Indirect Effects of Relationship Quality on Organizational Commitment among Academics in Sports Sciences: The Mediating Roles of Psychological Empowerment and Organizational Cynicism

Spor Bilimleri Akademisyenleri Arasında İlişki Kalitesinin Örgütsel Bağlılık Üzerindeki Dolaylı Etkileri: Psikolojik Güçlendirme ve Örgütsel Sinizmin Aracı Rolleri

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the mediating role of psychological empowerment and organizational cynicism in the relationship between leader-member exchange (LMX) and organizational commitment among academics in sports science faculties in Turkey. Conducted as a cross-sectional survey with 405 participants (72.8% male, mean age=41.62) from various universities in Turkey, this research employed the PROCESS macro in SPSS to conduct a multiple mediation analysis. The findings revealed positive associations among the variables, particularly highlighting the direct impact of academics' LMX on organizational commitment. Additionally, the study identified a relative influence of organizational cynicism and empowerment on organizational commitment. Thus, it was concluded that relationship quality indirectly affects organizational commitment through these mediating factors. By examining the mediation processes between LMX and organizational commitment, this study contributes significantly to the existing literature. Moreover, the necessity for academic institutions to develop policies and programs designed to strengthen interactions between leaders and academics is emphasized. Furthermore, focusing on strategies to enhance trust and collaboration among employees and implementing measures to reduce organizational cynicism are essential. These measures include establishing transparent communication channels, promoting supportive leadership practices, and organizing activities to enhance employee participation. By adopting such measures, academic institutions can enhance employee commitment and foster a more productive work environment.

Keywords: Leader-member exchange (LMX), organizational commitment, psychological empowerment, organizational cynicism, academic institutions

ÖZ

Bu çalışma, Türkiye'deki spor bilimleri fakültelerindeki akademisyenler arasında lider-üye değişimi (LMX) ve örgütsel bağlılık arasındaki ilişkide psikolojik güçlendirme ve örgütsel sinizmin aracılık rolünü incelemektedir. Türkiye'deki çeşitli üniversitelerden 405 katılımcı (%72,8 erkek, ortalama yaş=41,62) ile kesitsel bir anket olarak yürütülen bu araştırma, çoklu aracılık analizi yapmak için SPSS'te PROCESS makrosunu kullanmıştır. Bulgular, değişkenler arasında pozitif ilişkiler olduğunu ortaya koymuş, özellikle akademisyenlerin LMX'in örgütsel bağlılık üzerindeki doğrudan etkisini vurgulamıştır. Ayrıca, çalışma örgütsel sinizm ve güçlendirmenin örgütsel bağlılık üzerinde göreceli bir etkisi olduğunu tespit etmiştir. Böylece, ilişki kalitesinin bu aracı faktörler vasıtasıyla örgütsel bağlılığı dolaylı olarak etkilediği sonucuna varılmıştır. Bu çalışma, LMX ve örgütsel bağlılık arasındaki aracılık süreçlerini inceleyerek mevcut literatüre önemli bir katkı sağlamaktadır. Ayrıca, akademik kurumların liderler ve akademisyenler arasındaki etkileşimi güçlendirmek için tasarlanmış politika ve programlar geliştirmelerinin gerekliliği vurgulanmaktadır. Ayrıca, çalışanlar arasında güven ve işbirliğini artıracak stratejilere odaklanılması ve örgütsel sinizmi azaltacak tedbirlerin uygulanması elzemdir. Bu tedbirler arasında şeffaf iletişim kanallarının kurulması, destekleyici liderlik uygulamalarının teşvik edilmesi ve çalışanların katılımını artıracak faaliyetlerin düzenlenmesi yer almaktadır. Akademik kurumlar bu tür önlemleri benimseyerek çalışanların bağlılığını artırabilir ve daha üretken bir çalışma ortamını teşvik edebilir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Lider-üye ilişkisi (LMX), örgütsel bağlılık, psikolojik güçlendirme, örgütsel sinizm, akademik kurumlar

