

LEADER-MEMBER EXCHANGE, CREATIVE WORK INVOLVEMENT: THE IMPORTANCE OF ORGANIZATIONAL FORGETTING

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Abstract

An increasing number of organizations are turning to knowledge based organizations. Thus, these firms pay attention to innovation and creativity more and more. Therefore, this study focused on the mediating role of organizational forgetting in the LMX- creative work involvement relationship. Data (N= 418) collected in knowledge based organizations in north of Iran and confirmed our assumptions on the mediating role of organizational forgetting. The indirect relationship between LMX and creative work involvement through organizational forgetting was stronger than direct effect. Our findings, point to the importance of considering the leader-member relationship and organizational forgetting issues for increasing employees' creative work involvement.

Key words: Leader-member exchange (LMX), Creative work involvement, Organizational forgetting, Intentional organizational forgetting.

Introduction

Today, global companies have been exposed to rapid changes, they need employees who search for new opportunities and who continuously improve their work environment (Oldham & Cummings, 1996; Rank, Pace & Frese, 2004; Unsworth, 2001). Especially, in a knowledge –based economy, organizations face rising needs to increase not only productivity among their workers, but also their creativity. The speed of technological change as well as globalization and increasing competition, both domestically and internationally, has put enormous pressure on companies to be first- to – market, quick to solve problems, and ready to develop new small group of individuals working

together (Amabile, 1988, p.126 cited in Atwater & Carmeli, 2009) has rapidly become a key goal of many organizations (Mumford, Scott, Gaddis & Strange, 2002). Leaders are thought to be one of the most influential predictors of creativity work (Mumford, Scott Gaddis & Strange, 2002; Rosing, Frese & Bausch, 2011). Therefore, leaders need to know how to provide a context for employees' creativity in order to stay competitive in today's turbulent and fast-changing work environments (Tierney, 2008). Furthermore, it is almost the dominant view among leaders that knowledge is one of the most important competitive advantage of firms in today economic competitiveness (Davenport & Prusak, 1998; Mayo & Lank, 1994). In a broad view toward knowledge, there is little doubt that today's competitive advantage of all economic units, individuals (Drucker, 1999), firms (Davenport & Prusak, 1998), and nations (Stevens, 1998; Foray, 2000; Lundvall & Archibugi, 2001) is highly related to their capabilities of managing their knowledge. Accordingly, the process of developing and utilizing such valuable source of competitiveness, learning, would be the most important agenda of firms in such knowledge-based competitive market. The very influential role of knowledge in all aspects of life lead us to overlook the fact that companies do not just learn; they also forget (Deholan, Phillips & Lawrence, 2004). Organizational forgetting is important and essential because organizational learning and creative work mostly depend on organizational forgetting processes. It means that the companies, which intend to change themselves, not only need new abilities, but also forget the old knowledge which restricted them in the past (Esfahani, Radmehr & Hatampoor, 2012). Therefore, the current study examine how leader-member exchange (LMX) quality impact followers' creative work involvement by mediator role of organization forgetting (International organizational forgetting).

Leader-member exchange quality

Leader-member exchange (LMX) theory describes leadership as a process, focusing on the relationship between a leader and follower (Gerstner & Day, 1997; Liden, Sparrowe & Wayne, 1997). Byrne (1971) explained that when a leader and a follower share similar attitudes, opinions, and beliefs, their relationship would be more positive (cited in Barbuto & Gifford, 2012). From this similarity attraction paradigm, Dansereau, Graen and Haga (1975) developed vertical dyad linkage theory to depict the leader-follower relationship. Dansereau et al.'s findings indicated that leaders fostered differentiated dyadic exchanges with individual followers based upon similarities and differences.

