, according to Liden ans Maslyn (1998). LMX focuses one-dimensional relationship understanding emphasizing on importance of work behaviors between supervisors and subordinate, which exposes the uniformness, the algorithm of relationships between the two mediums. Whilst LMXD focuses on the degree of within-group variation that exists when a supervisor forms different quality relationships with different members, emphasize the multidimensionality of the relationships. LMXD suggests that individuals do not use the same style in dealing with all people, but rather develop different types of exchange relationship with others (Henderson, Liden, Glibkowski and Chaudhry, 2009). Because LMXD seems to be the norm rather than the exception within organizations, an important avenue for current LMX research is to understand the effects of the degree of LMXD for group effectiveness and their impacts toward employee job performance (Li & Hui, 2014).

Research has demonstrated that employees are aware of their relative standing in a set of differentiated LMX relationships in their work team. Findings of empirical studies support the moderating role of LMXD on LMX in organizations (Henderson et al., 2009). Boies and Howell (2006) tested the moderating effect of LMXD within team on the relationship between LMX quality and team level outcome. They found that when team members report differentiated relationship with their leader, the relationship between mean LMX and team potency is strong and positive. Weng’s study revealed that the positive relationship between supervisor-subordinate quanxi (LMX in Chinese context) and employee service performance is moderated by supervisor-subordinate guqnxii differentiation (LMXD in Chinese context) (Weng, 2014). In a meta-analysis by Gerstner and Day (1997), individual performance was found to be more strongly and positively related to LMXD than to LMX. Through their multilevel review and examination of the antecedents and outcomes of LMXD, Henderson et al., (2009) add strong support to Gerstner and Day’s findings. Based on the above discussion, we conclude that even if they both have positive correlation with employee work outcomes and other variables, LMXD and LXM are different from each other. Accordingly, we posit that LXMD moderates the impact of LMX on job performance. We thus propose that:
Hypothesis 4: Positive relationship LMX and job performance will be moderated by LMXD such that when LMXD is greater, the positive relationship between LMX and job performance is stronger.

III、METHOD

A. Sample and Procedures

The sample of the study comprised of 140 employees of 25 work teams in a Taiwan-Japanese joint venture company. The company was founded in 1975 and is based in Taichung, Taiwan. In order to avoid common method bias, we follow Scott and Bruce (1994) to divide the questionnaire into two parts, a supervisor questionnaire which evaluates the job performance of subordinates and a subordinate questionnaire, which measures the perception amongst the subordinates of the political skill, LMX in their own work team. Data were collected from two sources: employees and their immediate supervisors. In order to ensure a high response rate, we collected the survey data at the company’s annual training sessions, in which all employees were required to participate. We personally administered two questionnaires at one time. 25 supervisors were asked to evaluate up to 5-6 subordinates within the work team with a numerical code being used for each subordinate so that the supervisor’s evaluation data could be matched with the data on the subordinate. To ensure anonymity, no names were required in any part of the questionnaire and participants were informed that their responses would remain confidential.

The final sample for analysis in this study comprised of 140 respondents from 25 work team. After deducting the incomplete response questionnaires, the valid returns were 124. The valid return rate was 88.57%. Among the participants, 63.7 percent were female (female = 79, male = 45), average age was 38.3 years (ranging from 18 to 60), average job tenure was 9.8 years (ranging from 1 to 30).

B. Measures

It is noted that “central tendency” bias is generally found amongst chinese respondents (Yang & Chiu, 1987), thus, in the study, all of the measures were carried out using a six-point Likert scale, with 1 indicating “strongly disagree” and 6 indicating “strongly agree”.

(A) Individual-Level Variables

1. Political Skill

Subordinates reported perceptions of their political skills using the Political Skill Inventory, developed by Ferris and Treadway (2012). Example items include, “I spend
a lot of time and effort at work networking with others,” and “I am able to make most people feel comfortable and at ease.” The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measurement was very good (KMO = 0.82) and Bartlett's test of sphericity produced a significant result (χ² = 735.22; p < 0.001). The Cronbach’s alpha for this scale was found to be .86.

2. Leader-Member Exchange (LMX)

LMX is assessed in the study using the Graen and Uhl-Bien (1995) leader-member exchange scale, which includes questions such as “how well does your leader understand your job problems and needs?” and “how well does your leader recognize your potential?” The Kaiser – Meyer – Olkin measure (KMO) of sampling adequacy and the Bartlett test of sphericity were applied to determine appropriateness of LMX. All rating items with good appropriateness (KMO 0.75) and Bartlett significance resulting (χ² = 406.61; p < 0.001). The Cronbach’s alpha for this scale was .83.

