

# Benevolent Leadership and Interpersonal Citizenship Behavior: The Role of Leader-member Exchange and Extraversion

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## ABSTRACT

The influence of benevolent leaders on their followers' interaction within their surroundings during work is less addressed by scholars. As such, we proposed a positive relationship between benevolent leadership and person- and task-focused interpersonal citizenship behavior, through the mediation of leader-member exchange and the second-stage moderation of follower extraversion. Results of a sample of 95 participants supported our proposition. Furthermore, this relationship was stronger for followers who were less extravert. The implication for future research and practitioners were discussed.

**Keywords:** *Benevolent leadership, interpersonal citizenship behavior, leader-member exchange, extraversion*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Benevolent leadership refers to leaders' individualized, holistic concern, both work-related and non-work-related, for subordinates' personal or familial well-being[1]. As a critical component of paternalistic leadership[2], it has gained continuous attention from both scholars and practitioners[3]. Benevolent leadership triggers followers' gratitude and loyalty towards their leaders, which constitutes an ideal reciprocal relationship between the leader and followers[4-5].

Interpersonal citizenship behavior (ICB) refers to behaviors directed towards others in the organization that go beyond one's own job requirements. It is evident that ICB receivers have increased job satisfaction and decreased turnover intention[6]. Given the important influence of leadership on followers' interpersonal relationship, it is worth studying how benevolence leadership is associated with followers interact with peers, superiors, and subordinates around them. Therefore, the present study aims to examine the association between benevolent leadership and followers' ICB.

To better illustrate the underlying mechanism, leader-member exchange (LMX) was taken into consideration. It was proposed that the LMX would influence followers'

prosocial behavior and mediate the association between benevolent leadership and followers' ICB. Furthermore, a personality trait, extraversion, was included as a moderator in our model. Unlike followers who are extraverted, less extraverted followers may need more encouragement and support on their relationship development and out-role behaviors [7].

Extraversion is one of the Big Five personalities which portrays an individual who is adventurous, energetic, assertive, sociable, gregarious, and talkative[8]. A good LMX generated by benevolent leadership could serve as a booster to give less extraverted individuals more intention and motivation to build positive relationships with colleagues around them, fostering citizenship behaviors in a person-focused level. Thus, the effect of LMX on ICB may be more salient for less extraverted individuals than extraverted ones.

This study seeks to make two contributions to enrich benevolent leadership literature. First, we focus on its impact outside of the leader-follower dyadic relationship. Our study investigated the different effect of benevolent leadership on person-focused (ICB-P) and task-focused interpersonal citizenship behavior (ICB-T), responding to the call to pay attention to the two forms of organizational citizenship. Second, we further investigate the mediating

role of LMX in the effect of benevolent leadership on ICB-P and ICB-T.

Taken together, the present study would extend the existing findings on the relationship of benevolent leadership and the interpersonal citizenship behavior using the data from a 4-wave survey in China by examining the mediating effect of LMX and moderating effect of extroversion. Fig.1 depicts our research model.

**2. HYPOTHESES**

H 1: Extraversion will act as a second stage moderator of the mediated relationship between benevolent leadership and person-focused ICB through LMX, such that this relationship will be stronger when employee extraversion is low versus high.

H 2: Extraversion will act as a second stage moderator of the mediated relationship between benevolent leadership and task-focused ICB through LMX, such that this relationship will be stronger when employee extraversion is low versus high.

**3. METHODOLOGY**

**3.1. Sample and Procedure**

We collected data in north China with 112 full-time employees from different industries who took part in a part-time psychology class. During the class, we asked the part-time students to complete the survey. None of them were aware of the purpose of the study.

We designed our data collection as a four-wave survey study to reduce the likelihood of common method bias which would inflate the relationships among all variables we were interested in. At Time 1, we measured participants' trait extraversion as well as participants' demographic information. At Time 2, we measured benevolent leadership style. At Time 3, we asked them to rate leader-member exchange quality. At Time 4, interpersonal citizenship behavior, both task-focused and person-focused, and their affectivity were measured.

We ruled out participants who not finished the four-wave surveys and finally, our sample included 95 participants, yield a response rate of 84.8%. Among them, 77.9% of which are female, with an average age of 28.78 (SD=4.90) and an average work experience of 7.1 years (SD=4.63). On average, they have an education of 15.45 years (SD=1.85) and have been working with their direct supervisor for 2.6 years (SD=3.00).

