

Happiness-LMX Relationship: Mediating Role of Perceived Organizational Support & Resilience

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Happiness at work is being sought by business owners, policymakers, and employees at large as happy employees are generally more productive ones. The present study has examined the relationship of Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) with happiness. Also hypothesized that Perceived Organizational Support (POS) and resilience would positively contribute to happiness and would mediate the relationship between LMX and happiness. The participants in the study were 217 working professionals with diverse backgrounds. Data were analyzed through Smart PLS4 software. Analyses revealed that LMX, POS, and resilience were positively related to happiness. Mediation hypotheses were also supported. POS and resilience partially mediated the Happiness-LMX relationship. The results were interpreted within the social exchange theory framework.

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Introduction

Happiness may be considered the ultimate goal of life and serves as the basis of human relationships. Happiness may be defined as the experience of positive emotions more frequently than negative emotions and a positive evaluation of the quality-of-life experiences. Happiness and subjective well-being (SWB) have been interchangeably used in the literature. SWB is considered a broad category of phenomena including emotional experiences, domain satisfaction, and an overall evaluation of life satisfaction (Diener, 2000). Another term 'Eudaimonia' is also used for depicting happiness. It combines Eu (good) and daimon (spirit). Eudaimonia has been defined as a life well-lived or human flourishing. It refers to different types of happiness that emphasize cognitive and reflective abilities. A review of definitions suggests that Eudaimonic happiness includes four elements: authenticity, excellence, growth, and meaning. (Huta & Waterman, 2014).

Positive Psychology has generated renewed interest in the study of happi-

ness or SWB. More researchers have used the happiness construct in their studies (Bajaj & Krishnan, 2016; Bani-Melhem, Al-Hawari & Quratulain, 2022; Salas -Vallina & Fernandez, 2017; Masterson et al, 2021).

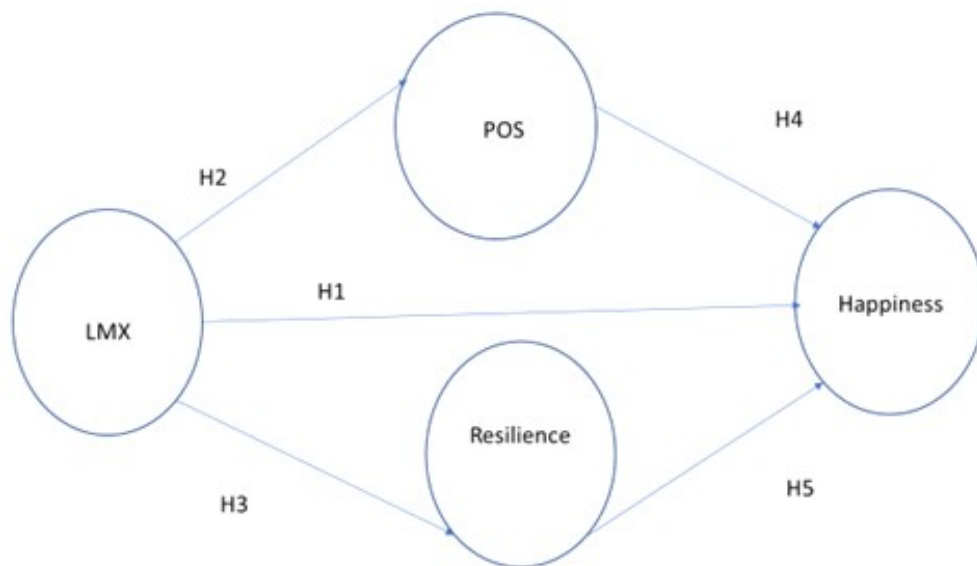
The present study has used happiness as an outcome variable and has made multiple contributions by examining the linkage between happiness and resilience and exploring the mediating role of Perceived Organizational Support (POS) and resilience in the happiness- Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) relationship. Specifically, the study has examined how happiness may be enhanced. Working on the Social Exchange theory and LMX theory frameworks, the following research questions were addressed: 1. How LMX is related to happiness? 2. How POS is related to happiness? 3. How resilience is related to happiness? 4. Does POS mediate the LMX-happi-

ness relationship? 5. Does resilience mediate the LMX-happiness relationship?

