

# **The Impact of Leader-Member Exchange, Supportive Supervisor Communication, Affective Commitment, and Role Ambiguity on Bank Employees' Turnover Intentions and Performance**

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## **Abstract**

*This study examines the mediating roles of supportive supervisor communication (SSC) and role ambiguity in the relationships between leader-member exchange (LMX) and employee job attitudes, turnover intentions, and performance. Specifically, role ambiguity and SSC were expected to mediate the positive LMX- employee affective commitment relationship, and the positive relationships between LMX and task performance, and two dimensions of contextual performance - interpersonal facilitation and job dedication. Next, role ambiguity and SSC were expected to mediate the positive relationship between LMX and affective commitment. Affective commitment was expected to mediate both the SSC-turnover intentions and role ambiguity-turnover intentions relationships. Job dedication was expected to mediate the relationship between SSC and task performance, and partially mediate the relationship between SSC and interpersonal facilitation. Results based on a sample of 237 supervisor-subordinate dyads from the banking industry provided substantial support for the theoretical model.*

**Keywords:** Supportive communication, leader-member exchange, affective commitment, role ambiguity, turnover, retention, contextual performance, mediation

In 2013, 20.3% of non-farm American workers voluntarily quit their jobs!

- U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

## **1. Introduction**

Understanding the key drivers of organizational performance has long been the focus of organizational research (e.g., Rumelt, Schendel, & Teece, 1994; Summer et al., 1990). The strategic human resource management perspective (e.g., Le, Oh, Shaffer & Schmidt, 2007), and the resource-based view of competitive advantage (e.g., Acedo, Barroso, & Galan, 2006; Barney, Wright, & Ketchen, 2001) emphasize the critical role of human capital in achieving organizational effectiveness and creating sustainable competitive advantage (e.g., Takeuchi, Lepak, Wang, & Takeuchi, 2007). Human capital is the combined value of the knowledge, skills, abilities (KSAs), experience, and motivation of an organization's workforce, and an organization's resources (i.e., human) can provide sustainable competitive advantage when they are valuable, scarce, difficult to duplicate, and no substitutes are readily available (Barney, et al.). Human capital is difficult to imitate, and thus well suited to creating sustainable competitive advantage (Coff, 1997).

To achieve sustainable competitive advantage through human capital, organizations need to not only attract, obtain, invest in, and develop human capital, but most importantly, must retain experienced managers and employees (Crook, Todd, Combs, Woehr, & Ketchen, 2011).

Voluntary employee turnover is of particular concern because it: is employee-initiated; often occurs unexpectedly; may be less controllable; may result in the loss of valued human capital (the human capital perspective; Shaw, Gupta, & Delery, 2005); can have a negative impact on workforce productivity (the operational disruption perspective; Summers, Humphrey, & Ferris, 2012), and can hurt financial performance due to increased replacement costs (the cost perspective; Cascio, 2006).

Voluntary turnover can be classified as functional (i.e., when poor or marginal performers quit), or dysfunctional (i.e., when star performers with high-demand, hard to replace, firm-specific skills, quit). Furthermore, employees may quit for a number of reasons, and some are more controllable (i.e., employee attitudes and drivers of turnover), than others (e.g., family issues).

Employee retention is crucial due to the strategic value of human capital and the cost of replacing valued employees (J. A. LePine, Podsakoff, & LePine, 2005). The total cost of turnover can be substantial. According to a study by the Society for Human Resource Management (D. G. Allen, 2008), the direct cost of replacing and hiring new staff may be as much as 60% of an employee's annual compensation. However, with indirect costs such as lost productivity due to disruptions in operations (Ton & Huckman, 2008), decreased customer service quality and subsequent loss of customers (Hancock, D. G. Allen, Bosco, McDaniel, & Pearce, 2013), increased accident rates (Shaw, et al., 2005), lost sales, knowledge, and firm-specific skills, total costs of replacement can range from 90% to 200% of an employee's annual compensation (D. G. Allen, 2008).

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), the annual quits rate in 2012, was 18.8% of total nonfarm employment (25.1 million quits), and 20.3% in 2013 (37.6 million quits). Thus, during those years about one-fifth of non-farm workers voluntarily quit their jobs. These turnover rates translate into billions of dollars in replacement costs. Furthermore, Shaw, Park, and Kim (2013), and Park and Shaw (2013) found that the deleterious effects of voluntary turnover on organizational performance was greater in human capital intensive industries (e.g., service industries such as banking and finance), than in industries that were less human capital intensive (e.g., manufacturing).