Educational Relevance and Implications

This study emphasizes the importance of academicians' commitment to their institutions and the quality of intra-organizational relationships in enhancing educational quality. Academicians serve as the cornerstone of institutions, such as universities, which specialize in educating future professionals. Therefore, the evaluation and enhancement of university environments are crucial in nurturing competent candidates capable of delivering high-quality education. The research demonstrates how the quality of relationships among academicians influences their commitment to the institution. The study demonstrates that academicians who actively promote their institutions and foster strong relationships play a pivotal role in fostering academic development. Furthermore, the study elucidates how organizational cynicism indirectly impacts organizational commitment. This phenomenon, though unexpected in work environments, is prevalent in education-focused institutions like universities, where personal sacrifices are often demanded. Despite educators' dedicated efforts to provide quality education, the lack of egalitarian leadership in the empowerment process or insincere relationships can contribute to intra-organizational cynicism. However, heightened commitment among academicians exhibiting organizational cynicism can facilitate their attainment of desired rewards, such as accolades and promotions, within a limited timeframe. Hence, enhancing the quality of Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) is imperative. Within the organizational context, management's change strategy plays a crucial role in effecting successful transformations. A robust LMX enhances the efficiency of educational institutions, like universities, and serves as a cornerstone for institutional growth and success. The establishment of positive and goal-oriented relationships between managers and subordinates serves to motivate employees to engage with the institution and enhance their performance in educational settings. This strengthens the presence of universities, ensures the cultivation of a better-educated workforce, and nurtures subject matter experts for the future.

Introduction

In today's context, personnel working in many public institutions increasingly hold appreciable authority. However, factors such as remote work, knowledge-based tasks, and the evolving nature of work can influence academics' commitment to their institutions (Audenaert et al., 2017; De Vries et al., 2019; Walsh, 2016). This study aims to enhance our understanding of organizational commitment among academics working in Sports Science faculties. In the public sector, esteemed academics often have the freedom to pursue their own priorities and beliefs.

The presence of effective and attentive personnel in a university plays a critical role in ensuring the delivery of quality education. However, numerous factors affect organizational commitment. Employees' perceptions of their organization's support, psychological empowerment, and their leaders' commitment to common goals can contribute to increased organizational commitment (Allen, 2003). Therefore, the positive impact of leader-member exchange (LMX) on psychological empowerment and organizational commitment levels enables universities to offer higher-quality education.

The influence of leaders on their subordinates and the development of positive relationships between leaders and subordinates are essential for creating a conducive work environment. Leader-member exchange (LMX) reflects the degree of mutual respect and trust-based interaction between leaders and subordinates (Hsiung & Tsai, 2009). Employees in strong relationships exhibit higher levels of organizational commitment, decision-making flexibility, and contribution opportunities (Kraimer et al., 2001; Mittal & Dhar, 2015; Morrow et al., 2005; Wayne et al., 2002). Therefore, investigating the relationship between LMX and organizational commitment among academics is crucial.

Empowerment, defined as "providing power and authority," is associated with the delegation of power from upper management to lower management within an organization (Tulloch, 1993). Increased empowerment and authorization lead individuals to be more committed to their jobs, thereby fostering higher organizational commitment (Liden et al., 2000). Employees who perceive themselves as psychologically empowered demonstrate greater commitment to the organization. Therefore, as previously indicated, psychological empowerment can enhance the quality of education provided by university employees (Moye et al., 2005; Safari et al., 2011).

Organizational cynicism is defined as a lack of belief in the organization one works for and includes critical behaviors consistent with this belief (Dean et al., 1998). Individuals with high levels of organizational cynicism perceive the company as lacking integrity, honesty, and justice (Davis & Gardner, 2004). Therefore, organizational cynicism has a negative relationship

with organizational commitment (Barton & Ambrosini, 2012; Sanoubar & Bajestani, 2015; Yasin & Khalid, 2015). In line with this, the aim of this study is to identify factors influencing organizational commitment among academics working in Sports Science faculties and examine the relationships between these factors.