Literature Review & Hypothesis Development

Fig. 1 presents the conceptual model of this study. Happiness/SWB is treated as an outcome variable. Leaders have the power to transform organizational culture and employee behavior through their styles of interaction. LMX framework has been used to study the relationship of leadership. POS has been taken as another potentially powerful construct to influence happiness within social exchange theory. Resilience, a component of PsyCap, and emotional intelligence, a personal resource, has also been included in the study with the expectation that it will positively influence happiness. The literature review and hypothesis development have been organized around Fig. 1.

Fig. 1 Conceptual Diagram



Happiness

Happiness has been conceptualized in multiple ways using varied perspectives. DeNeve and Cooper (1998) defined happiness as the dominance of positive affect over negative affect in the overall evaluation of people's life. Another way of defining happiness is to live a life full of virtues. Still another way to define happiness is to realize one's potential. Carol Ryff's (1989) model of psychological well-being consists of six elements of life: a. Self-acceptance, b. Personal growth, c. Purpose in life, d. Positive relationship with others, e. environmental mastery, and f. Autonomy. This approach is grounded in Humanistic Psychology.

Self-determination theory suggests that people will feel happier when they are intrinsically motivated.

Ryan and Deci's (2000) self-determination theory is another theory of happiness incorporating eudaimonic well-being/happiness. Their theory proposes three psychological needs: a. Autonomy, b. Relatedness, and c. Competence. They emphasize that if these three needs are fulfilled, people will experience eudaimonic well-being. Self-determination theory suggests that people will feel happier when they are intrinsically motivated.

Seligman's (2011) PERMA model of flourishing defined happiness in terms of five components: positive emotions (P), relationships (R), engagement (E), mean-

ing (M), and accomplishment (A). If we compare the three models (Ryff, 1989; Ryan & Deci, 2000; Seligman, 2011) of happiness, we find that autonomy, relatedness, and competence are common in the three models as environmental mastery in Ryff's model and accomplishment in Seligman's model denote competence only. Similarly, Purpose in life in Ryff's model is very close to the 'Meaning' element of Seligman. The present study has used an integrative approach to happiness incorporating aspects of: relationship, inner peace, commitment, success, health and well-being for measuring the happiness of working professionals.

LMX-Happiness Relationship.

Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) theory provides insight into how leaders can create positive relationships with their employees, leading to increased job satisfaction, engagement performance, and overall happiness in the workplace (Graen & Uhl-Bein, 1995; Bhal, 2005; Chaurasia & Shukla, 2014; Inceoglu et al., 2018). Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) is a leadership theory that focuses on the development of relationships between leaders and team members. It suggests that when there is a strong mutual exchange of respect and trust between a leader and their employee, it leads to increased job satisfaction, motivation, and commitment among employees. This type of relationship can be developed through clear communication, recognition of achievements, open dialogue about expectations, and providing opportunities for growth. Based on the above-mentioned argument, it is proposed:

H1. LMX will be positively related to happiness.

LMX-POS Relationship.

LMX can be considered as a dyadic level variable or a team level variable where an employee or a team member feels motivated and engaged because he/she enjoys a quality relationship including encouragement, positive and challenging assignments, resource support, and positive appraisal. Such employees also perceive that their organizations are supportive of their initiatives and value their contributions (Eisenberger et al., 2002). Perceived organizational support may be conceptualized as employee perception of the extent to which their contributions are valued by their organizations and their organizations care about their well-being (Eisenberger et al. 1986; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). Within the social exchange theory framework, individuals, according to the theory, involve in a series of interdependent actions that produce obligations among the exchange parties (Blau, 1964; Emerson, 1976; Homans, 1958). When one party offers another a valuable and beneficial resource, an obligation to return a valuable resource is formed. A series of mutual exchanges enhance the quality of the relationship between the exchange parties, resulting in beneficial and productive behaviors (Blau, 1964). Employees exchange efforts, performance, commitment, and socio-emotional obligation in exchange for financial benefits and support. The long-term trusting relationship may develop in mutually supporting parties. Based on the above arguments, it is posited that:

H2. LMX will be positively related to POS.

LMX-Resilience Relationship.