3. Job Performance

Job performance was defined as actions and behaviors of an employee that contribute to the goals of the organization (Campbell, 1990; Murphy, 1989). The supervisors overseeing the work of their subordinates were asked to rate their employees by using the Farh, Dobbins and Cheng (1991) three-item scale to provide ratings of their subordinates’ job performance. Sample items include “ability to work independently,” “ability to solve problems” and “overall performance.” When completing this measure, supervisors were asked to base the performance rating on their recall of their employee’s most recent performance appraisal. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measurement was good (KMO = 0.75) and Bartlett's test of sphericity produced a significant result (χ² = 285.21; p < 0.001). The Cronbach’s alpha for this scale was found to be .92.

In addition to the individual-level job performance, we also conceptualized and aggregated job performance into the group-level. To examine the appropriateness of data aggregation, we calculated three indicators: the inter-rater agreement (r wg ) (James, 1982), Intra-class correlation coefficient (ICC1) and reliability of group mean (ICC2)(Kozlowski & Klein, 2000). The aggregation statistics, r wg score was = 0.85; the ICC1 score was 0.4 and the ICC2 score was 0.76. Following previous research, we adopted a cutoff of .70 for r wg and a cutoff of .10 for ICC1 score and a cutoff of .70 for ICC2 score (Liao & Chuang, 2007). All of our measures exceeded the cutoffs. See

Table 1. Group Agreement Statistics for Job Performance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>ICC1 (&gt;0.1)</th>
<th>ICC2 (&gt;0.7)</th>
<th>r wg (&gt;0.7)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Job Performance</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td>0.85</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
(B) Group-level variables
1. Leader-Member Exchange Differentiation (LMXD)

LMXD measure was obtained according to Chan’s (1998) dispersion model of aggregation. Using the same operationalization procedure undertaken by Henderson et al. (2009), we calculated the within-team variance in individual level LMX scores across all members to capture LMXD for each of the work teams.

(C) Control Variables
Three categories of control variables were included in the study: age, gender (0=female; 1=male), organizational tenure (years) as the individual control variables; whilst the group control variables included mean age, gender ratio, tenure within the organization, all at group level. All of these group level statistics were compiled from the aggregate scores of the statistics recorded at individual level.

IV、RESULTS

A. Correlation Analysis
The descriptive statistics, means, standard deviations, and correlations among the study variables are presented in Table 2. Age was positively related to organizational tenure (γ =0.43, p<0.01); Job performance was positively related to age (γ =0.35, p<0.01) and organizational tenure (γ =0.39, p<0.01). In addition, LMX was positively related to political skills (γ =0.43, p<0.01) and job performance (γ =0.26, p<0.01). Political skills had job performance had significant positive associations (γ =0.37, p<0.1).

Table 2. Mean, Standard Deviations and Correlations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Age</td>
<td>38.27</td>
<td>9.34</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Organizational Tenure</td>
<td>13.24</td>
<td>8.78</td>
<td>0.43**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Leader–Member Exchange (LMX)</td>
<td>4.41</td>
<td>0.63</td>
<td>−0.02</td>
<td>−0.01</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Political Skills</td>
<td>3.75</td>
<td>0.56</td>
<td>−0.05</td>
<td>−0.02</td>
<td>0.43**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Job Performance</td>
<td>4.37</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td>0.35**</td>
<td>0.39**</td>
<td>0.26**</td>
<td>0.37+</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. All correlations were analyzed at the individual-level; N=124
***p<0.001; **p<0.01; *p<0.05; + p<0.1
(A) Hypothesis Testing

We adopted hierarchical linear modeling (HLM) analysis to test our hypotheses. To test the proposed cross-level mediation model, we grand-mean centered all individual-level predictors as recommended by Hofmann and Gavin (1998). The HLM results appear in Table 3.

As we can see from Model 2 of Table 3, political skill was found to be significantly related to job performance ($\gamma = .41, p<0.05$), thereby providing support for Hypothesis 1. As shown in Model 5 of Table 3, political skill was found to be positively associated with LMX ($\gamma = .48, p<.001$), thereby providing support for Hypothesis 2. Following the method of Baron and Kenny (1986), Model 3 of Table 3 tests the mediating effects of LMX between political skill and job performance. Political skill was found to be positively associated with job performance (H1); and when both political skill and LMX were entered into the regression equation, we found that the effects of political skill to job performance decreased ($\gamma = .08, \text{ns}$). The results provided supporting evidence of LMX as a mediator of the relationship between political skill and job performance. These results therefore provided support for Hypothesis 3.