Methods

Design

This study adopts a correlational research design to investigate the relationships between independent, mediator, and dependent variables and their respective patterns. The research initially formulates theoretical explanations for value fit effects, employs survey methodology for data collection, and subsequently conducts intricate statistical analyses to generate empirical findings and test mediation hypotheses (Limpanitgul, 2009).

The survey serves as the primary data collection tool due to its suitability for examining and explaining relationships between structures, particularly causal links, within a deductive approach (Saunders et al., 2007). The survey was selected for its ability to efficiently gather data on multiple variables and is a preferred method for large-scale sampling. Two survey models were utilized: descriptive and relational. The descriptive model defined the research data and calculated descriptive statistics, including the number of samples, arithmetic mean, and standard deviation (Christensen et al., 2015). Correlational survey models were employed to determine the presence and extent of fluctuations between two or more variables (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006; Karasar, 2015). The investigation utilized "Model 6" as the mediation model, examining the sequential mediating influence of psychological empowerment (PE) and organizational cynicism (OCy.) in the association between relationship quality (LMX) and organizational commitment (OC) (see Figure 1).
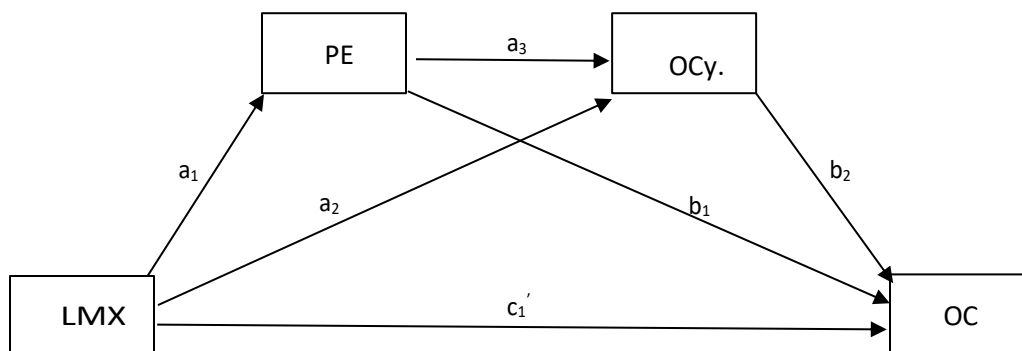
Figure 1.
Serial multiple mediation.

Participant

The study's sample comprised 410 academics voluntarily participating from the faculties of sports sciences in Turkey, working in fields including coaching, physical education and sports teaching, sports management, and recreation. Excluding five participants due to missing data, the final sample consisted of 405 academics aged 22-68 (M=41.62; SD=10.91), including 295 (72.8%) males and 110 (27.2%) females.

Procedures

Ethical standards were strictly adhered to throughout the research process, with approval granted by the Ethics Committee. Ethics committee approval was received for this study from the ethics committee of Kütahya Dumlupınar University (Date: February 17, 2022, Decision Number: 2022/02, Protocol No: E-87125). Academics completed online questionnaires sent to them and filled them out at their respective institutions. Participants were assured of confidentiality and informed that no answers were deemed right or wrong. Participation was voluntary, and no incentives were provided. Upon reviewing and approving the informed consent form, participants were instructed to answer basic demographic

questions and complete the scales provided. Verbal consent was obtained from all the participants.

Measures

LMX-7 Scale

The LMX-7 Scale, developed by Graen and Uhl-Bien in 1995, measures the quality of leader-member exchanges. Validity and reliability were established by Caliskan in 2015. This one-dimensional scale employs a five-point Likert-type format with seven items, ranging from 1 to 5 points. Scores indicate the level of manager-staff relationships, ranging from Very Low (7-14 points) to Very High (30-35 points). A higher score signifies a stronger and higher-quality connection between managers and subordinates. Cronbach's Alpha for the original scale was .85. Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) demonstrated validity with CMIN=21.77, DF=9, $p<.001$, CMIN/DF=2.42, RMSEA=.05, CFI=.98, GFI=.98, and SRMR=.03. For this study, reliability was assessed with Cronbach's Alpha at .86.

