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## CRUISERS ON THE DANUBE — THE IMPACT OF LMX THEORY ON JOB SATISFACTION AND EMPLOYEES' COMMITMENT TO ORGANIZATION

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**Abstract:** In the early 21<sup>st</sup> century, tourist cruises along the Danube River (Corridor 7) experience significant expansion. The main task of cruise companies is the satisfaction of guests, which primarily depends on employee satisfaction affected by numerous organizational factors, including the relationship between the employee and the manager as one of the most important. The aim is to examine how the exchange between leaders and followers affects job satisfaction and employee commitment to the organization, is there a connection between these variables and whether there are differences in the perception by managers and crew members. The study included 41 managers and 25 crew members of the river cruisers. Statistical techniques used in the paper are the descriptive statistics, correlation analysis and MANOVA. The results have shown a positive correlation between the LMX theory (the leader–member exchange theory), job satisfaction and commitment to the organization. Also, the results of the research have shown that there is no statistically significant difference between the perception of LMX exchange in the aspects of leaders and associates, but there is a difference in the perception of job satisfaction and commitment to the organization.

**Key words:** the leader–member exchange (LMX) theory, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, tourist cruises, Corridor 7

### Introduction

The Corridor 7 or the Danube River Corridor, along with the Rhine and the Main, is one of the most important internal waterway in Europe. The total length of the Danube navigable network is about 5,000 km and consists of 2,414 km of the Danube, coastal and other tributaries and navigable tributaries and canals.

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Since 2002, international tourist cruises along the Corridor 7 through Central and South Eastern Europe have expanded rapidly (Dragin, 2010), and with the increasing demand for this type of travel the number of companies and employees has increased too. According to Cruise Lines International Associations (CLIA) (2015), the international tourist cruises generated directly and indirectly over 348,930 jobs. The CLIA data from 2014 indicated that in the cruise industry has been employed 169,831 people. The main task of cruise companies is guest satisfaction, which depends primarily on the employee satisfaction affected by numerous organizational factors, including the relationship between the employee and the manager as one of the most important.

The subjects of intensive research of scientists are the theories of management in the function of predictors of job satisfaction of employees as well as the effects on organizational behaviour. In the theory of the leader-member exchange (LMX theory), the leadership is defined as a process in the centre of which is the interaction between leaders and followers. The relationship between leaders and followers has been studied several decades backwards. In early studies of the theory of exchange, which was then called the theory of vertical dyadic linkage - VDL, the researchers focused on vertical link instituted by the leader with each of his followers (Dansereau, Graen, & Haga, 1975). This approach to leadership based on the relationship between leaders and followers comes from the theory of social exchange (Blau, 1964; Foa & Foa, 1974; Homans, 1950) and assumes that high-quality relationships are characterized by trust, respect, loyalty, intimacy, support and honesty (Graen & Scandura, 1987). In later studies, the focus of the LMX theory moved ahead. In a series of studies that have followed it was investigated how this theory is related to the effectiveness in the organizations. In these studies, special attention has been paid to what is the link between the qualitative exchange in relation to the leader-member and the positive results for leaders, followers, groups and organizations in general (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995; Gerstner & Day, 1997). Researchers have found that high-quality leader-member exchange results in a lower departure of employees, a higher grade of performance, preferable tasks, better attitude towards work, greater attention and support of leaders, prominent participation and faster career advancement (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995; Harrison, Newman, & Roth, 2006). This paper will explore the exchange between leader and member relating to job satisfaction and commitment to the organization.