Baron and Kenny (1986) have indicated that a moderator is a qualitative or quantitative variable that influences the strength or the direction of the relation between the independent and the dependent variable. Hypothesis 4, which postulates the moderating effects of LMXD on the relationship between LMX and job performance, was subsequently tested. Presented in Model 4 of Table 3, the results revealed a significant interaction effect ($\gamma = -.88, p<0.01$). We followed the procedure of Aiken and West (1991) to graphically illustrate the interaction effects in Figure 2. We can see that the patterns of interaction are consistent with our hypothesis; that is, the relationship between LMX and job performance is stronger at higher levels of LMXD than at lower levels, thereby providing support for Hypothesis 4.

V. DISCUSSION

A. Theoretical Contributions

Our findings contribute to the literature in multiple ways. First, our findings mesh with and extend previous theoretical and empirical research efforts. Previous studies have shown the associations between political skill and job performance, but less is known about the intermediary mechanisms that translate political skill to positive job performance. Our results revealed that LMX, a previously less examined mediator, served as an explanatory mechanism between political skill and job performance. We found that subordinates’ political skill sets the bridge for LMX thereby increasing favorable responses from supervisors. In turn, politically skilled individuals are able to
make job performance effectively by applying their capability to subtly influence their supervisors and consequently exchange power to better control their work resources for better job performance. Additionally, our results add to the limited empirical findings about LMXD that really operates at multiple levels to moderate the relationship between LMX and employee job performance. Our findings are consistent with the implications of Tse (2014) who has implied that positive LMXD could clearly increase cohesiveness, an “us” mentality and psychological channels that enhance subordinates working together to achieve common goals.

B. Practical Implications

Our findings suggest several possible implications for organizations to consider. First, our findings show that politically skilled subordinates strategically employ their competencies in ways that ensure favorable LMX for goal attainment is one key predictor for job performance. Because political skill triggers the positive LMX between supervisors and subordinates, it is beneficial to provide more training on specific political tactics (e.g., positioning, social astuteness and networking skills) to help subordinates develop desirable LMX with their supervisors. Second, although our study found that political skill is positively associated with employee job
Table 3. Hierarchical Linear Modeling Results for Job Performance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Job Performance</th>
<th>LMX</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Model1</td>
<td>Model2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>7.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Individual-level control variables</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>γ_10</td>
<td>0.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>γ_20</td>
<td>0.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational tenure</td>
<td>γ_30</td>
<td>-0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Individual-level independent variables</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Skill</td>
<td>γ_50</td>
<td>0.41*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LMX</td>
<td>γ_60</td>
<td>0.33**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Group-level control variables</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>γ_01</td>
<td>-0.04*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>γ_02</td>
<td>-0.76*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational tenure</td>
<td>γ_03</td>
<td>0.00***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cross-level interaction variables</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LMXLMX Differentiation</td>
<td>γ_55</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.66</td>
<td>0.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>00</td>
<td>0.07*</td>
<td>0.07*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>0.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model Deviance</td>
<td>295.13</td>
<td>295.42</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. **"***p < 0.001, **"p < 0.01, *p < 0.05, +p < 0.1

*Deviance is the measurement of model fit. The smaller, the better the model fits.

bThe tau (τ) matrix is a covariance matrix for the group intercepts and slopes.

cThe gamma(a) (γ) are the HLM coefficients to be interpreted.
performance, our study indicated that employee job performance may occur by increasing LMX. Therefore, we suggest when making decisions about who should be promoted to leadership positions, the individuals’ LMX relationships need to be weighed along with other important staffing criteria.

C. Limitation and Future Research

There are limitations of this study that need to be acknowledged. The first is our results. As the results were based on one organization in one society, and the majority of articles referenced relied on western-based researchers, generalizability of findings should be limited and verified because of the above issues. In addition, the company from which the data were collected was a Taiwan-Japan joint venture. Because of the effects of cultural differences on management style of international joint ventures (Lu & Lee, 2005), the findings might not be transferable to all types of organizations. For these reasons, further research is recommended covering a broad range of reference sources and expanding to larger sample sizes and, also in different regions and sectors for the reliability of the findings. Second, the risk of common method variance due to social desirability (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994) would be a concern because the scales of political skill and LMX were measured by subordinates’ self-reported and job performance items were evaluated by the supervisor subjectively. It is thought that in future surveys the so-called lie scales could be developed and introduced into the test items to counter the tendency of social desirability bias. The job performance related items can be answered by multiple sources- subordinates self reported and supervisor reported-method in order to enhance objectivity and to minimize same-source biases.
D. Conclusion

The findings of the present study give novel contributions to the extant literature on political skill, LMX, and LMXD theories. In this study, we show that LMX is one mechanism through which political skill positively impacts job performance. Using the tenets of social exchange theory as guide, we posited that one of the implicit expectations of subordinates is to have opportunities to utilize their political skill to establish high-quality differentiated leadership-member exchange relationship (LMXD). By means of LMXD, politically skilled subordinates obtain the opportunities of increasing positive reciprocity obligation that lead to better job performance.
REFERENCES


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