In its infancy, LMX research categorized the relationship leaders could have with their followers into two groups: the in-group and out group, more recently referred to as high-quality and low-quality exchange respectively (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995; Liden et al., 1997). Research on leader-member exchange (LMX) has shown the value of high-quality leader-member relationships in organizations (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995; Liden, Sparrowe & Wayne, 1997; Maslyn & Uhl-Bien, 2001). A high-quality exchange relationship requires both parties accept their mutual-interests and agree to pursue shared superordinate goals. High-quality have been described as a partnering of colleagues, where individuals step beyond formal organizational roles to achieve desired goals (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995 cited in Fisk & Friesen, 2012). In contrast, leaders and followers in low-quality relationship closely adhere to their respective organizational roles and do not step beyond those bounds. Also, managers exhibits low levels of mutual trust, respect, and obligation toward members (Barbuto & Gifford, 2012).

LMX and Creative work Involvement

Although researchers have long been interested in the antecedents and consequences of job involvement (Carmeli, 2005), relatively little is known about involvement in creative work, i.e., "the

extent to which an employee engages his or her time and effort resources in creative processes associated with work (Carmeli & Schaubroeck, 2007, p. 36). Also, researchers have argued that it is not only important to consider outcomes of creativity, such as the actual idea or solution, but that it is of special importance to gain knowledge about employees' evaluation of creative involvement at work (Atwater & Carmeli, 2009; Carmeli & Schaubroeck, 2007; Kark & Carmeli, 2009). According to Ohly et al. (2006), creative work involvement is regarded as an important precursor of creative outcomes because it is strongly related to creative performance and innovation (Volmer, Spurk & Niessen, 2012).

Leaders are thought to be one of the most influential predictors of creativity at work (Mumford, et al., 2002; Rosing, Frese & Bausch, 2011). Thus, researchers have begun investigating the impact of leaders on creativity, including studies that have considered leader and follower traits (Tierney, Farmer & Graen, 1999; Zhou & George, 2003), transformational leadership (e.g. Jaussi & Dionne, 2003; Jung, chow & Wu, 2003), benevolent leadership (Wang & Cheng, 2010), and empowering leadership (Zhang & Bartol, 2010a). Also, researchers have also started examining the association between a relational concept of leadership, namely leader-member exchange (LMX) and creativity (e.g. Atwater & Carmeli, 2009; Volmer et al., 2012; Scott & Bruce, 1994; Tierney et al., 1999). According to Graen & Schiemann, LMX theory differs from other leadership approaches by its explicit focus on unique, dyadic relationships and the notion that leaders and followers negotiate their relationship over time (Volmer et al., 2012).

Theoretically, researchers have suggested a number of reasons for a positive LMX-creativity relationship. For example, employees in high-quality relationships are considered to be more creative compared to their less-privileged colleagues because of their more focused approach to challenging and difficult tasks, together with their greater risk-taking, and the fact that employees in high-quality LMX relationships receive more task-related recognition, interpersonal support and appreciation (Tierney, 2008; Tierney, Farmer & Graen, 1999). Moreover, researchers have suggested that LMX is beneficial for innovation because enjoying a good LMX relationship is accompanied by encouraging climate perceptions (Scott & Bruce, 1994). The experience of an encouraging social climate is important for employees' creative work involvement (Kark & Carmeli, 2009). LMX research has also shown that employees who enjoy a high-quality LMX relationship feel obliged to reciprocate to their supervisors by engaging in discretionary processes at work (Ilies, Nahrgang & Morgeson, 2007). Therefore, in this study we examine a direct relationship between LMX and creative work involvement.

Hypothesis 1: The quality of leader-member exchange (LMX) will be positively related with creative work involvement.

Mediating role of organizational forgetting

Knowledge management, as one of the most important organizational components, needs founding a system to learn, gathers, keep and spread knowledge inside the organization (Esfahani et al., 2012). Also, based on works by Dierickx and Cool (1989), Decarolis and Deeds (1999) and others, organizational knowledge can be represented as stocks of knowledge that grow through flows of increasing knowledge (organizational learning) and shrink through flows of depreciating knowledge (organizational forgetting) (cited in Fernandez & Sune, 2009). Scientific research on knowledge management has focused on the processes of knowledge creation, use and transfer, but has devoted little attention to the processes of organizational forgetting. However, it must be considered as a strategic agenda.