Psychological Empowerment Scale

The validity and reliability study of Spreitzer's (1995) psychological empowerment scale was conducted by Surgevil et al. (2013). The scale comprises 12 statements and four sub-dimensions, graded on a 5-point Likert scale. While the sub-dimensions are self-evaluative, scores for each dimension can be obtained, and the total psychological empowerment score is obtained by aggregating all sub-dimension scores. High scores indicate a high perception of psychological empowerment. The original scale was deemed reliable based on results from the internal reliability analysis, as the factor dimensions in all constructs had internal reliability values above Cronbach $\alpha=0.70$. Results from the DFA showed scale validity with CMIN=64.37, DF=40, $p<.001$, CMIN/DF=1.60, RMSEA=.03, CFI=.99, GFI=.97, and SRMR .01. For this study's reliability, Cronbach's Alpha value was .91.

Organizational Cynicism Scale

The thirteen-item scale, developed by Brandes et al. (1999), was adapted to Turkish culture by Karacaoglu and Ince (2012). As part of this adaptation, the organizational cynicism scale's three-dimensional structure, consisting of cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions, was reexamined. The dimensions were confirmed by the data collected from the Turkish sample. The study conducted an evaluation of the entire five-point Likert-type rating scale. The scale has a maximum score of 65 and a minimum score of 13. Its Cronbach Alpha Internal Consistency Coefficient is .91. The scale's validity was confirmed by the DFA analysis, with CMIN=111.45, DF=58, p<0.001, CMIN/DF=1.92, RMSEA=.04, CFI=.98, GFI=.96, and SRMR .04. The scale's reliability was also established, with a Cronbach's Alpha value of .93.

Organizational Commitment Scale

The Organizational Commitment Scale is widely used to measure employees' organizational commitment in both educational and business settings. The Turkish version of this scale, originally developed by Meyer et al. (1993), was adapted by Daglı et al. (2018). The scale contains three sub-dimensions -- affective commitment, continuance commitment, and normative commitment -- and a total of 18 items. For the purposes of this study, we considered the scores obtained from the entire scale. The maximum score achievable from the five-point Likert scale is 90, while its minimum score is 18. The Cronbach Alpha Internal Consistency Coefficient for the scale was computed as 0.88. The scale's validity was assessed based on DFA results that indicated CMIN=294.11, DF=108, $p<.001$, CMIN/DF=2.72, RMSEA=.06, CFI=.93 GFI=.92, and SRMR .07. The study's reliability was also evaluated, and Cronbach's Alpha was found to be .86.

Statistical Analysis

The data for this investigation was processed utilizing SPSS 25.0 (IBM SPSS Corp., Armonk, NY, USA) for data processing, statistical analysis and correlation testing, HAYES Process v4.1 for determining the roles of serial mediating variables, and AMOS 24.0 for confirmatory factor analysis.

The survey responses of 405 participants were evaluated to examine their distribution to the scales. Initially, frequencies

were tabulated, followed by an examination of skewness and kurtosis normality test and validity and reliability analyses of the scales. The normality analysis results for the scales used in this study (measured by skewness and kurtosis) indicate that the LMX-7 scale had a skewness value of -.389 and a kurtosis value of -.263, while the PE scale had a skewness value of -.575 and a kurtosis value of .354. As for the OCy scale, it had a skewness value of -.554 and a kurtosis value of .063, while the OC scale showed a skewness value of -.054 and a kurtosis value of 1.460. Tabachnick and Fidell (2013) indicated that skewness and kurtosis values between ±1.5 serve as indications of normality. The study employed parametric tests since the data exhibited normality with regard to distribution. Descriptive statistics, including means standard deviations, and correlations were analyzed to explore the data and relationships between variables. The study did not account for demographic factors such as gender, age, and department when testing the model. Regression tests demonstrated that these factors had little to no significant impact on outcome variables. Data analysis utilized HAYES bootstrap analysis to determine the mediating role.