### **Tourist Cruises along the Corridor 7**

According to Horwath Consulting Zagreb and Faculty of Economy Belgrade HCEF (2005) estimations, in Europe, including the canal network there are over 15,000 kilometres of internal waterways. The most popular rivers are the Danube, the Rhine, the Neva, the Volga, the Elbe, the Seine, the Rhone and the Po. In addition to the Danube and the Rhine, important waterways in terms of tourist cruises make the Moselle and the Main, the Elbe and the Rhone, as well as the Seine and the Saone. In 2009, out of 209 river cruise ships operating in Europe, about 96% of the ships sail in these rivers. The focus of this research is the Pan-European Corridor 7 — international waterway of the Danube between Regensburg – the Black Sea, more precisely, 93.7% of the Corridor, which includes 2,227 kilometres of the Danube waterway (from the city of Passau in Germany to the Danube delta in the Black Sea). This corridor, along with the Rhine and the Main, is also one of the most important internal waterway of Europe, concretely, the most attractive tourism resource when it comes to cruising.

The Danube is an international river, the second largest in Europe and the largest river in the Balkans, 2,888 km long, which is formed by merging the Breg and the Brigach rivers originating in the south-eastern slopes of the Black Forest in Germany, and by a large delta it flows into the Black Sea. The Danube flows through ten countries — Germany, Austria, Slovakia, Hungary, Croatia, Serbia, Bulgaria, Romania, Moldova and Ukraine. It is navigable at a length of 2,580 km, from Ulm for smaller boats, and from Regensburg for vessels. The total length of the Danube navigable network is about 5,000 km and consists of 2,414 km of the Danube, coastal and other tributaries and navigable tributaries and canals. The most important tributaries of the Danube are the In River in Germany, the Ens in Austria, the Morava in the border area between Austria and Slovakia, the Drava in Croatia, the Tisa, the Sava, the Velika Morava in Serbia, the Iskar in Bulgaria, the Olta and the Prut in Romania. Important harbours on the Danube are: Ulm, Regensburg, Linz, Vienna, Bratislava, Budapest, Novi Sad, Belgrade, Smederevo, Russe, Braila, Galati and Izmail (Danube Commission, 2014).

River cruises are the most dynamic and rapidly growing segment of tourism industry (Gibson, 2006; 2008; Peisley, 2006; Dragin, Ivkov, & Dragin, 2006, Dragin, 2010). According to Dragin et al. (2006), in the context of global tourism development, the Danube (Pan-European Corridor 7) occupies a leading position in terms of supply and demand. The Danube cruises through Central and South Eastern Europe are in the process of expansion, and major tourist

generating areas are the United States and Germany. Since 2002, the tour operators who operate within the cruise industry on the Danube have rented dozens of vessels from shipping companies from Switzerland, Germany, Austria, Hungary, Bulgaria and Ukraine (Dragin, Ivkov, Maletin, 2004). Cruises sailing the Corridor 7 during the cruise season (from late March to early November) represent parts of differing travel arrangements of many tour operators. According to statistics of the Danube Commission (2014), in 2014 around 1,386,000 passengers cruised the Danube within the national waterways and 543,000 passengers on the international level. The same source stated that in 2007, a total of 105 cruise ships and 196,000 passengers were registered on the Danube.

### **LMX Theory and Job Satisfaction**

Observing the relationship between leaders and followers as a process of exchange, it is considered that all the vertical links are different (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995; Liden, Sparrowe, & Wayne, 1997), thus forming two basic types of connections (relationships). The first type are those links which were based on the agreed extended roles that involve certain responsibilities (additional roles) or internal group (in-group), and the second type those based on formal employment contracts (defined roles), called external groups (out-group). In the recent research the division is done on high-quality and low-quality exchanges (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995; Liden et al., 1997). Whether the relationship will be classified as a high quality one or not, it depends on the level of trust on both sides, the level of mutual respect and the common perception of mutual obligations (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). Quality exchange requires that both sides accept the common interests and the decision to pursue common goals. High-quality relationships are described as collegial partnerships, where individuals are willing to go a step further than their formal role in the organization to achieve the desired objectives (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). In contrast, leaders and followers in non-qualitative relationships closely observe their organizational roles and do not deviate from the formal constraints. Personal interest dictates the behaviour of the individual in this type of relationship, and the follower is motivated to contribute not out of trust, respect and a sense of loyalty, but from formally acquired economic control and formal authority of the leader (Duchon, Green, & Taber 1986; Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). In relation to those who have bad relationships with their leaders, the followers in the quality exchanges tend to get wider social, political and economic support, which leads to the fact that these individuals go a step further, beyond their formal job roles, in order to justify and feedback such treatment (Liden & Graen, 1980; Wayne & Green, 1993). It was found that the quality of the leader-follower relationship is

the predictor of various positive results at work, including job satisfaction of the followers (Graen, Liden, & Hoel, 1982a; Green, Anderson, & Shivers, 1996), but also more stewardship at all levels (Gerstner & Day, 1997; Liden et al., 1997).