Organizational forgetting has been defined as the intentional or unintentional loss of organizational knowledge at any level (Martin & Phillips, 2003). Furthermore, in the field of

organization theory, organizational forgetting has been studied mainly from two standpoints. The first standpoint sees accidental or unwanted forgetting as a degradation of the stocks of organizational knowledge. The second standpoint considers forgetting as an intentional process of unlearning preceding organizational learning (Fernandez & Sune, 2009). Considering these two aspects, there are four types of organizational forgetting (See table 1).

Table1. Organizational forgetting types (Deholan Phillips & Lawrence, 2004).

Forgetting method	Old	New
Accidental	Destroying memory	Inability gaining knowledge
Intentional	Cleaning learning	Avoiding bad habits

Destroying memory happens when the knowledge, which is saved in organizational memory system, destroys gradually. moreover, inability in gaining knowledge is unable to keep the new knowledge which has been transferred from outside to organization and has been created inside the organization. Also, cleaning learning happens when the knowledge which is present in organization is removed knowingly from organizational memory. Finally, avoiding bad habits happen when organization can learn bad habits, instructions, deeds, beliefs and values which are harmful for production (Deholan, Phillips & Lawrence, 2004).

In this study, intentional dimension of organizational forgetting has been examined. Because managing old, obsolete and harmful knowledge in organizations can reduce potential negative impacts of such knowledge in organizational performance (Tsang & Zahra, 2008; DeHolan & Filiphis, 2005).

Organizational forgetting, especially intentional organization forgetting, is effective on the competitiveness of an organization and generally, proper managing of organizational forgetting is an unavoidable affair to increase the competitiveness of organizations in today's rough environment. According Esfahani et al. (2012), there is a positive and meaning full relationship between organizational forgetting and situational leadership style (Selling, participation and delegation leadership style). Also, Nystrom and Starbuck (1984):58) suggest that the way to unlearn during an organizational crisis is by removing top managers as a group. This is because top managers are bolstered by previous successes and adamantly cling to their beliefs and perceptions, therefore rationalizing their organizations' failures. Change in ownership is often another trigger of forgetting (Markoczy, 1994).

Thus, leadership is an important factor for learning or unlearning of a firm. However, in this study, the effect of LMX has been examined on organizational forgetting. Because a high-quality relationship, as characterized by favorable reciprocal exchanges between leader and member (Volmer et al. , 2012) , is associated with numerous positive outcomes , such as better performance , more commitment , job satisfaction, and a higher degree of mutual liking (Hies et al. , 2007 ; Liden et al., 1997). These factors can lead to increase employees' positive actions like intentional knowledge forgetting.

Hypo thesis 2: The quality of leader-member exchange (LMX) will be positively related with intentional knowledge forgetting.

The speed and innovation of companies rely more and more on knowledge and creativity. But knowledge and innovation process in organizations are astounding with information. Nothing is as fast outdated as information. The stress should be on innovative capacity (Dhondt, 2005). One of factors can limit the innovative capacity in an organization is the oldness and uselessness of current technical and non-technical knowledge (Bagherzadeh Niri, Akhavan & Hosnavi & Atashgah, 2010). Thus, organizational forgetting , especially , intentional organizational forgetting can be useful for

increase of employees' innovative capacity, as Fernandez and Sune (2009) conceded that organizational forgetting is in relation with innovation .

Hypothesis 3: The intentional organizational forgetting will be positively related with creative work involvement.

Researchers point out leaders can promote creativity among followers by providing them with the resources. They need for creative task. Creativity requires time and effort, and leaders can help followers by procuring essential resources such as materials, funding, and access to information and knowledge (Keiter-Palmone & Illies, 2004). Therefore, Intentional organizational forget can mediate the relationship between LMX and creative work involvement.

Hypothesis 4: Through the mediating effect of intentional organizational forgetting, the quality of leader-member exchange (LMX) will enhance creative work involvement.