Previous research has examined numerous antecedents of voluntary turnover. Much of this research has been based on the assumption that specific, distal turnover drivers such as leader-member relations (e.g., DeConinck, 2011; Michael 2013; 2014), supportive supervisor communication (Michael, 2012, 2013, 2014; Michael & Harris, 2010), and role clarity/ambiguity (e.g., Panacciol & Vandenberghe, 2011), impact key employee attitudes, such as job satisfaction (e.g., Michael, 2012), affective commitment (Michael, 2013), and these antecedents activate the withdrawal process, which may include thoughts of quitting, consideration of job alternatives, intentions to quit, and job search activity, which may ultimately lead to actual turnover (D. G. Allen, 2008). Of these withdrawal cognitions, researchers have treated turnover intentions as the most proximal and accurate antecedent of actual turnover (e.g., Heavey, Holwerda, & Hausknecht, 2013; Hom, Mitchell, T. W. Lee, & Griffeth, 2012).

T.W. Lee, Mitchell, Holtom, McDaniel, and Hill (1999) specified two sequential time intervals involved in leaving: the time interval between experienced dissatisfaction (prompting first thoughts of quitting), to quit decisions, and the time interval from quit decisions and intentions, to actual leaving. Together, they represent the total time in leaving. Thus, employers can intervene to influence turnover decisions at several points in the turnover process, but these interventions must be timely enough to curb dysfunctional voluntary turnover. Specifically, interventions need to take place prior to the second interval, before turnover takes place. Prior to intervening, employers must assess key employee attitudes (e.g., job satisfaction and affective commitment), and if potential problems are uncovered, then the drivers of turnover need to be assessed to determine the cause(s) of these problems, and the corrective action required.

Researchers have also examined numerous antecedents of employee performance, such as job attitudes and leader-member relations (LMX), but traditionally, most of these variables have been studied independently of one another. Thus, only a few studies have incorporated these variables into more comprehensive models, and even fewer have done so in the banking industry. Thus, the present study seeks to improve upon this shortcoming.

The research reported here makes several important contributions to organizational research. First, it provides a better understanding of the antecedents of turnover and performance of bank employees. Second, it extends previous research by examining a more comprehensive model of performance and turnover intentions that incorporates supportive supervisor-communication with traditional antecedents. This study also incorporates two types of supervisor-rated employee performance: task and contextual.

No previously published study of bank employees has incorporated these same antecedents and outcome variables. Finally, it provides a better understanding of the multidimensional nature of supervisor support, and how it impacts employee performance and turnover intentions.

Managerial communication has been shown to have a positive relationship with employee job performance and organizational commitment (e.g., Andrews & Kacmar, 2001; Michael, 2013), increased trust (Zeffane, Tipu, & Ryan, 2011), decreased role ambiguity (Johlke, & Duhan, 2001), and decreased turnover intentions (M. Allen, 1996; Gregson, 1990). Unlike previous studies primarily focusing on task-related communication and employee outcomes (Andrews & Kacmar, 2001), the present study focuses on the supportive nature of interpersonal communication relationships between supervisors and subordinates.

Supportive communication is an outward expression of sensitivity to, and empathy for, other individuals. For example, SSC expresses concern for employee needs and feelings, praising them for their job performance, encouraging them in their work, and encouraging and providing guidance in their professional development. Thus, SSC may be an important dimension of supervisor support, and may impact employee perceptions regarding the general level of supervisor supportiveness.

## **2. Theoretical Model and Research Hypotheses**

### **2.1 LMX and SSC**

Supervisor-subordinate communication exchanges in high-quality LMX relationships are characterized by greater degrees of openness, trust, empathy, and supervisory attention, and employees in such relationships enjoy greater negotiating latitude and involvement in decision making (Mueller & J. Lee, 2002). High-quality LMXs can be considered established partnerships, and are characterized by behavioral and emotional exchanges of loyalty and support (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). Clearly, supportive communication represents a key means with which supervisors can express support for their employees, reciprocate high-quality LMX relationships, and encourage positive employee reciprocation, such as enhanced contextual and task performance. Furthermore, recent research has shown LMX to have a positive relationship with SSC (Michael, 2013, 2014). Thus, the following hypothesis will be tested:

*Hypothesis 1: LMX is positively related to SSC.*

### **2.2 SSC, Role Ambiguity and Turnover Intentions**

Role ambiguity occurs when individuals are uncertain about what is expected of them, and has been shown to be positively related to turnover intentions (e.g., Michael, 2013; Panacciol & Vandenberghe, 2011), and role ambiguity and turnover intentions have been shown to be inversely related to LMX, SSC, and affective commitment (e.g., Cole & Bruch, 2006; Michael, 2012).

Since SSC has been shown to have a positive relationship with affective commitment and an inverse relationship with role ambiguity and turnover intentions, no formal hypotheses will be proposed regarding these relationships. However, role ambiguity and SSC are expected to mediate the LMX-affective commitment relationship, and role ambiguity, SSC, and affective commitment are expected to mediate the LMX-turnover intentions relationship. Thus, the following hypotheses will be proposed regarding these mediating relationships.