LMX has rarely been studied in relation to resilience with an honorable exception Kakkar (2019). High LMX means mutual trust between leader and members, reciprocity of positive exchange of ideas and resources, and clarity of communication and expectations. If employees feel that leaders are supportive and consistent in their dealings, employees develop personal resources like self-efficacy and resilience so that they can overcome impediments on the way to performance. When these attributes are high (i.e., high LMX), subordinates are more likely to positively evaluate the leader's actions and directions. This positive evaluation boosts subordinate motivation and contributes to greater resilience.

High LMX means mutual trust between leader and members, reciprocity of positive exchange of ideas and resources, and clarity of communication and expectations.

According to Luthans et al. (2006), resilience can be developed through organizational interventions and good management practices. Employee resilience has been found to be related to social support and organizational relationships. Positive emotions are instrumental in influencing resilience (Vanhove et al., 2016; Sommer et al., 2016). Positive affective experiences increase psychologi-

cal resources and improve coping ability (Feldman et al., 2015; Folkman, 2008) and learning behaviors (Meredith et al., 2011). Positive affect/motivation is also related to high levels of persistence, which improves coping abilities during challenging situations and thus significantly contributes to resilience.

H3. LMX will be positively related to subordinate resilience

POS & Happiness Relationship.

Eisenberger and colleagues introduced the theory of perceived organizational support in the 1980s, which is defined as “an employee’s perception that the organization values his or her contribution and cares about the employee’s well-being” (Eisenberger et al., 1986). As a result, employers should recognize their employees’ well-being and provide them with organizational support. Organizations can support their employees through supervisors and the organizational side, with the latter being especially important because it promotes positive work-related outcomes for employees (Blancero et al., 2009, Riggle, Edmondson, & Hansen, 2009). When employees perceive organizational support, they respond with increased job satisfaction (Witt, 1991), engagement (Pati & Kumar, 2010), organizational commitment (Rhodes & Eisenberger, 2002), and SWB (Tripathi & Singh, 2020) among other things. Based on the presented arguments, it is hypothesized:

H4. POS will be positively related to happiness

Resilience – Happiness Relationship.

Resilience is defined as the ability to recover from adversity. It is an employee’s personal resource for dealing with challenging situations. The process of adapting well in the face of adversity, loss, trauma, and other significant sources of stress is known as resilience. Resilience is a part PsyCap which has been extensively studied in relation to work outcomes. According to theory and research, PsyCap has a direct impact on desired attitudes and performance, and employee psychological well-being (Avey et al., 2010). Employees who have PsyCap are more satisfied and perform better in their professions (Avey et al., 2011), have a higher organizational commitment and less absenteeism (Avey et al., 2006), and experience lower levels of stress (Roche et al., 2014). Happiness or SWB is a multifaceted concept that defines an individual’s satisfaction with various domains of life. Resilient people are confident in their ability to deal with adversity. There is not enough research on resilience and happiness in the workplace. In clinical settings, resilience has been found to be positively associated with coping skills. Extending the personal resource theory of PsyCap argument, it is proposed:

H5. Resilience will be positively related to happiness

LMX-POS-Happiness Relationship.

LMX theory proposes that high LMX is positively related to many employee outcomes like job satisfaction, employee

engagement, performance, organizational commitment and organizational citizenship behavior (Graen & Uhl-Bein, 1995). Positive exchange of resources, mutual admiration, and support and trust in a leader-member relationship create a positive climate where employees are likely to report happiness. Further, if employees trust their leaders and find that their organizations appreciate their contribution and care about their well-being, the feeling of happiness and contentment are likely to be generated. The mechanism to explain the relationship can be found in social exchange theory (Blau, 1964) which suggests that both leaders and employees are in an exchange relationship of personal and organizational resources and employees also perceive organizations as a source of support and the leader is the agent of the organization. Thus, it is logical to posit that the LMX-happiness relationship will be mediated by POS. Thus, it is hypothesized:

H6. POS will mediate the LMX-Happiness relationship.

LMX-Resilience-Happiness Relationship.

As LMX-resilience relationship has already been explained that supportive leaders transform their followers into strong and confident people to face challenging situations. Resilience as a part of PsyCap served as a personal resource to cope with challenges and adversities (Avey et al, 2009). The explanation mechanism for LMX-happiness relationship with resilience as a mediator is straight forward. Leaders with their posi-

tive exchange of resources make their employees tough and resourceful. Tough and resourceful employees, in turn, feel good about their leaders as well as about themselves and are ready to meet challenges faced by them, and likely to report greater satisfaction and well-being. Thus, it is hypothesized:

H7. Resilience will mediate the LMX-Happiness relationship.