**3.2. Measurements**

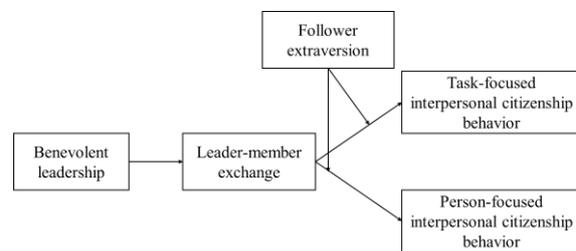
All measurements were originally constructed in English. As all of our participants are Chinese, we followed the rule of translation and back-translation (Brislin, 1986) to develop the Chinese version so that all

participants could understand each item. We also unified all of our scales into 7-point Likert scale. We used path analysis in Mplus software to test our proposed model. Participants' affectivity at Time 4 as well as tenure and dyadic tenure were controlled during our analysis.

We measured benevolent leadership by using the scale developed by Cheng, Chou, Huang, Farh, and Peng [9]. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for this scale is .87.

Using a list of words ("shy" "quiet", etc.), we asked participants to rate their extraversion personality using the scale developed by Saucier[10] and it has an acceptable reliability of .81.

We measured LMX by using a 7-item scale adopted from Scandura and Graen[11]. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient is .86.



**Figure 1** Benevolent leadership, Leader-member Exchange, Interpersonal Citizenship Behavior and Extraversion

At Time 4, we measured participants ICB with a 14-item scale developed by Settoon and Mossholder[12]. Item 1-8 were used to measure person-focused ICB, and item 9-14 were used to measure task-focused ICB. Participants indicated their agreements on a 7-point Likert scale of how likely they would do ICB-P and ICB-T ( $\alpha=.95$ ).

In order to rule out the influence of participants' affectivity on their response of how likely they would do ICB, we measured their general emotional state at Time 4 as a control variable by using the PANAS scale [13]. This scale has a good validity across studies and contains of a list of 20 words. We found the word "Alert" is confusing to our participants and it was not considered as positive in Chinese culture in our pilot study, so we deleted it when we did our final data collection. As a result, we used 9 items to measure participants' positive affectivity and 10 items to measure their negative affectivity. Participants rated their general affectivity on a 7-point Likert scale. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for this scale is .89.

**4. RESULTS**

Mean, standard deviation and correlations among all variables in our study are presented in Table 1.

**4.1. Measurements Model**

Based on the model we proposed before, we first conducted a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) including all 5 factors (benevolent leadership, leader-member exchange, extraversion, person-focused interpersonal citizenship behavior, and task-focused interpersonal citizenship behavior) using MPLUS to check whether our model had an acceptable fit or not. This model was proved to have a better fit to the data ( $\chi^2 = 608.11$ ,  $df = 395$ ,  $\chi^2/df = 1.54$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ; Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) = .075, Comparative Fit Index (CFI) = .86, Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI) = .85) than all other potential models (four-factor model ( $\chi^2 = 723.60$ ,  $df = 399$ ,  $\chi^2/df = 1.81$ , RMSEA = .09, CFI = .79, TLI = .77;  $\Delta\chi^2 = 115.49$ ,  $\Delta df = 4$ ,  $p < .01$ ), three-factor model ( $\chi^2 = 796.27$ ,  $df = 402$ ,  $\chi^2/df = 1.98$ ,

RMSEA = .10, CFI = .74, TLI = .72;  $\Delta\chi^2 = 188.16$ ,  $\Delta df = 7$ ,  $p < .01$ ), two-factor model ( $\chi^2 = 1097.49$ ,  $df = 404$ ,  $\chi^2/df = 2.72$ , CFI = .55, TLI = .52, RMSEA = .13;  $\Delta\chi^2 = 489.38$ ,  $\Delta df = 9$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and one-factor model ( $\chi^2 = 1214.67$ ,  $df = 405$ ,  $\chi^2/df = 3.00$ , RMSEA = .15, CFI = .47, TLI = .44;  $\Delta\chi^2 = 606.56$ ,  $\Delta df = 10$ ,  $p < .01$ )) which suggested our 5-factor model had a good construct distinction.

**4.2. Hypothesis test**

When testing H1, the indirect effect of benevolent leadership on person-focused interpersonal citizenship behavior through leader-member exchange was significantly stronger when followers' extraversion was low versus high ( $B = -.27$ ,  $SE = 0.14$ ,  $p < .05$ ).