Job satisfaction is a subjective category, defined in many ways. This is a kind of evaluation of work by associates: an attitude that reflects how much the employee likes or dislikes his job (Spector, 1997), and as such represents one of the most important antecedents of the organizational behaviour of the followers (Judge, Thoresen, Bono, & Patton, 2001). In this research, it will be examined how the exchange between leaders and followers influence job satisfaction and employee commitment to the organization on cruise ships for river cruise tourism. From the above mentioned, the following assumptions can be carried out:

*H1: The exchange between leaders and associates is positively related to job satisfaction.*

*H2: There is no statistically significant difference between the perceptions of job satisfaction from the aspect of leader and from the aspect of associate.*

*H3: There is no statistically significant difference between the perception of LMX exchange from the aspect of leader and from the aspect of associate.*

### **LMX Theory and Commitment to Organization**

Individuals with higher level of commitment to the organization have a sense of belonging and identification with the organization where they are employed, which increases their desire to pursue the objectives and activities of the organization, which is reflected in their willingness to still be a part of the organization (Meyer & Allen, 1991; Mowday, Porter, & Steers, 1982). Besides, individuals who are committed to the organization are far less absent from work and quit less (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990; Meyer & Allen, 1997; Mowday et al., 1982; Riketta, 2002). The previous research, focusing exclusively on the traditional organizational modalities, have repeatedly confirmed the positive relationship between the quality of LMX relationship and commitment to the organization (Duchon et al., 1986; Green et al., 1996; Kinicki & Vecchio, 1994; Schriesheim, Neider, Scandura, & Tepper, 1992a; Settoon, Bennett, & Liden, 1996; Wayne, Shore, & Liden, 1997). Essentially, these researchers concluded that high-quality LMX exchange leads to mutual trust, affection and respect which promote commitment to the organization, as opposed to the LMX exchanges of lower quality. In contrast, it is believed that individuals who are

part of the LMX exchange of low-quality will have a much lower sense of commitment to the organization. Given that individuals who are part of poor LMX relationship feel less obligation to their superiors and have less need to fight back as desired organizational behaviour, they tend to see their job only as a set of contractual obligations (Heider, 1958), and therefore there is a tendency to show less commitment to the organization. Accordingly, it is expected that individuals who are part of good LMX exchange will show a higher level of commitment to the organization in relation to those individuals who are part of the exchange of lower quality. From the above mentioned, the following assumptions can be carried out:

*H4: The exchange between leader and associate is positively related to organizational commitment.*

*H5: There is no statistically significant difference between the perception of organizational commitment by leader and by associate.*

### **Research Methodology**

The research included employees at the river tourist boats intended for cruises. The survey was conducted by questionnaires which are distributed via the Internet. A total of 90 questionnaires were sent to Internet addresses of employees, while 66 were completed.

The LMX scale of seven items was used to measure the support of the leaders (Gerstner & Day, 1997; Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995; Graen, Novak, M. A., & Sommerkamp, 1982b; Seers & Graen, 1984). This scale is considered the best measuring instrument of exchange between leaders and followers (Gerstner & Day, 1997). The arithmetic mean for all items was taken as the score for the LMX scale. Cronbach's Alpha for all seven items is 0.833 and the results are considered reliable.

Job satisfaction of associates was conducted through Job Satisfaction Questionnaire — JQS, introduced by Spector (Spector, 1997), which has 36 items. This questionnaire has been accepted in the literature and has a Cronbach's Alpha index of 0.919 in the sample.