Research method

Overview

This research studied the relationship between leadership-member exchange quality, organizational forgetting and creative work involvement. From what has been discussed above, the study established a basic research model. Fig.1 shows that leadership-member exchange is independent variable, organizational forgetting is the mediator variable and eventually creative work involvement is the dependent variable.

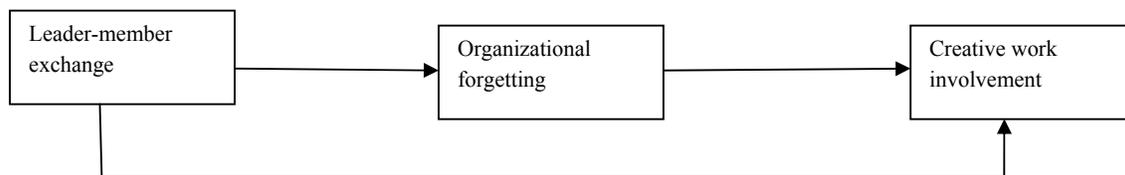


Fig.1. Conceptual framework of the research

The data were collected from employees in insurance companies in northeast of Iran through a questionnaire with three sections. . Leader-member was adapted from the 7-item measure from Graen and Uhl-Bien (1995). Employee involvement in creative work was adopted from the 9- item measure developed used by Tierney, Farmer and Graen (1999). Finally, following pervious research (e. g. , Lee , 2001) , 13- item were used to measure intentional organizational forgetting . Also, questionnaire was answered on a 5 – point likert type scale varying in 5 differing response sets. Furthermore, the study used Spss 20 for descriptive statistic analysis; AMOS 7 was used for confirmatory factor analysis and structural equation modeling.

Results

Respondent profile

After we obtained constant from managers to allow their employees to participate in our study, total of 520 randomly selected employees. 418 complete and valid questionnaires were received as the response. Regarding demographics, 62 % of the employee respondents were male with an average age of 28.55 years (SD= 9.34). 76.53% of participants possessed bachelor's degree. Moreover, their average work experience was 7.06 years.

Table1. Respondents' profile

	Frequency	%
Gender		
Male	259	62
Female	159	38
Total	418	100
Age (yr)		
25 or under	77	18.42
26-35	225	53.83
36-45	102	24.40
46-55	12	2.87
56 or above	4	0.96
Total	418	100
Education		
Less than secondary/high school	-	-
Secondary/high school	10	2.39
Some college or university	72	17.22
College/university diploma/degree	319	76.31
Postgraduate degree	17	4.06
Total	418	100
Years of service		
5 or less	66	15.89
5-10	198	47.37
11-15	92	22
16-20	48	11.48
21-25	10	2.39
26 or above	4	0.96
Total	418	100

Descriptive analysis

Table 2 displays means, standard deviations and correlations among study variables. Leadership – member exchange quality had a significant correlation with organizational forgetting and creative work involvement ($r= 0.514, p \leq 0.01, r= 0.452, p \leq 0.01$). Creative work involvement also, had significant positive correlations with organizational forgetting ($r= 0.459, p \leq 0.001$). Moreover, The Cronbach's alpha values of research variable were in the range of 0.68- 0.89, indicating good reliability (Nunnally, 1976).

Table2. Descriptive analyses

N=418	Mean(S.D.)	Cronbach's α	Correlations		
			1	2	3
1.LMX	4.15(1.03)	0.89	1		
2.organizational forgetting	3.18(0.78)	0.68	0.514*	1	
3. creative work involvement	4.56(0.57)	0.78	0.452*	0.459*	1

*p-value<0.01

Confirmatory factor analysis

Before testing the hypotheses of this study, LISREL 8.8 is used to conduct confirmatory factor analysis on the three research variable (LMX, Knowledge sharing, Creative work involvement). This aims to verify the construct validity of the research concepts. Questions used in this study have considerable content validity. Table 3 shows that the standardized factor loadings of observed variables to their latent variables ranged from .56-.88 and results of t test all reached the level of significance. This shows that the observed variables are adequate to reflect the constructed latent variables are adequate to reflect the constructed latent variable (Bentler & Wu, 1983; Jöreskog & Sörbom, 2006). In a further step, composite reliability (CR) and the average amount of variance extracted (AVE) are used to check the reliability and validity of the scale. Hair et al., (1998) proposed that the CR value must be greater than 0.7 and Fornell and Larcker (1981) suggested the AVE value must be greater than 0.5 . The latent variables CR value derived from the studies in this research falls in between 0.78-0.96 and AVE value 0.59-0.69. This shows that the latent variables in this study have good consistency, reliability and convergent validity.