Results

Recent studies have indicated that Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) is a suitable tool for testing mediation effects (Cheung & Lau, 2007). This study examined the serial mediating roles of psychological empowerment and organizational cynicism in the model using the bootstrapping method. The Bootstrap method efficiently decreases first-type errors in the use process and is particularly relevant for testing the mediation effects of experimental research with small sample sizes. This study employed the Bootstrap method to randomly select 5000 samples with 95% confidence intervals. The maximum likelihood method, a widely favored technique, was utilized to calculate the estimators.

Common method bias testing

The study collected data using four scales from the same individuals during the same period. Common method bias (CMB) concerns have been raised because correlations between two constructs were obtained from the same source. The scales differ in terms of their objectives and questions. Moreover, the scale's elements contain negative statements coded in reverse, which may also trigger CMB. CMB has been identified as a primary reason for inaccuracies in measurement (Podsakoff et al., 2012). Consequently, Harman's single-factor analysis (Harman, 1976) was employed to investigate CMB, which can arise from including multiple scales in the same survey and analyzing them simultaneously (Podsakoff et al., 2003). If the first factor of the scale varies by less than 50%, it is interpreted as the absence of CMB (Fuller et al., 2016; Podsakoff et al., 2003). In the analysis of the study, the variance value for one factor (27.376%) on the scale did not exhibit a significant change due to a CMB.

Descriptive statistics and bivariate correlations for the main variables

The study's variables were analyzed utilizing descriptive statistics and Pearson bivariate correlation (See Table 1). The average score for LMX was 23.67 (*Sd.*=6.03), 49.57 (*Sd.*=7.53) for PE, 44.80 (*Sd.*=10.39) for OCy., and 56.57 (*Sd.*=8.45) for OC. Pearson correlation coefficient enables pre-assessment of interdependent relationships between variables. As demonstrated in Table 1, there are significant and meaningful relationships between the variables. A highly significant positive correlation ($r_{(405)}$=.558, $p<$ .01) was discovered between leader-member exchange (LMX) and organizational commitment (OC) in this study. Additionally, a moderately significant positive relationship ($r_{(405)}$=.326, $p<$ .01) was found between LMX and OC. It was determined that there was a low level of positive correlation ($r_{(405)}$=.269, $p<$ .01) between PE and OCy. Also, a low level of positive correlation ($r_{(405)}$=.166, $p<$ .01) between PE and OC was observed. There was a moderately significant positive correlation ($r_{(405)}$=.362, $p<$ .01) found between OCy and OC.

Table 1.
*Descriptives statistics and bivariate correlations of variables*

	M	*Sd.*	1	2	3	4
1. LMX	23.67	6.03	1			
2. PE	49.57	7.53	.285[**]	1		
3. OCy.	44.80	10.39	.558[**]	.269[**]	1	
4. OC	56.57	8.45	.326[**]	.166[**]	.362[**]	1

Note: [*]p<.05, [**]p<.01, M=Mean, Sd.= Standard deviation, LMX=Leader-Member Exchange, PE=Phychological Empowerment, OCy.= Organizational Cynicism, OC=Organizational Commitment.

Serial mediation effect testing

First, to reduce multiple linkages, all research variables underwent standardization before further analysis (Dearing & Hamilton, 2006). Then, the Hayes PROCESS macro (Hayes, 2013) was used to apply bootstrapping and obtain the bias-corrected confidence interval (CI). This was done to determine the serial mediating roles of psychological empowerment and organizational cynicism in the relationship between LMX and organizational commitment in academic settings. Model 6 of the PROCESS software, utilizing 5,000 resamples, was employed to conduct serial mediation analysis (refer to Figure 1). In addition, a detailed integrated model was developed to elucidate and anticipate the nature of academicians' relationships within the institution and their dedication to their workplace. This research extends the findings of previous studies employing the serial-mediated model. Figure 2 demonstrates the results of the serial mediating pathway model analysis, while Tables 2 and 3 present the mediation analysis findings.