Table 1. Demographic variables of respondents

Variable	Category	Number of respondents	Percentage
Gender	Male	29	43.9
	Female	37	56.1
Age	21–30	18	27.3
	31–40	29	43.9
	41–50	12	18.2
	51–60	5	7.6
	> 61	2	3
Education	High school	19	28.8
	College	8	12.1
	Faculty	27	40.9
	Master	11	16.7
	Doctoral studies	1	1.5
Work experience	<5	15	22.7
	6–10	21	31.8
	11–15	11	16.7
	16–20	2	3
	> 21	17	25.8
Length of service in the company	<5	45	68.1
	6–10	17	25.8
	11–15	4	6.1
Position	Manager	41	62.1
	Crew member	25	37.9

Organizational Commitment Questionnaire — OCQ (Mowday, Steers, & Porter, 1979) of 15 items was used to measure commitment to the organization. Responses were summed to determine the arithmetic mean and then the reliability of the scale was tested. Cronbach Alpha is 0.914 and the results are considered reliable. Demographic variables of respondents have been shown in details in Table 1.

### Results

The Table 2 shows the correlation between the mentioned factors. The results showed a significant positive correlation between TLMX and all the factors that are related to job satisfaction, but also between TLMX and TOC, which confirmed the hypotheses H1 and H4.

Table 2. Pearson’s correlation coefficients

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1	1										
2	.765**	1									
3	.480**	.666**	1								
4	.644**	.713**	.586**	1							
5	.422**	.489**	.699**	.632**	1						
6	.585**	.649**	.599**	.648**	.633**	1					
7	.566**	.760**	.627**	.597**	.468**	.597**	1				
8	.520**	.641**	.489**	.481**	.445**	.439**	.600**	1			
9	.634**	.605**	.630**	.590**	.486**	.469**	.594**	.524**	1		
10	.472**	.503**	.309*	.475**	.279*	.340**	.377**	.406**	.352**	1	
11	.429**	.655**	.405**	.332**	.110	.468**	.671**	.472**	.408**	.262*	1

TLMX — arithmetic mean for all seven LMX items

TOC — arithmetic mean for all 15 items commitment to the organization

TJSSC — arithmetic mean for factor communication within job satisfaction

TJSSNOW — arithmetic mean for factor nature of job within job satisfaction

TJSSCW — arithmetic mean for factor associates within job satisfaction

TJSSOP — arithmetic mean for factor operational procedures within job satisfaction

TJSSCR — arithmetic mean for factor rewarding within job satisfaction

TJSSFB — arithmetic mean for factor benefits within job satisfaction

TJSSS — arithmetic mean for factor relationship with superior within job satisfaction

TJSSPR — arithmetic mean for factor promotion within job satisfaction

TJSSP — arithmetic mean for factor salary within job satisfaction

Before applying the Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA), the value of the Mahalanobis distance had been calculated to determine whether there were critical distances. The maximum value is 11.098, which is <16.27 for three dependent variables (TLMX, TJSS-the arithmetic mean of the variable job satisfaction, TOC). Also, there was a check of dispersion linearity using scatter plot matrices and one cannot notice the signs of obvious nonlinearity on them. Therefore, the assumption of linearity is considered reliable.

Table 3. Descriptive statistics

	Position	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
TOC	Manager	4.21	.629	41
	Crew member	3.63	.655	25
	Total	3.99	.696	66
TLMX	Manager	4.18	.627	41
	Crew member	3.71	.562	25
	Total	4.00	.640	66
TJSS	Manager	3.96	.484	41
	Crew member	3.51	.482	25
	Total	3.79	.528	66

The Table 3 shows mean values and standard deviations of variables that measured commitment to the organization (TOC), the relationship between leaders and followers (TLMX) and job satisfaction (TJSS).



In the Table 4, the values of Sig. in all three cases are >0.05, and the assumption of the equality of variance of their variables is not disturbed.