Hypothesis 2: Role ambiguity and SSC will mediate the LMX-affective commitment relationship.

Hypothesis 3: Role ambiguity, SSC, and affective commitment will mediate the LMX-turnover intentions relationship.

### **2.3 LMX, SSC, and Employee Performance**

**Contextual Performance.** Contextual performance is similar to organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) and involves behaviors that contribute to the maintenance, enhancement (Organ, 1997), and support of the broader organizational, social, and psychological context in which task performance and the technical core must function (Borman & Motowidlo, 1993). Contextual performance is made up of two dimensions: job dedication and interpersonal facilitation. Interpersonal facilitation (Van Scotter, 2000; Van Scotter & Motowidlo, 1996) includes cooperative, considerate, and helpful behaviors that facilitate coworkers' performance (Van Scotter, Motowidlo, & Cross, 2000), whereas job dedication involves self-discipline, initiative, effort, and persistence, such as working harder than necessary and asking for more challenging work (Van Scotter et al., 2000).

LMX focuses on the quality of the supervisor-subordinate relationship, and the reciprocal social exchanges that build, cultivate, and maintain that relationship. According to LMX theory and research, supervisors may have high-quality relationships with some subordinates (the in-group), characterized by the exchange of quality resources such as information, support, trust, rewards, and effort (e.g., Liden, Sparrowe, & Wayne, 1997), or may have low-quality relationships with other subordinates (the out-group), characterized by the absence of quality resource exchanges (e.g., Dienesch & Liden, 1986). In low-quality LMXs, employee performance tends to reflect the formal role requirements as specified in the job description (Liden & Maslyn, 1998). However, in high-quality LMX relationships, supervisors get subordinates to help them on various tasks by offering them desirable inducements such as influence and support (Graen & Scandura, 1987). Consistent with the norm of reciprocity (Gouldner, 1960), and social exchange theory (Blau, 1964), these inducements create employee obligations to reciprocate by working harder to satisfy supervisor requests (task performance), or by engaging in extra-role behaviors beneficial to the supervisor and organization (Wayne & Green, 1993). Employees in high-quality LMXs have also been shown to engage more in helpful behaviors (Wayne & Green, 1993), greater information exchange, self-disclosure, and emotional support with their peers (Kram & Isabella, 1985). These behaviors are indicative of job dedication and interpersonal facilitation, which have been shown to be positively related to LMX (e.g., Michael, 2013, 2014). Supervisors reciprocate these desirable behaviors by giving these employees better performance appraisals, more challenging work assignments, greater autonomy, higher compensation, and greater advancement in their careers (e.g., Dienesch & Liden, 1986; Duarte, Goodson, & Klich, 1994).

Motivating language theory (Sullivan, 1988) suggests that supportive supervisor communication is positively related to desirable employee outcomes such as better job performance and affective commitment. Furthermore, SSC has been shown to have a positive relationship with interpersonal facilitation, job dedication, and task performance (e.g., Michael, 2013, 2014). Since LMX and SSC have been shown to have positive relationships with task and contextual performance, formal hypotheses regarding these relationships will not be proposed, however, the paths representing these relationships are included in the model in figure 1.

To summarize, in figure 1, SSC is shown to have a direct, positive relationship with job dedication and interpersonal facilitation, and job dedication to have a direct, positive relationship with task performance and interpersonal facilitation. Thus, job dedication partially mediates the relationship between SSC and interpersonal facilitation, and fully mediates the relationship between SSC and task performance. Finally, SSC fully mediates the relationships between LMX and these three performance dimensions. Thus, the following hypotheses are proposed regarding mediation:

Hypothesis 4: Job dedication partially mediates the relationship between SSC and interpersonal facilitation, and fully mediates the relationship between SSC and task performance.

Hypothesis 5: SSC will mediate the relationship between LMX and the three performance dimensions of job dedication, interpersonal facilitation, and task performance.

### **3. Method**

#### **3.1 Participants and Procedure**

All professional (operations and service) employees and their supervisors, from 33 branches of six banking institutions (banks and credit unions) located in the southeastern United States, were invited to participate in this study. To encourage participation, supervisors and their subordinates were given verbal and written assurances that their individual responses would be kept anonymous. Code numbers were used throughout the data collection process to allow the matching of dyad members and to ensure that individual responses remained anonymous. The number of supervisor-subordinate dyads in these six institutions ranged from minimum of 14 to a maximum of 108 ( $M = 39.33$ ;  $SD = 36.37$ ).