As shown in Table 3 and Figure 2, researchers found that the indirect effect was 0.218, accounting for 47.72% (0.16) of the total effect. Additionally, a direct effect of 0.23 was observed in the relationship between relationship quality (LMX) and organizational commitment (OC). The 95% confidence interval ranged from 0.33 to 0.59. Specifically, the total indirect effect includes three different pathways. While LMX did not impact academics' dedication to the organization via psychological empowerment, it did have an effect through organizational cynicism and the sequential mediating roles of both psychological empowerment and organizational cynicism, as demonstrated by indirect consequences. Furthermore, indirect effects 2 and 3 accounted for 40.73% and 2.62% of the total effects, respectively. The 95% confidence intervals did not overlap with zero, which indicates that indirect effects 2 and 3 were significantly positive.

$^{*}p < .05; ^{**}p < .01; ^{***}p < .001$
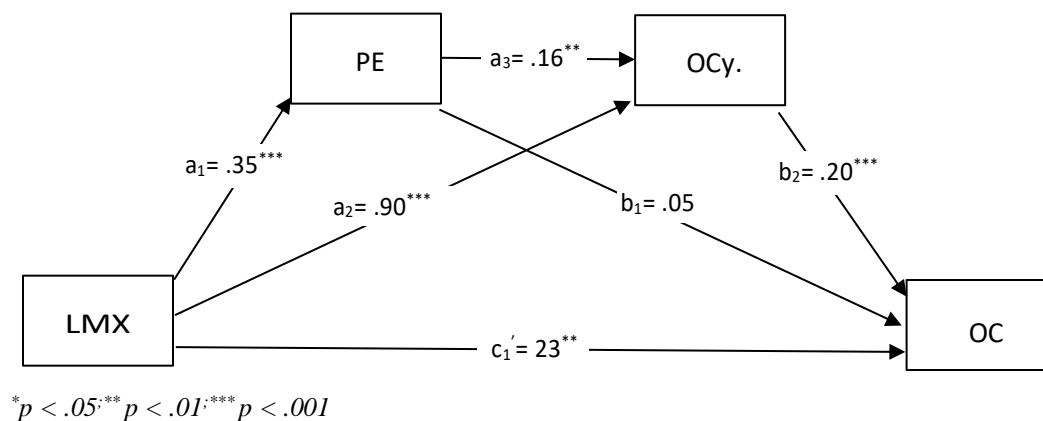
Figure 2.
Serial multiple mediation pathway model predicting organizational commitment (OC)

Table 2.
The serial mediating role of PE and OCy. in relation between LMX and OC.

	PE (Mediator)				OCy. (Mediator)				OC (Dependent)			
	b	se	β	%95 CI	b	se	β	%95 CI	b	se	β	%95 CI
LMX	.35***	.06	.28***	[.239, .473]	.90***	.07	.57***	[.759, 1.049]	.23***	.07	.39**	[.084, .393]
PE					.16**	.05	.26**	[.049, .281]	.05	.04	.16	[-.052, .162]
OCy.									.01**	.00		[.003, .026]
	$R^2 = .081$, $F_{(0.772)}=35.592$, p=.000				$R^2 = .325$, $F_{(1.958)}=96.744$, p=.000				$R^2 = .155$, $F_{(2.230)}=24.589$, p=.000			

Notes: $^{*}p < .05; ^{**}p < .01; ^{***}p < .001$, LMX=Leader-Member Exchange, PE=Psychological Empowerment, OCy.= Organizational Cynicism, OC=Organizational Commitment, b = Unstandardised regression coefficients, , β = Standardised regression coefficients, se= Standard error, $^{***}p<,001$, %95 CI= %95 Confidence interval, R^2 = coefficients of determination, n=344 k=5000 Bootstrap sample.

Table 3.
Bootsrap analysis of multiple mediation effects.