Table 4. Levene’s test for equality of variances

Variables	F	df1	df2	Sig.
TOC	.068	1	64	.794
TLMX	1.077	1	64	.303
TJSS	.263	1	64	.610

Based on the Table 5, it has been found whether there is statistically significant difference between the groups according to the value of the indicator Wilks' Lambda (0.812), and the significance level is Sig. = 0.005. Sig.<0.05, so there is significant difference between those two groups.

Table 5. Multivariate tests of significance<sup>b</sup>

Effect		Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Intercept	Pillai’s Trace	.984	1,311.454a	3.000	62.000	.000	.984
	Wilks’ Lambda	.016	1,311.454a	3.000	62.000	.000	.984
	Hotelling’s Trace	63.457	1,311.454a	3.000	62.000	.000	.984
	Roy’s Largest Root	63.457	1,311.454a	3.000	62.000	.000	.984
Position	Pillai’s Trace	.188	4.799a	3.000	62.000	.005	.188
	Wilks’ Lambda	.812	4.799a	3.000	62.000	.005	.188
	Hotelling’s Trace	.232	4.799a	3.000	62.000	.005	.188
	Roy’s Largest Root	.232	4.799a	3.000	62.000	.005	.188

a. Exact statistic

b. Design: Intercept + Position

Limit value of Sig. is 0.017 because the alpha value of 0.05 is divided by the number of dependent variables (3) in order to reduce the probability of making error of the first kind. It has been found that the values of the two dependent variables are less than the limit value Sig. = 0.017, TOC = 0.001 and TJSS = 0.000 (Table 6).

The size of the impact of position on job satisfaction and organizational commitment is defined by indicator *Partial Eta Squared* and represents the proportion of variance in the dependent variables (in the total job satisfaction and the total organizational commitment) explained by the independent variable - position in the company. *Partial Eta Squared* (TOC) = 0.170, *Partial Eta Squared* (TJSS) = 0.177, which means that the position explains 17 and 17.7% of the variance in the results of measurement of organizational commitment and job satisfaction (Table 6). In both cases, *Partial Eta Squared* >0.138, which is large influence.

Table 6. Test Between-subject Effects

Source	Dep.V.	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	TOC	5.339a	1	5.339	13.066	.001	.170
	TLMX	3.335b	1	3.335	9.162	.004	.125
	TJSS	3.217c	1	3.217	13.791	.000	.177
Intercept	TOC	954.500	1	954.500	2,335.788	.000	.973
	TLMX	967.281	1	967.281	2,657.232	.000	.976
	TJSS	865.737	1	865.737	3,711.003	.000	.983
Position	TOC	5.339	1	5.339	13.066	.001	.170
	TLMX	3.335	1	3.335	9.162	.004	.125
	TJSS	3.217	1	3.217	13.791	.000	.177
Error	TOC	26.153	64	.409			
	TLMX	23.297	64	.364			
	TJSS	14.931	64	.233			
Total	TOC	1,082.698	66				
	TLMX	1,083.776	66				
	TJSS	965.328	66				
Corrected Total	TOC	31.492	65				
	TLMX	26.632	65				
	TJSS	18.148	65				

a. R Squared = .170 (Adjusted R Squared = .157)

b. R Squared = .125 (Adjusted R Squared = .112)

c. R Squared = .177 (Adjusted R Squared = .164)

Based on multivariate analysis of variance MANOVA a statistically significant difference was found, based on the position  $F(3,62) = 4.78$ ,  $p = 0.005$  *Wilks' Lambda* = 0.98, *Partial Eta Squared* = 0.18 (Table 5). When the results of dependent variables are considered separately, it has been found that the two differences reached statistical significance (with Bonferroni corrected alpha level of 0.017), job satisfaction and organizational commitment. TOC,  $F(1,64) = 13.07$ ,  $p = 0.001$ , *Partial Eta Squared* = 0.17 and JSS,  $F(1,64) = 13.79$ ,  $p = 0.000$ , *Partial Eta Squared* = 0.18 (Table 6).