Bank supervisors were allotted time away from work responsibilities to complete questionnaires that assessed their subordinates' task and contextual performance (interpersonal facilitation and job dedication), and were given instructions to mail the completed questionnaires back to the researchers. The number of subordinates evaluated by supervisors ranged from 1 to 25 ( $M = 3.24$ ;  $SD = 3.19$ ).

The researcher administered the questionnaires to bank employees in small group sessions at each of the sites. Employees assessed LMX, their affective commitment, role ambiguity, turnover intentions, their supervisor's provision of supportive communication, and their biographical information.

Absent employees received their questionnaires from human resources when they returned to work, with instructions to mail the completed questionnaires directly to the researcher.

Employee questionnaires completed by subordinates who also played the role of a supervisor in at least one other dyad, were excluded from the analysis to prevent possible confounding. Only the data from questionnaires completed by these dual-role individuals acting in a supervisory role were used in the analysis. After excluding dual-role employee questionnaires, and questionnaires with missing data, the final number of completed questionnaires yielded 237 dyad matches, for a dyad-matched response rate of 53%. Of the 237 employees who responded, 80% were female, 71% had 1 - 5 years of organizational tenure, 56% had 1 - 5 years of job tenure, and 35% had 1 - 2 years tenure with their current supervisor. Of the 72 supervisors who completed the survey, 50 (69%) were female.

### 3.2 Measures

Scales assessing “extent” had a seven-point response format ranging from 1 (Never) to 7 (Very Great Extent). All other scales employed a seven-point response format ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 7 (Strongly Agree). Cronbach alpha reliability is reported for each scale.

**Leader-Member Exchange (LMX).** Employees assessed leader-member exchange using Liden and Maslyn’s (1998) 12-item leader-member exchange-multidimensional scale (LMX-MDM). The scale measures four LMX dimensions: loyalty, affect, professional respect, and contribution. Sample items include “My supervisor is the kind of person one would like to have as a friend,” and “My supervisor would come to my defense if I were ‘attacked’ by others.” Following Liden and Maslyn’s (1998) suggestion, scale items were combined into composite scores, forming a global measure of LMX. Thus, items from each of the four subscales were averaged and used as multiple manifest indicators of a general leader-member exchange factor ( $\alpha = .91$ ).

**Affective Commitment.** Self-reported employee affective commitment was assessed using Meyer and N. J. Allen’s (1991) six-item scale. Sample items include “I feel a strong sense of “belonging to my organization,” and “I feel emotionally attached to this organization” ( $\alpha = .84$ ).

**Role Ambiguity.** Employees’ role ambiguity was assessed using Rizzo, House, & Lirtzman’s (1970) six item scale ( $\alpha = .85$ ).

**Employees’ Turnover Intentions.** Employee turnover intentions were assessed using two of three items adapted from the Michigan Organizational Assessment Questionnaire (Camman, Fichman, Jenkins, & Klesh, 1979; Seashore, Lawler, Mirvis, & Camman, 1982; as cited in Cook, Hepworth, Wall, & Warr, 1981). We removed the third item from the scale due to a negative correlation with the other items ( $\alpha = .80$ ).

**Supportive Supervisor Communication.** Employees completed eleven items assessing the extent to which their supervisors communicated with them in a supportive manner. The survey instructions stated the following: “The statements below show different ways that your supervisor might communicate with you. Using the scale on the left, indicate the current extent to which your supervisor communicates that way with you” This scale consisted of six modified items from Wiemann’s (1977) communicative competence scale, and five modified items assessing “empathic language” from Mayfield, Mayfield, and Kopf’s (1995) motivating language scale. These items were selected because of their close association with the SSC construct, and their high reliability and validity reported in previous studies (e.g., Douglas, 1991; Street, Mulac, & Wiemann, 1988; Wiemann, 1977). The modified items were “My supervisor”...“provides encouragement for my work efforts,” “expresses concern about my affective commitment,” “expresses trust in me,” “expresses concern for my feelings,” “really listens to my opinions,” “works to build a relationship with me,” “is willing to discuss my personal concerns with me,” “expresses sensitivity to my needs,” and “communicates with me in a supportive way” ( $\alpha = .96$ ).

**Contextual Performance.** Supervisors completed Van Scotter et al.’s (2000) 15-item scale to assess their employees’ contextual performance in terms of interpersonal facilitation (7-items) and job dedication (8-items). Cronbach alpha reliabilities for interpersonal facilitation and job dedication were .89 and .88, respectively.

**Task Performance.** Supervisors assessed employee task performance using Williams and Anderson’s (1991) 7-item scale ( $\alpha = .85$ ).

**Control Variables.** According to convention (Tsui & O'Reilly, 1989; Kacmar, Witt, Zivnuska, & Gully, 2003), job and dyad tenure were initially included in the analyses to control for their potential effects on subordinate performance. However, no significant relationships were found between these variables so they were excluded them from the final analyses.