	Effect size	SE	Percentage of total effects	95% CI Lower limit	Upper limit
Total effects	0.457	0.066	100%	0.327	0.587
İndirect effects	0.238	0.079	52.08%	0.084	0.393
Total mediation effects	0.218	0.057	47.72%	0.106	0.334
LMX → PE → OC	0.020	0.021	4.37%	-0.024	0.059
LMX → OCy. → OC	0.187	0.082	40.73%	0.082	0.302
LMX → PE → OCy. → OC	0.012	0.006	2.62%	0.003	0.028

In Table 2, the evaluation was conducted on psychological empowerment and organizational cynicism, which acted as mediators between relationship quality (LMX) and organizational commitment. The findings indicated a significant indirect effect of relationship quality (LMX) on organizational commitment through psychological empowerment and organizational cynicism (b=.012, t=2.000, $p<.005$). Additionally, the study found that LMX has a direct and significant effect on organizational commitment when intermediaries are present (b=.238, t=3.030, $p<.005$). Psychological empowerment and organizational cynicism partially mediate the relationship between relationship quality (LMX) and organizational commitment.

When examining the non-standardized regression weights of the model, it was found that LMX explained psychological empowerment (b = 0.35), while organizational cynicism (b = 0.90) and organizational commitment (b = 0.23) (Figure 2 and Table 2). Based on the standardized regression weights, LMX had a greater impact on organizational cynicism (β = .57) compared to psychological empowerment (β = .28) and organizational commitment (β = .39). Psychological empowerment had stronger explanatory power for organizational cynicism (β = .26) than for organizational commitment (β = .16) (Table 2). Additionally, as indicated in Table 2, LMX significantly influenced psychological empowerment (b=.35, t=5.96, $p=.000$), organizational cynicism (b=.90, t=12.26, $p=000$), and organizational commitment (b=.23, t=3.03, P=.003). While the impact of psychological empowerment on organizational cynicism (b=.16, t=.05, $p=.005$) was significant, it did not have a significant effect on organizational commitment (b=.05, t=1.01, $p>.05$).

Discussion

This research examines the relationship between leader-member exchange (LMX) and organizational commitment among academics working in sports science faculties in Turkey. It also investigates the mediating role of psychological empowerment and organizational cynicism and how these relationships can be explained within an integrated model. While previous studies have largely confirmed the relationship between leader-member exchange and organizational commitment, this study contributes to the literature by providing a comprehensive treatment of the factors influencing organizational commitment.

For academic institutions, fostering quality relationships and fostering faculty commitment to their institutions are important in line with the general and specific objectives of higher education. High-quality communication, trust-based relationships, and institutional support contribute positively to the development of psychological empowerment. Employees who experience psychological empowerment generally exhibit higher job satisfaction and levels of organizational commitment, leading to better performance (Raub & Robert, 2013).

The analysis of the study indicates that when academics feel empowered and take on more active roles within their institutions, they are more likely to remain committed to their job tasks. This finding is consistent with numerous studies in the literature (Abdullah et al., 2015; Bhatnagar, 2005; Durrani et al., 2017; Leiter & Laschinger, 2006; Wall et al., 2005). It is observed that high relationship quality and psychological empowerment facilitate employee involvement in their work and enhance their self-perception of competence, thereby contributing to the meaningfulness of their work experiences. Nevertheless, it is important to note that psychological empowerment and LMX are fundamentally distinct variables (Harris et al., 2009). While psychological empowerment is associated with individual-level personal needs and internal motivations, LMX is more dependent on external factors and is defined as the exchange and support provided by supervisors (Liden et al., 2006). Empirical evidence supports the assertion that psychological empowerment has a positive impact on employees' organizational commitment (Aghaei & Savari, 2014; Avolio et al., 2004). Moreover, empirical evidence indicates that an individual's psychological state significantly affects outcomes such as change commitment, even in contexts where LMX is less important (Rizvi et al., 2020). In this context, the findings of the study underscore the significance of academic institutions

fostering psychological empowerment and ensuring that academics remain more dedicated to their professional responsibilities. Furthermore, external factors such as the quality of the relationship between the employee and their supervisor are seen to be effective in increasing employees' organizational commitment. Consequently, it is of paramount importance for leaders and managers to devise and implement effective strategies to empower their employees.