Table 7. Comparison of mean values by groups

Dependent V.	Position	Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
				Lower Bound	Upper Bound
TOC	Manager	4.213	.100	4.014	4.412
	Crew member	3.627	.128	3.371	3.882
TLMX	Manager	4.178	.094	3.989	4.366
	Crew member	3.714	.121	3.473	3.955
TJSS	Manager	3.961	.075	3.810	4.111
	Crew member	3.506	.097	3.313	3.699

Examining the average values of the results, it has been found that managers (leaders) record significantly higher levels of job satisfaction and commitment to

the organization: TJSS,  $M = 3.96$ ,  $SD = 0.48$ ; TOC,  $M = 4.21$ ,  $SD = 0.63$  than the crew members (associates): TJSS,  $M = 3.51$ ,  $SD = 0.48$ ; TOC,  $M = 3.63$ ,  $SD = 0.66$  (Table 3 and Table 7). The hypotheses H2 and H5 are thus rejected, while the hypothesis H3 is accepted.

### Discussion and Conclusions

Based on the research (Venkataramani, Green, & Schleicher, 2010), high-quality social exchanges within organizations can result in the form of a positive perception of the work environment by followers, resulting in often being studied, the positive correlation between the LMX followers and job satisfaction. Many previous studies have shown a positive relationship between the LMX followers and job satisfaction of the followers (Gerstner & Day, 1997; Golden & Veiga, 2005; Graen et al., 1982a; Schriesheim, Scandura, Eisenbach, & Neider 1992b). Furthermore, the recent research has shown that leaders also have positive results of high-quality LMX relationships (Wilson, Sin, & Conlon, 2010). The same authors considered that the contribution of leaders to LMX exchange can generate certain benefits that affect the formation of attitudes of the leader himself to work in general. For example, a leader who does not contribute to a positive LMX exchange recognizes that followers do not meet expectations, convey their dissatisfaction with LMX exchange to other followers, whereby the quality of LMX exchanges with other followers is endangered. Thus, job satisfaction of the leader may be affected. Based on previous results, which indicate that the quality of LMX link from the aspect of follower is in a positive correlation with job satisfaction of the followers, then that the positive LMX relationship from the aspect of the leaders is also positively associated with job satisfaction of the leader, we concluded that is confirmed in this study that LMX exchange is positively correlated with job satisfaction, whereby the hypothesis **H1** is confirmed.

In the study of Golden and Veiga (2008), results have shown that employees who are part of high-quality LMX exchange demonstrate a considerably higher degree of organizational commitment in relation to employees who are part of poor LMX exchange. Previous studies confirmed similar results in terms of the positive link between LMX and organizational commitment (Duchon et al., 1986; Green et al., 1996; Kinicki & Vecchio, 1994; Schriesheim, et al., 1992a; Settoon, et al., 1996; Wayne et al., 1997). Essentially, these researchers have concluded that the quality LMX connections result in mutual trust, respect and mutual approval, leading to increased organizational commitment, while these attributes cannot be associated with the poor quality of LMX exchanges. This

research has come to results that are consistent with the above-mentioned research, and the hypothesis H4 is considered confirmed.

We examined job satisfaction, perception of LMX relation and organizational commitment from the aspect of managers and crew members. It has been found that managers are considerably more satisfied with the job and to a greater extent devoted to the organization. Observed aspects are not conditioned by the total length of service, length of service in the company as well as the level of education of the respondents (based on the MANOVA analysis). Therefore, the hypotheses **H2** and **H5** are rejected. A statistically significant difference in the perception of LMX link from the aspect of leaders and followers is not detected, and thus the hypothesis **H3** is confirmed.

#### *Limitations of the research and guidelines for future research*

It is important to note that this research has been done on the principle of self-evaluation and therefore a certain dose of subjectivity of the respondents is possible. Therefore, there is the possibility of giving socially acceptable answers. In order to confirm the results, it is desirable to expand the sample to be able to more deeply examine the relative relationship of all variables or perform a longitudinal study by examining employees in other sectors.

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