Sample & Procedure

A convenience sample of 217 (Male=201, Female=16) working individuals having at least one year of experience in their present organization was used in the study. They represented diverse functions and industries like production, marketing, research and development, finance and accounts, health care, education, energy, engineering, etc. The age of participants ranged from 22 to 58 with a mean value of 41.62 years. Their work experience in the present company ranged between 1 and 32 years with a mean of 12.32 years. Participants typically had a professional qualification in engineering, management, accounting, or a postgraduate degree in science and social science disciplines. They belonged to junior, middle, and senior levels of management with a majority (49.3%) coming from the middle level of management.

The research team personally approached the organizations and individuals to participate in the study. 350 questionnaires were distributed and 217 usable questionnaires were returned to us.

Measures.

The measures used in this study are described as:

Happiness. Happiness was measured on a 10-item scale having five-point response categories. Some aspects covered in the scale are: satisfaction with the relationship, feeling of inner peace and well-being, success, and commitment to the organization.

Leader-Member Exchange. This latent construct was measured through a 7-item scale developed by Graen and Uhl-Bein(1995). The two typical items of the scale are:

1. Do you usually know how satisfied your manager is with what you do? Very dissatisfied (1) Dissatisfied (2) So-So (3) Satisfied (4) Very Satisfied (5)
2. How does your manager understand your job problem and needs? Not a bit (1) A little (2) A Fair Amount (3) Quite a bit (4) A great deal (5)

Perceived Organizational Support. This latent construct was measured through a modified version of the Eisenberger et al. (1986) Scale consisting of 6 items having 7-point response categories ranging from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (7). Two typical items of the scale are: 1. The organization really cares about my well-being. 2. The organization takes pride in my accomplishment.

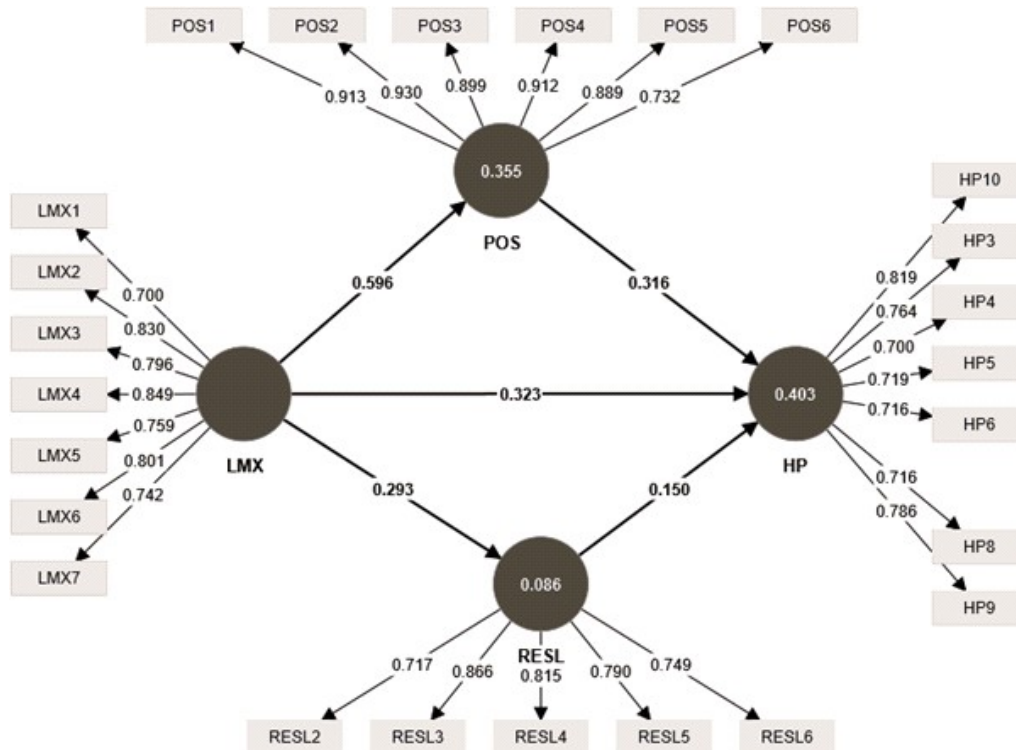
Resilience. This latent construct was assessed through a 6-item inventory on a 5-point scale with response alternatives ranging from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (5). This scale is an adapted version of Smith et al. (2008) Brief Resilience scale. A sample item from the scale is: I usually find a way out through stressful events.