This study introduces a novel perspective to the existing literature by examining the mediating role of psychological empowerment and organizational cynicism in the relationship between leader-member exchange (LMX) and organizational commitment. The results indicate that psychological empowerment and organizational cynicism partially mediate the relationship between leader-member exchange (LMX) and organizational commitment. According to the findings, relationship quality not only directly promotes employee commitment but also indirectly influences commitment by increasing psychological empowerment and reducing cynical tendencies. This demonstrates the multifaceted impact of relationship quality on shaping organizational commitment. Firstly, the study by Jaiswal and Dhar (2016) suggests that low-quality leader-subordinate exchanges can negatively affect employee commitment levels. This finding underscores the complexity of the relationship between leader-member exchange (LMX) and organizational commitment, demonstrating the impact of LMX on commitment. Conversely, the study by Garg and Dhar (2016) indicates that employees' level of psychological empowerment strengthens the relationship between LMX and emotional commitment. This finding underscores the significant role of psychological empowerment in increasing employees' organizational commitment. These findings are consistent with those of Brunetto et al. (2010) and Liao et al. (2009), which indicate that relationship quality and psychological empowerment are important factors in promoting organizational commitment. Additionally, Durrani et al. (2017) indicate the importance of managers implementing practices aimed at empowering employees by delegating authority and providing greater autonomy, alongside efforts to minimize negative attitudes and behaviors. In conclusion, these studies provide an important perspective for understanding the complex relationship between relationship quality, psychological empowerment, and organizational commitment. In this framework, the development and implementation of strategies to empower employees are identified as a crucial step in increasing organizational commitment.

The findings of the study underscore the necessity of developing strategies that prioritize psychological empowerment and the significance of promoting ethical practices. Strong relationships established by employees with their leaders enhance organizational commitment while reducing organizational cynicism. In this context, it is crucial for managers to empower their employees and provide them with greater authority and autonomy to foster positive attitudes. However, adverse circumstances such as the transgression of ethical principles and organizational cynicism can diminish commitment and negatively impact workforce productivity. Consequently, the promotion of ethical practices and the conferral of greater authority and autonomy upon employees can be an efficacious strategy for augmenting commitment and mitigating organizational cynicism. Particularly among academics, the enhancement of trust and satisfaction within the institution can positively influence organizational effectiveness. The study results indicate that managers should prioritize the inculcation of ethical principles and the provision of authority and autonomy to employees. While these practices can facilitate the enhancement of commitment and workforce productivity, they may not realize their full potential in the absence of a reduction in organizational cynicism. Consequently, it is also important to address organizational cynicism, as these negative attitudes can have a detrimental impact on organizational effectiveness and employee commitment.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The intricate interplay between relationship quality, psychological empowerment, and organizational cynicism, as revealed by our study, underscores the necessity for leaders and managers within academic institutions to actively support their employees through effective psychological empowerment strategies. The pivotal role of employee empowerment in bolstering commitment to institutional goals underscores the importance of academic institutions investing in methodologies aimed at enhancing psychological empowerment. This investment may take the form of comprehensive leadership training initiatives and the implementation of programs designed to foster active employee participation.

Moreover, alongside efforts to bolster psychological empowerment, there is an equal need to cultivate an organizational culture grounded in ethical principles and practices while concurrently mitigating organizational cynicism. Research has consistently shown that cultivating robust relationships between employees and their leaders not only enhances organizational commitment but also serves to diminish organizational cynicism. In light of this, academic institutions must

take proactive measures to set ethical standards through the establishment of clear ethical codes and the enforcement of equitable workplace practices. Furthermore, the establishment of transparent communication channels and the promotion of supportive leadership practices are essential steps in reducing organizational cynicism within academic settings. By fostering an environment characterized by open communication and supportive leadership, institutions can effectively counteract the development of cynicism among employees.

In conclusion, the findings of our study underscore the critical importance of enhancing leadership strategies and psychological empowerment practices within academic institutions to cultivate a workforce characterized by heightened commitment and organizational effectiveness. It is of paramount importance to emphasise ethical practices and to afford employees greater authority and autonomy if this objective is to be achieved. The implementation of these recommendations has the potential to significantly enhance the working environments within academic institutions, thereby fostering a more dedicated and engaged workforce.

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