### 3.3 Analyses

EQS 6.1 (Bentler, 2010) statistical software with robust maximum likelihood estimators (ML) was used to conduct confirmatory factor analyses (CFA), and structural equation modeling (SEM) to analyze and test the measurement and structural models, respectively. EQS 6.1 uses the multivariate delta method to test for mediation, which is a multivariate extension of the product-of-coefficients strategy (Preacher & Hayes, 2008). Of the many methods available for estimating indirect effects in multi-mediation models, the multivariate delta method tends to be preferred (Sobel, 1986). Among several formulas for the standard error of the indirect effect (MacKinnon, Lockwood, Hoffman, West, & Sheets, 2002), this method has been shown to produce standard errors with the least amount of bias. However, it must be used under conditions of multivariate normality. Specifically, the individual indirect effect coefficients, as well as the sampling distributions of the total, and specific indirect effects, must follow a multivariate normal distribution. Thus, Mardia's (1974) multivariate kurtosis coefficient was used to assess the extent of multivariate normality of the data.

**Measurement Model.** The measurement model was composed of multiple-indicators, thus providing the most unambiguous assignment of meaning to the estimated constructs (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988). In order to reduce the total number of manifest indicators and parameters to be estimated relative to sample size (Hayduk, 1987), item parcels were created by averaging several, randomly selected items measuring the same construct (e.g., Marsh, Antill, & Cunningham, 1989), thus producing indicators with higher reliability than could be accomplished using the individual items (MacCallum, Roznowski, & Necowitz, 1992). LMX had four composite indicators representing the four dimensions of the LMX-MDM scale (i.e., affect, loyalty, contribution, and professional respect); SSC had four composite indicators; turnover intention was assessed with the original two scale items. Each of the remaining variables had three composite indicators. To minimize the potential for interpretational confounding, Anderson and Gerbing's (1988) two-step procedure was used to estimate the measurement model prior to simultaneously estimating the measurement and structural sub-models.

**Structural Model.** Once the measurement model was estimated, the measurement and structural sub-models were estimated simultaneously. Then, a series of Satorra-Bentler (Satorra & Bentler, 1994) chi-square ( $SB-\chi^2$ ) difference tests (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988) were conducted to assess the soundness of the proposed structural model.

**Estimation and Fit.** Mardia's (1974) multivariate kurtosis coefficient indicated that the data lacked multivariate normality ( $g_{2,p} = 126.06$ ,  $z = 26.41$ ). Thus, Satorra and Bentler's (1994) scaled chi-square test statistic ( $SB-\chi^2$ ) was used to approximate the referenced chi-square distribution, which has been shown to be the best performing test statistic under a wide array of circumstances (e.g., Chou, Bentler, & Satorra, 1991), and distribution types, and to perform extremely well under a wide range of normal and non-normal circumstances (Curran, West, & Finch, 1996). While this procedure has been shown to correct for multivariate non-normality, and produce correct "robust" standard errors (Bentler & Dijkstra, 1985), the value of the  $SB-\chi^2$  and other commonly used chi-square based measures of fit are directly dependent upon sample size (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988). Thus, in addition to using the  $SB-\chi^2$  statistic and the comparative fit index (CFI; Hu & Bentler, 1999) to assess fit, also used were the robust comparative fit index (RCFI) (which is not dependent upon sample size), the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), and the corresponding 90% confidence intervals.

## 4. Results

Table 1 presents descriptive statistics, reliability coefficients, and the correlations among the study variables. For mediation to occur, the mediators must be significantly related (in the correct direction) to the dependent variables, and the independent variables must be significantly related to the mediators and the dependent variables. A review of the correlation matrix provides preliminary support for mediation, and provides support for hypothesis 1. Specifically, LMX is positively related to SSC ( $r = .87$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

**Table 1: Descriptive Statistics, Correlations, and Reliabilities**

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. LMX	5.83	.97	<b>.91</b>							
2. SSC	5.07	1.43	.87	<b>.96</b>						
3. Interpersonal facilitation	5.07	1.00	.40	.46	<b>.89</b>					
4. Job dedication	5.03	1.01	.29	.33	.69	<b>.88</b>				
5. Task performance	5.65	.86	.22	.26	.53	.77	<b>.85</b>			
6. Turnover intentions	2.62	1.62	-.59	-.57	-.26	-.19	-.15	<b>.80</b>		
7. Affective Commitment	5.07	1.16	.52	.54	.25	.18	.14	-.76	<b>.84</b>	
8. Role Ambiguity	2.21	.91	-.62	-.54	-.26	-.18	-.14	.50	-.54	<b>.85</b>

Note.  $N = 243$  supervisor-subordinate dyads; reliability coefficients appear in bold. LMX = leader-member exchange; SSC = supportive supervisor communication. Correlations .15 to .19 are significant at  $p \leq .01$ . Correlations  $\geq .20$  are significant at  $p < .001$  (one-tailed tests).