Results & Discussion

Data were analyzed through SmartPLS4 (Ringle, Wende & Becker, 2022) as it is more useful for small samples and does not require the assumption of normality of data. Before testing the hypothesis, let us discuss the adequacy of the measurement model and psychometric properties of the four latent constructs: LMX, POS, Resilience, and Happiness used in the study (Fig. 2). The indicators shown in shaded black are part of the outer model and represent the measurement model of the study while constructs shown in dark black represent the structural model. First, we need to establish the adequacy of the measurement model, then we can proceed with testing the structural model. Fig. 2 presents factor loadings of indicator variables constituting latent constructs.

As a rule of thumb, for a well-fitting reflective model, factor loadings should be above .70 (Henseler, Ringle & Sarstedt, 2012: 269). The loading of .70 signifies that approximately half of the variance in the indicator variable is explained by its factor. It may further be suggested that the explained variance by the factor may be higher than the error

Fig. 2 Empirical Model Generated by Smart PLS 4.0



variance. Thus, following the criteria of acceptable loading of .70, 3 items were dropped from the Happiness scale. Factor loadings of the modified scale of Happiness ranged from 0.702 to 0.818. The scale has a Cronbach Alpha reliability of 0.87.

Scanning of Fig. 2 clearly indicates that for POS and LMX, none of the indicators has a lower factor loading than 0.70. POS and LMX have Cronbach Alpha reliabilities of 0.94 and 0.90 respectively (Table 1).

Resilience was having an indicator with a loading of 0.626. This item was dropped. The modified scale with five

items had loadings ranging between 0.717 and 0.866. Cronbach Alpha for the scale was 0.85. Overall, factor loadings of the outer model are satisfactory.

Convergent & Discriminant Validity

Convergent validity refers to the extent to which a measure correlates positively with alternative measures of the same construct. It can be ascertained when items of a specific measure converge to denote the underlying construct. The AVE is calculated as the average of the squared loadings of each indicator associated with a construct. To determine convergent validity, we need to have a composite reliability of 0.70 and an AVE of 0.50 (Hair et al.,

2014). All the latent constructs used in the study meet AVE and Composite Reliability criteria, thus convergent validities are satisfactory (Table 1)

Table 1 Intercorrelations & Reliability, Convergent & Discriminant Validity of Latent Constructs

Latent Constructs	1	2	3	4
1. Happiness	0.747			
2.LMX	0.557	0.784		
3.POS	0.550	0.596	0.882	
4. Resilience	0.330	0.293	0.274	0.789
Cronbach's Alpha Reliability	0.867	0.895	0.942	0.847
Composite Reliability	0.871	0.90	0.952	0.856
AVE	0.558	0.614	0.777	0.624

LMX= Leader-Member Exchange; POS= Perceived Organizational Support; AVE=Average Variance Extracted. Figures in diagonal are square roots of AVE for respective constructs. For establishing Discriminant Validity inter-construct correlation should be less than the square root of AVE.

The three methods of establishing Discriminant Validity are provided by Smart PLS. They are Hetero Trait Mono Trait (HTMT) Ratio, Fornell Larcker Criteria, and Cross loading Criteria. According to the Fornell and Larcker criterion (1981) and the Cross-loadings, to satisfy discriminant validity criteria: (1) the square root of each construct's AVE should be higher than its correlation with another construct, and (2) each item loads the highest on its associated construct. The HTMT Ratio method of Discriminant Validity as proposed by Henseler, Ringle, & Sarstedt (2015) suggest that the HTMT value should be below 0.90. On the basis of three criteria, POS, LMX, Resilience, and Happiness have adequate Discriminant Validities (Tables 2 & 3).