Table3. Confirmatory factor analysis on measurement variables

Latent variables	Items	Standardized parameter s	t-value	CR	AVE
Leader- member exchange	Q1	.67	6.18	.96	.66
	Q2	.73	6.25		
	Q3	.67	6.86		
	Q4	.85	7.72		
	Q5	.68	10.82		
	Q6	.84	9.71		
	Q7	.88	10.32		
Organizational forgetting	Q8	.73	8.46	.78	.59
	Q9	.68	6.58		
	Q10	.77	6.16		
	Q11	.84	8.43		
	Q12	.85	9.76		
	Q13	.76	6.63		
	Q14	.64	5.67		
	Q15	.56	6.78		
	Q16	.58	8.56		
	Q17	.68	6.78		
Creative work involvement	Q18	.61	5.34	.79	.69
	Q19	.83	5.78		
	Q20	.78	6.78		
	Q21	.78	6.21		
	Q22	.74	6.53		
	Q23	.71	9.67		
	Q24	.63	10.14		
	Q25	.68	7.43		
	Q26	.72	8.98		
	Q27	.66	6.89		
	Q28	.85	7.88		
	Q29	.58	6.78		

Hypotheses tests

Measurement model

We used structural equation modeling with LISREL 8.8 (Jöreskog & Sörbom, 2006) to test our hypotheses. Prior to testing the hypothesized structural model, we tested to see if the measurement model had good fit (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988). We tested a measurement model that had three latent factors (i.e. LMX, organizational forgetting, creative work involvement). The measurement model had an acceptable fit ($\chi^2 = 741.06$, $df=225$, $p \leq 0.01$; NNFI= 0.98, GFI= 0.93, CFI= 0.94, RMSEA= 0.09 ; SRMR= 0.06) (Arbuckle , 1997 ; Bollen , 1999 ; Browne & Cudeck , 1993), and all of the indicators had statistically significant ($p \leq 0.01$) loading on their intended constructs.

Hypothesized model

Having confirmed that the measurement model had adequate fit, we tested our proposed structural model. Results of the structural analysis of the proposed model provides an acceptable fit to the data ($\chi^2 = 740.71$, $df= 231$, $p \leq 0.01$; NNFI= 0.95, GFI= 0.93, CFI= 0.94, RMSEA= 0.09, SRMR= 0.06) (Arbuckle, 1997; Bollen, 1989; Browne & Cudeck, 1993; Hox, 2002).

Table4. Goodness- of fit indicators for the measurement and structural model

Indicators of goodness fit	Measurement model	Structural model	Proposed
χ^2 / df	741.06/225=	740.71/231=	≤ 3
NNFI	0.98	0.95	≥ 0.9
GFI	0.95	0.93	≥ 0.9
CFI	0.96	0.94	≥ 0.9
RMSEA	0.09	0.09	≤ 0.08
SRMR	0.06	0.06	≤ 0.08

In support of hypothesis 1, the path coefficient between LMX and creative work involvement was positive and significant ($\beta = 0.25$, $p \leq 0.001$). Hypothesis 2 predicted that LMX is positively related to organizational forgetting. We also, found support for this hypothesis ($\beta = 0.59$, $p \leq 0.001$). Furthermore, organizational forgetting significantly and positively affected creative work involvement ($\beta = 0.46$, $p \leq 0.001$), thereby hypothesis 3 is supported. Hypothesis 4 predicted that organizational forgetting mediates the relationship between LMX and creative work involvement. To test for mediation, James et al. (2006) provided some recommendations. First, a statistically significant relationship must exist between the predictor and the mediator. Second, a statistically significant relationship must exist between the mediator and the outcome. Finally, a goodness- of fit test is conducted to determine whether the only path from the predictor to the outcome is through the mediator.