Table 2 presents the results of the measurement and structural model comparisons. The factorial (convergent) validity of the study measures was assessed using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) by comparing the hypothesized measurement model (1) to two, more parsimonious models, composed of combined factors. Specifically, model 2 had seven factors consisting of measurement model 1, but with LMX and SSC merged into one factor. Model 3 had seven factors consisting of model 1, with job dedication and interpersonal facilitation merged into one factor. Affective commitment, task performance, role ambiguity, and turnover intentions were kept as separate factors. Results show that the hypothesized eight-factor measurement model not only fit the data well, it had a better fit than the competing models, indicating that common method bias did not explain the observed relationships, and thus was not of major concern in this study (Erdogan, Liden, & Kraimer, 2006; Podsakoff & Organ, 1986). Convergent validity was further assessed by examining the factor loadings of the individual measures on their a priori defined factors (Brown & Cudek, 1993). The loadings for the four LMX dimensions ranged from .58 to .88; SSC loadings ranged from .78 to .96; task performance ranged from .72 to .90; interpersonal facilitation and job dedication ranged from .79 to .86, and .66 to .87, respectively; affective commitment ranged from .60 to .91; role ambiguity ranged from .70 to .88; and turnover intentions ranged from .73 to .90. Taken together, these results provide strong evidence of convergent validity for the measures in this study.

The structural equation model comparison is shown in the lower half of Table 2. Results provide satisfactory support for our theoretical model (model 1). Specifically, the fit indices surpassed Bentler's (1990) CFI cutoff value of .90, and RMSEA was less than Brown and Cudek's (1993) suggested cutoff value of .08, or less [ $SB-\chi^2 = 432.74$ ; ( $df = 266$ ,  $p < .001$ ); RCFI = .94; CFI = .94; RMSEA = .05].

Next, a multivariate Lagrange multiplier test was conducted to identify if any of the fixed parameters in the theoretical model, if set free, would lead to a significantly better-fitting model (Byrne, 1994). Results from this test indicated that adding a path from LMX to turnover intentions would result in a better fitting model. Thus, a revised partially mediated model 2 was constructed in which a direct path was added between LMX and turnover intentions. In table 2, results show that model 2 produced a significant change in the  $SB-\chi^2$ , but did not produce a practical change in the RCFI or RMSEA. However, adding the path did produce a positive change in the CFI from .94 to .95.

**Mediation.** The standardized effects coefficients for the revised partially mediated model are presented in Table 3. These results provide strong support for the revised partially mediated model 2, and support for mediation. Specifically, role ambiguity and SSC mediated the LMX-affective commitment relationship (hypothesis 2), and role ambiguity, SSC, and affective commitment partially mediated the LMX-turnover intentions relationship (hypothesis 3). Next, job dedication partially mediated the SSC-interpersonal facilitation relationship, and fully mediated the SSC-task performance relationship (hypothesis 4). Finally, SSC mediated the relationship between LMX and the three performance dimensions of job dedication, interpersonal facilitation, and task performance (hypothesis 5). In each case, the direct and indirect effects coefficients were significant and in the expected direction.

## 5. Discussion

The research reported here makes several important contributions to organizational research. First, it provides a better understanding of the antecedents of employee turnover and performance for a sample of bank employees. Second, it extends previous research by examining a more comprehensive model of turnover intentions and performance by incorporating supportive supervisor communication with traditional antecedents. This study also incorporates two types of supervisor-rated employee performance: task and contextual. No previously published study of bank employees has incorporated these same antecedents and outcome variables. Finally, it provides a better understanding of the multidimensional nature of supervisor support, and its various manifestations, and their impact on employee turnover and performance.

This study provides substantial support for the hypothesis that SSC mediates the relationship between LMX and employees' contextual and task performance, and that job dedication partially mediates the relationship between SSC and interpersonal facilitation, and fully mediates the relationship between SSC and task performance. Furthermore, role ambiguity and SSC were shown to mediate the relationship between LMX and affective commitment, and partially mediate the relationship between LMX and turnover intentions. Affective commitment was shown to mediate the SSC-turnover intentions relationship, and role ambiguity-turnover intentions relationship.