Table 2 Discriminant Validities of Latent Constructs Based on Hetero Trait-Mono Trait Ratio

Latent Constructs	Hetero Trait-Mono Trait Ratio (HTMT)
LMX <-> Happiness	0.620
POS <-> Happiness	0.594
POS <-> LMX	0.644
Resilience <-> Happiness	0.388
Resilience <-> LMX	0.334
Resilience <-> POS	0.305

LMX= Leader-Member Exchange; POS= Perceived Organizational Support

Henseler, Ringle, & Sarstedt (2015: 121) suggest that if the HTMT value is below 0.90, discriminant validity has been established between a given pair of reflective constructs.

Testing of Hypothesis: Path Coefficients

An examination of path coefficients (Tables 4 & 5) suggests that all the con-

structs POS, LMX, and Resilience have a positive and significant relationship with happiness. Bootstrapping algorithm also generates confidence intervals of the path coefficients. Bias-corrected

Table 3 Cross-Loading Criteria of Discriminant Validity

	Happiness	LMX	POS	Resilience
HP10	0.818	0.375	0.406	0.307
HP3	0.766	0.533	0.481	0.138
HP4	0.702	0.476	0.418	0.212
HP5	0.720	0.350	0.360	0.224
HP6	0.715	0.371	0.353	0.252
HP8	0.714	0.334	0.396	0.343
HP9	0.785	0.432	0.435	0.274
LMX1	0.420	0.700	0.362	0.332
LMX2	0.423	0.830	0.511	0.209
LMX3	0.441	0.796	0.423	0.231
LMX4	0.476	0.849	0.516	0.302
LMX5	0.387	0.759	0.446	0.174
LMX6	0.521	0.801	0.542	0.202
LMX7	0.360	0.742	0.447	0.150
POS1	0.498	0.526	0.913	0.228
POS2	0.517	0.582	0.930	0.264
POS3	0.501	0.519	0.899	0.210
POS4	0.508	0.514	0.912	0.228
POS7	0.274	0.439	0.731	0.232
POs6	0.557	0.560	0.889	0.287
RESL2	0.189	0.225	0.206	0.717
RESL3	0.278	0.270	0.246	0.866
RESL4	0.274	0.267	0.254	0.815
RESL5	0.232	0.244	0.230	0.790
RESL6	0.322	0.145	0.137	0.749

LMX= Leader-Member Exchange; POS= Perceived Organizational Support

Bold Figures are factor loadings of indicators belonging to respective constructs. These are also shown in Fig. 2. To establish discriminant validity, indicator factor loadings should be the highest on the same construct to which it belongs as compared to any other construct. For example, items/ indicators belonging to Happiness construct represented by HP3 HP4 HP5, etc. have the highest loadings on Happiness construct only as compared to any other constructs, namely, LMX, POS, and Resilience.

Table 4 Standardized Path Coefficients with Bias-Corrected Confidence Intervals

Latent Variables	Original sample(O)	Sample mean (M)	t Statistics	P Value	Bias	Confidence Intervals	
						5.0%	95.0%
LMX -> Happiness	0.325	0.328	4.658	0.001	0.003	0.204	0.434
LMX -> POS	0.596	0.598	10.765	0.001	0.002	0.491	0.676
LMX -> Resilience	0.293	0.302	4.220	0.001	0.009	0.170	0.398
POS -> Happiness	0.316	0.313	4.100	0.001	-0.003	0.188	0.441
Resilience -> Happiness	0.149	0.155	1.987	0.024	0.006	0.012	0.260

LMX= Leader-Member Exchange; POS= Perceived Organizational Support

Table 5. Standardized Path Coefficients of Mediation Effects with Bias Correction

Latent Constructs	Original sample(O)	Sample mean (M)	t statistics	P values	Bias	5.0%	95.0%
LMX -> POS -> Happiness	0.188	0.187	3.761	0.001	-0.001	0.112	0.277
LMX -> Resilience -> Happiness	0.044	0.047	1.674	0.047	0.003	0.006	0.090

LMX= Leader-Member Exchange; POS= Perceived Organizational Support

bootstrapping algorithms have been used in the study. After the correction of bias, the range of path coefficients does not include zero. Thus, the proposed model is robust and positively predicts happiness ($R^2=.403$).