The study provided support for organizational forgetting as a mediator of the relationship between LMX and creative work involvement. Due to a statistically significant indirect effect implies that the relationship between the antecedent and the outcome variable occurs through the mediator ($0.69 \times 0.46 \geq 0.25$). Thus, the study validated hypothesis 4.

Table5. Summary of hypothesis results

Latent independent variable	Latent dependent variable	Path coefficient	t-value
LMX	Creative work involvement	0.69	3.56
LMX	Organizational forgetting	0.25	2.84
Organizational forgetting	Creative work involvement	0.46	3.22

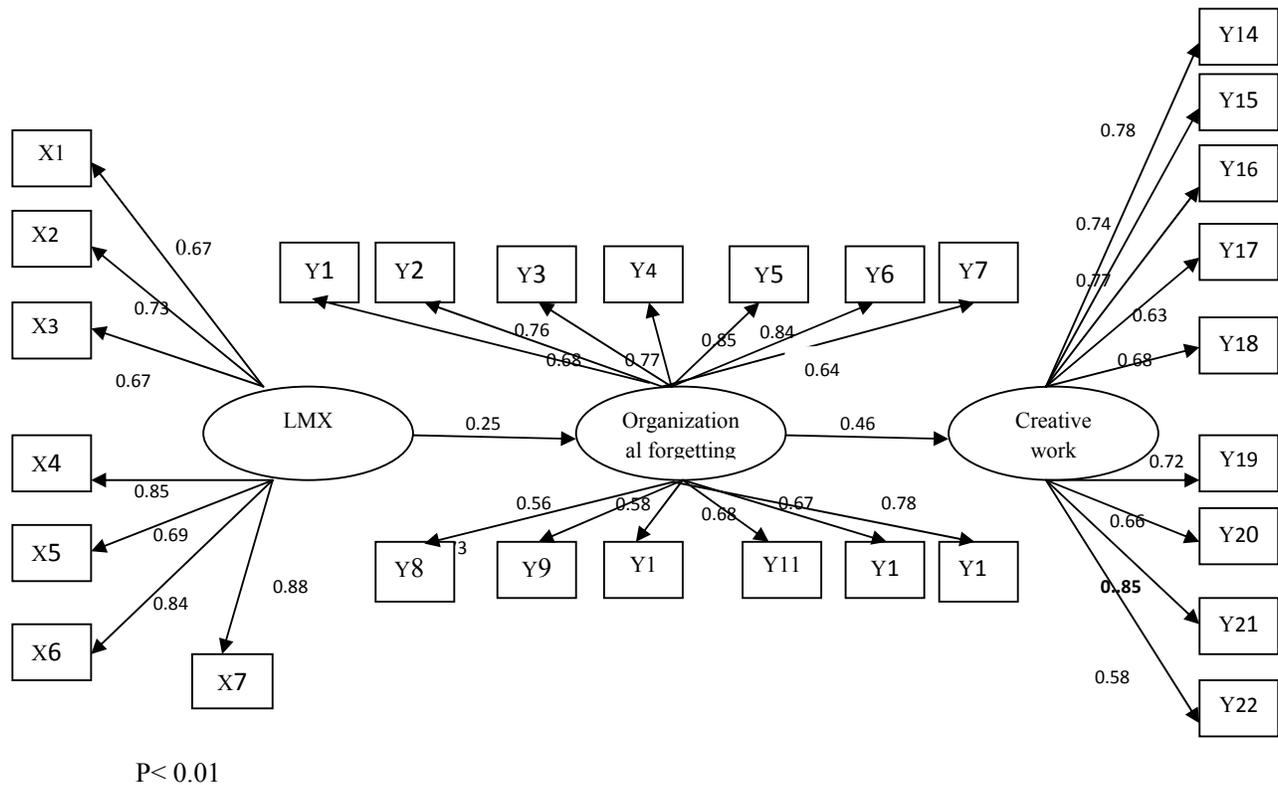


Fig.1. Structural model

Discussion

We sought whether relationship quality (in terms of leader –member exchange; LMX) was associated with creative work involvement, and whether organizational forgetting mediates this relationship. Our findings show that LMX was positively related with creative work involvement. Furthermore, LMX was positively related to organizational forgetting, organizational forgetting was positively related to creative work involvement. Also, and most importantly, our results yielded support for our postulated effect of mediating role of organizational forgetting. Thus, organizational forgetting mediated the relationship between LMX and creative work involvement. Researchers suggest a more detailed exploration of the LMX- creative work involvement relationship (Atwater & Carmeli, 2009; Tierney, 2008; Kark & Carmeli, 2009). For example, the findings of Volmer et al. (2012) indicated that high quality of supervisor-employee relationships(i.e. , leader-member exchange; LMX) fosters creativity at work . The findings of Volmer et al. (2012) indicated that high quality of supervisor-employee relationships(i.e. , leader-member exchange; LMX) fosters creativity at work . Moreover, Carmeli and Schaubroeck (2007) confirmed that the perceived expectation of the leader can influence individuals’ creative involvement at work. As a result, high quality connections at work could be relevant for work and job involvement (Kark & Carmeli, 2009; Ilies et al., 2007).

On the other hand, nowadays organizations must consider knowledge and the most valuable and strategic resource for themselves and believe that in order to remain competitive. They should manage their capabilities and mental resources and leadership is the most important factor in knowledge management (Esfahani et al. , 2012). This study confirmed that high quality of leader-member exchange can strengthen the intentional of organizational forgetting. Connections between supervisor and employees can facilitate the process of knowledge active forgetting in order to increase efficiency and effectiveness in an organization. Additionally, the finding that organizational mediates the relationship between LMX and work involvement. Because leaders in organizations are in positions