The results of this study indicate that LMX quality encourages SSC, which in turn increases employee obligations to reciprocate in terms of increased effort to discharge the obligation, or to "pay back" supervisors' favorable treatment with acceptable commodities of exchange, such as increased levels of interpersonal facilitation, job dedication, and task performance. It appears that SSC behaviors are perceived by subordinates as being influenced by, and emanating from the quality of the LMX relationship. Subordinates appear to reciprocate supportive supervisor treatment through direct and indirect acts of kindness, benevolence, citizenship, and performance enhancement. Furthermore, beyond the initial encounter phase of relationship development, not only does LMX quality promote SSC, it seems likely that SSC may in turn serve to nourish and maintain the supervisor-subordinate relationship. Furthermore, SSC not only encourages better performance, it positively impacts affective commitment, and the combined influence of affective commitment, SSC, and LMX negatively impacts employee turnover intentions. If SSC and LMX encourage employee affective commitment and performance, and discourage turnover intentions, and ultimately dysfunctional voluntary turnover and associated costs, then organizations would be well served by implementing a performance improvement and retention strategy that focuses on these relational inducements.

Several compelling research questions arise: What is the relative value of SSC versus other forms of favorable treatment, and do they differ in terms of their influence on employee reciprocation efforts, affective commitment, turnover intentions, and ultimately turnover? Is SSC a dimension of the more general construct of perceived supervisor support discussed in the literature (e.g., Maertz, Griffeth, Campbell, D. G. Allen, 2007; Stinglehamber & Vandenberghe, 2003)?

This study also demonstrates the important role that contextual performance plays in overall task performance assessments. Contextual performance, particularly job dedication, seems to translate into assessments of task performance. These results raise the possibility that, rather than being two discrete dimensions of contextual performance, interpersonal facilitation and job dedication might be causally related, particularly as assessed by supervisors. Do supervisors in fact perceive employee acts of interpersonal facilitation as behavioral manifestations of job dedication, such that they believe that employees help others because of their job dedication? Future research would benefit by explicitly focusing on the relationships between interpersonal facilitation, job dedication, and task performance. In particular, research should consider using diverse assessors of these performance measures. In this study, all three forms of performance were assessed by supervisors. Assessments could also be made by coworkers, customers, or self.

## 6. Limitations

There are several limitations of this research that are worth noting. First, while the data were collected from different sources, several adjacent constructs in this study were assessed using common methods and respondents. SSC, LMX, affective commitment, role ambiguity, and turnover intentions were all assessed by subordinates. Employee contextual performance (i.e., job dedication and interpersonal facilitation), and task performance data were collected from each employee's supervisor.

While CFA results suggest that these constructs are unique, future research would benefit from utilizing different sources or methods for collecting theoretically adjacent constructs. While common method and same source concerns may generate caution in interpreting the results of portions of the model, the results still provide compelling evidence that employee assessments of LMX and SSC explained unique variance in supervisor ratings of employee contextual and task performance.

Another limitation was the utilization of a cross-sectional design rather than a longitudinal one, thus preventing us from making causal inferences. Also, the data were collected from dyads in only one industry. Future researchers should include multiple industries to increase generalizability, and if possible, utilize a longitudinal design to permit causal inferences.

## 7. Conclusion

Graen and Uhl-Bien (e.g., 1991, 1995) have highlighted the importance of “leadership making,” i.e., efforts to improve the level of LMX in organizations so as to reap the benefits of enhanced relationship quality. Our research suggests that high-quality LMX relationships encourage SSC, which in turn creates an overall supportive environment that translates into higher employee contextual and task performance, improved affective commitment, and reduced turnover intentions. Unfortunately, communication is a critical leadership skill that many supervisors lack. From a leadership making and human resource management perspective, this research suggests that if supervisors are trained and encouraged to use more effective supportive communication strategies, and focus on building high quality supervisor-subordinate relationships, organizations may reap the benefits of greater employee contextual and task performance, improved role clarity, affective commitment, and employee retention.

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**Table 2: Measurement Model Comparisons**

Model Factors	$\frac{SB-\chi^2}{\Delta SB-\chi^2}$	$\frac{df}{\Delta df}$	$\frac{RCFI}{CFI}$	RMSEA	90% CI
1. Eight factors: Baseline measurement model	396.04	247	.95	.05	.04, .06
			.95	.06	.05, .07
2. Seven factors: Baseline measurement model with LMX and SSC merged into one factor	577.10	264	.89	.07	.06, .08
	181.06	17	.90	.08	.07, .09
3. Seven Factors: Baseline model with IF & JD merged into one factor	671.45	267	.85	.08	.07, .09
	331.10	20	.87	.09	.08, .10
<b>Structural Model Comparisons</b>					
1. Fully mediated structural model	432.74	266	.94	.05	.04, .06
			.94	.06	.05, .07
2. Final partially mediated structural model shown in Figure 2	420.80	265	.94	.05	.04, .06
	11.94	1	.95	.06	.05, .07

Note.  $N = 237$  supervisor-subordinate dyads. LMX, leader-member exchange; SSC, supportive supervisor communication; IF, Interpersonal facilitation; JD, Job dedication; TP, task performance; AFC, affective commitment; TURNI, turnover intentions;  $SB-\chi^2$ , Satorra – Bentler scaled chi-square statistic (corrects for multivariate non-normality); RCFI, robust comparative fit index (not dependent upon sample size); CFI, comparative fit index; RMSEA, root-mean-square error of approximation; CI, confidence interval for RMSEA. Measurement models (MM) 2 and 3 were compared to MM 1, and structural models (SM) 2 through 5 were compared to SM 1. All  $SB-\chi^2$  values are significant at  $p < .001$ .