The findings confirmed all seven hypotheses (Table 6). The first hypothesis is well documented that a high-quality exchange of relationships between lead-

ers and members is likely to generate positive outcomes like satisfaction, productivity, and organizational commitment (Graen & Uhl-Bein,1995). All of us are interested in happiness as happy employees are generally more productive employees. Therefore, it makes good business sense for leaders to create a work environment in which employees can be happy and experience personal growth and a sense of accomplishment.

Table 6 Summary of Overall Results

Hypothesis	Result
H1. LMX will be positively related to Happiness	Accepted (p<.001)
H2. LMX will be positively related to POS	Accepted (p<.001)
H3. LMX will be positively related to Resilience.	Accepted (p<.05)
H4. POS will be positively related to Happiness	Accepted (p<.001)
H5. Resilience will be positively related to Happiness	Accepted (p<.05)
H6. POS will mediate the relationship between LMX and Happiness	Accepted (p<.001)
H7. Resilience will mediate the relationship between LMX and Happiness	Accepted (p<.05)

LMX= Leader-Member Exchange; POS= Perceived Organizational Support

Employees who perceived greater organizational support were more likely to report higher levels of happiness.

The findings that POS significantly predicted happiness and mediated the relationship between LMX and happiness are in the expected direction. It signifies

that employees who perceived greater organizational support were more likely to report higher levels of happiness. The significant mediation suggests that professionals are likely to report greater happiness, even after controlling for LMX. This finding has clearcut practical implications, that organizations should focus on fostering a culture of support and appreciation in order to promote employee happiness. Additionally, man-

agers should be aware of the importance of POS in their employees' overall well-being and work to create an environment where employees feel valued and supported.

The study also investigated the role of resilience in happiness and its mediating role between LMX and happiness. The results indicated that resilience does indeed play a positive and significant role in predicting happiness. Further, higher levels of LMX were associated with increased levels of happiness through their impact on resilience.

Theoretical Implications.

The study has several theoretical implications. First, it contributes to positive psychology/ Positive organizational behavior literature by linking happiness with LMX. Second, it has reinforced the hypothesis that leaders can positively contribute to the building of resilience and in turn, to PsyCap. Third, within the social exchange theory framework, a positive relationship between POS and happiness is a manifestation of gratitude that employees experience towards their organizations because of the perceived support and in reciprocation they positively contribute to productivity, engagement, and happiness (Cropanzano et al., 2017). Fourth, the mediating role of POS and resilience in the LMX-happiness relationship is a unique contribution of the study is also consistent with social exchange theory. It suggests that POS and resilience would positively influence happiness even if the role of LMX is controlled.

Managerial Implications.

The findings have several implications for managerial practice. Happiness can be enhanced by leaders if they create a climate of mutual trust, clear communication, and encouragement for taking initiative and challenge. Employees will feel confident, repose their trust in their leaders, accept challenging assignments, and report greater satisfaction, performance, and happiness. POS contributing positively to happiness suggests that management needs to impress in the minds of employees that the organization will take care of their welfare and in exchange, they get full engagement and devotion from their employees.

Limitations & Directions for Future Research.

The study presented several important findings. However, the same has a few limitations which give the way for future research. First, the study has used self-report measures for studying the constructs where responses may be affected by social desirability. Second, the influence of common method variance may not be ruled out. Third, the design of the study is cross-sectional, thus no causal inferences may be drawn. Fourth, LMX was measured from the participant's point of view, the same could have been taken from the leader's point of view. Future research may be designed to overcome these limitations by undertaking longitudinal research, field experiments, and qualitative and mixed method design for better understanding.

Summary & Conclusions

Happiness is a prime concern in organizational studies, yet there is not enough effort to understand the underlying mechanism of the happiness-LMX relationship. In this study, we examined the role of two important factors—perceived organizational support (POS) and resilience—in mediating the relationship between LMX and happiness. We found that both POS and resilience partially mediated the relationship between LMX and happiness, such that higher-quality LMX relationships were associated with greater perceptions of POS, which in turn were associated with greater happiness. Similarly, higher-quality LMX relationships were associated with greater resilience, which in turn was associated with greater happiness. These findings suggest that LMX quality is positively related to employee happiness both directly as well as indirectly through POS and resilience.

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