to help manage knowledge resource. They can enforce a context of cooperation and structure the process of knowledge. Similarly, recent studies have pointed to the importance of high-quality work relationships for promoting learning and knowledge creation process (Volmer et al., 2012; Carmeli, Brueller & Dutton, 2009). Furthermore, Fernandez and Sune (2009) explained that forgetting is closely related to innovation. This study, in addition to confirmed this result, examined the mediating role of knowledge forgetting and conceded that the high quality of leader-member exchange can fortify intentional forgetting knowledge in organization and subsequently enhance the employees' creative work involvement.

Conclusion

In a knowledge-based society, organizations seek ways to increase their innovations by fostering creative and innovative behaviors at work (Ford, 1996; Scott & Bruce, 1994). One way is to better understand how managing knowledge in organization. Also, leaders are considered to be one of the most influential factors of creative work involvement. Therefore, in this study, we attempted to contribute to research on LMX and creative work involvement through intentional organizational forgetting. Using a sample of employees working in insurance companies in northeast of Iran, we sought to unravel the role of LMX in facilitating creative work involvement in organization. Our study showed that LMX directly and indirectly, through intentional organizational forgetting, augments creative work involvement. Thus, our study suggests that organizations should adopt an interactional approach in order to foster employees' creative work involvement. These findings highlight the fact that researchers and practitioners need to combine different research streams in an attempt to better understand what is needed for employees to involve creative works.

The results of this study lead to a number of avenues for future research. First, leaders can encourage in the work place using various tactics and behaviors. Certainly, there are other facets of leadership that foster creative activities (e.g. openness). Hence, one fruitful avenue for future research may be to identify a construct of creative leadership. Furthermore, we considered employee perceptions of LMX as an important mechanism for encouraging creative activities. However, future research should examine other dimensions of leader-member relationships that have the potential to encourage creativity. Moreover, in this study, we investigated mediating role of organizational forgetting which played a significant role in the LMX. Creative work involvement relationship. Although, other possible potential moderators, such as motivational orientations and feedback or collaboration structures should be investigated in future research.

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