**Table 3: Direct, Indirect, and Total Effects Coefficients for Partially Mediated Model 2**

Relationship	Indirect Effects	Direct Effects	Total Effects
LMX $\rightarrow$ Job Dedication	.31	-	.31
LMX $\rightarrow$ Interpersonal Facilitation	.40	-	.40
LMX $\rightarrow$ Task Performance	.25	-	.25
LMX $\rightarrow$ Affective Commitment	.53	-	.53
LMX $\rightarrow$ Turnover Intentions	-.32	-.28	-.60
LMX $\rightarrow$ Role Ambiguity	-	-.64	-.64
LMX $\rightarrow$ Supportive Supervisor Communication	-	.87	.87
SSC $\rightarrow$ Interpersonal Facilitation	.22	.25	.46
SSC $\rightarrow$ Task Performance	.28	-	.28
SSC $\rightarrow$ Turnover Intentions	-.21	-	-.21
SSC $\rightarrow$ Affective Commitment	-	.34	.34
SSC $\rightarrow$ Job Dedication	-	.36	.36
RA $\rightarrow$ Affective Commitment	-	-.36	-.36
RA $\rightarrow$ Turnover Intentions	.22	-	.22
JD $\rightarrow$ Task Performance	-	.80	.80
JD $\rightarrow$ Interpersonal Facilitation	-	.61	.61
AFC $\rightarrow$ Turnover Intentions	-	-.61	-.61

Note.  $N = 237$  supervisor-subordinate dyads. SSC, supportive supervisor communication; LMX, leader-member exchange; RA, Role Ambiguity; JD, Job Dedication; AFC, Affective Commitment. Total Effects = Direct Effects + Indirect Effects. All effects coefficients are significant at  $p < .001$ .

Figure 1: Theoretical Model

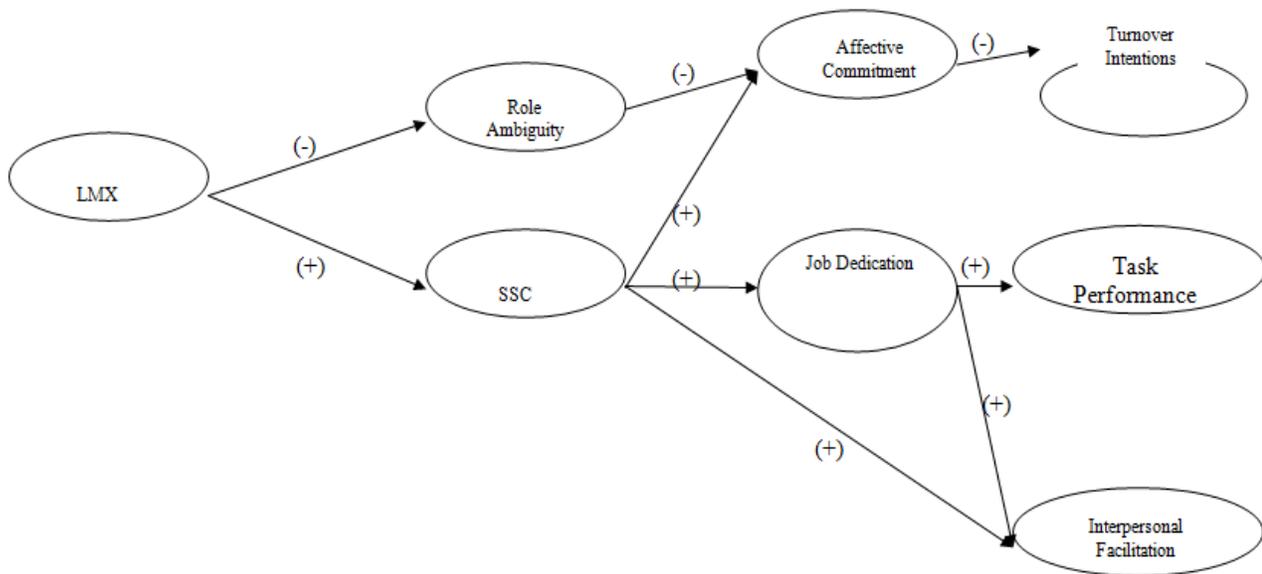


Figure 2  
Partially Mediated Model Results