**Table 1** Correlations and Descriptive Statistics

Variables	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Benevolent leadership	3.75	1.18	-								
2. Leader-member exchange	4.54	.90	.30**	-							
3. Interpersonal citizenship behavior (Task)	5.30	.93	.14	.28**	-						
4. Interpersonal citizenship behavior (Person)	4.73	1.05	.28**	.16	.56**	-					
5. Extraversion	4.41	1.06	-.05	.19	.40**	.16	-				
6. Tenure	7.10	4.63	-.14	-.19	.08	.10	.02	-			
7. Dyadic tenure	2.60	2.99	-.07	-.02	.08	.10	.02	.60**	-		
8. Positive affectivity	3.52	.70	-.02	.01	.09	.16	.20	.03	-.05	-	
9. Negative affectivity	2.01	.76	.05	.02	.05	-.07	-.08	.04	.04	-.45**	-

Note: N=95, \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ .

To better understand the nature of the interaction, we presented a plot in Fig.2. In testing the simple slopes, we found that the positive relationship between leader-member exchange and person-focused interpersonal citizenship behavior is significantly stronger when followers' extraversion was low ( $b = .55$ ,  $t = 1.64$ ,  $p < .01$ ) but insignificant when extraversion was high ( $b = 2.94$ ,  $t = -.36$ ,  $p = .72$ ). Overall, H1 was supported. For H2, the indirect effect was not significant ( $B = -.02$ ,  $SE = 0.14$ ,  $p = .87$ ), which indicated that the moderating effect of extraversion on the relationship between benevolent leadership and task-focused ICB through LMX was not supported.

**5. CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION**

Using data collected from a sample of 95 participants from diverse industries, results showed that benevolent leadership was significantly related to followers' person-focused ICB through LMX. Additionally, the follower extraversion plays a negative moderating role in this relationship. The positive relationship between benevolent leadership and person-focused ICB through the mediating of LMX was stronger when follower extraversion was low than high. However, the moderating effect of extraversion on the indirect relationship between benevolent leadership and task-focused ICB through

LMX was not proved. This may due to the person-oriented nature of benevolent leadership. As followers consider their benevolent leaders as role models, they will be more likely to devote in behaviors which are more person-focused ICB rather than task-focus ICB.

Our study highlights the differentiation effect of LMX on person-focused interpersonal citizenship behavior verse task-focused interpersonal citizenship behavior. Our study indicated that the less extraverted individuals were more likely influenced by their LMX with the benevolent leaders. For more extraverted individuals, the additional influence of LMX with their benevolent leaders couldn't significant more. This result contributes to the discussion by prior scholars who claim that personality is significantly associated with followers' intention to do ICB.

More importantly, our research findings suggested that leaders should pay attention to followers who are less extravert, provide more benevolent behaviors to promote a more positive leader-member exchange and through this to better their person-focused citizenship with others.

There's also limitation that need to be addressed by future research. The common method bias caused by our single data source may influence the results of our findings. To overcome this drawback, we designed our data collection as a cross-sectional process.

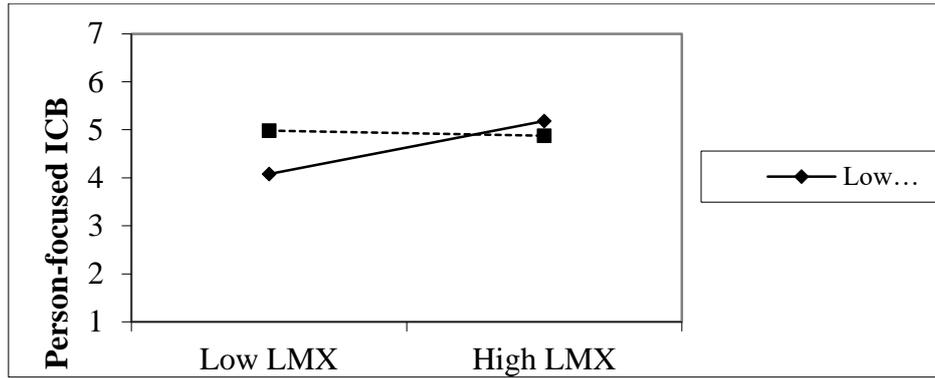


Figure 2 Interaction Between Leader-member Exchange and Extraversion on Person-focused Interpersonal Citizenship Behavior

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