

## The Leader Member Exchange (Lmx) in Organizational Health Context. Observational Study at the Department of Rehabilitation

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### Abstract

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The LMX (Leader Member Exchange) theory has proven to be one of the most compelling theories for the understanding of the effects of leadership on organizational behavior. This theory argues that the quality of the relationship between the coordinator and collaborator plays an important role in the responses of the staff within the work environment. Furthermore, a positive LMX is linked to organizational commitment, the job satisfaction, and intentions to remain in the organization. The objective is to identify if and how a good relationship between the coordinator and collaborator, influence the organizational support and commitment. Were involved 44 professionals in the rehabilitation of the Department of Rehabilitation of a hospital near Verona (Italy). Analysis of the data shows a positive and significant correlation between LMX and organizational support and positive between LMX and organizational commitment. The findings from this study have demonstrated the critical importance that the report assumes that the Coordinator develops with collaborators in the understanding of the effects of leadership on organizational behavior. For future research, it would be interesting to apply the consultation of the theory of LMX in broader populations and belonging to all the health professions.

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**Keywords:** LMX; rehabilitation; organizational support; commitment

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## 1. Background

The storical phase affecting Italian health is particularly delicate with regards to the various changes taking place for some years which are changing organization, management, and finance. The literature describes a bureaucratic culture in public sector organizations that gives strong emphasis on rules and regulations (Odom et al., 1990). Strength is the proper use of human resources; the figures of the employee and the coordinator are the most valuable resources, they are an important contribution to the quality and quantity of services provided. Since quality improvement requires significant management changes, a potential pitfall in the public sector is that the initiatives are achieved slowly by employees (McLaughlin and Kaluzny, 2004).

The coordinator is the guidance, motivational and organizational and support. In fact, the coordinator oversees not just the practical but also the relational and motivational activities. Careful management is therefore important on the part of the coordinator to integrate employees into the context, identify their training needs, and support the motivation and professionalism of each. In this context, research has produced a lot of literature in the field of nursing and of the poor in rehabilitation. We are faced with two classes of health professions which are completely different, not only in the skills required in profiles and training within a company but also in the cultural history evolution. Leadership can be seen as the ability to motivate, through ideas, strategies, and actions to focus efforts and achieve goals, contributing to the success of the service (Bally, 2007).

Therefore, as the Coordinator is the hub of the team, the leadership aims to guide and organize the work of the team, looking for an effective cure and to encourage staff to develop their full potential (Wong and Cummings, 2009). Personnel management by the coordinator, therefore, becomes a decisive factor for the smooth functioning of an organization. In a context of improving the quality, leadership is recognized as a key factor in models of excellence. The skills of professionals within organizations become one of the main competitive factors that influence business performance, the improvement of which is increasingly linked to managerial aspects and management development.

From health professions, organizational skills are now also required, oriented around the acquisition of skills, planning, coordination and evaluation, conveyed by a recognized leadership determined within the group and that it represents an authoritative reference for the group. These skills historically involve the nursing profession, but recently are starting to catch on, even compared to rehabilitation or technical professions.

Comparing physical therapists, and health rehabilitation in general, little appears in literature about the nature of managerial work (Alexandria, 1997), although the subject of leadership is treated in cross terms when it comes to special features, including those managerial, for the health professions. The Physical Therapist Practice Guide for management responsibilities with respect to the therapist only offers some general guidelines. It describes the organization as "a qualified process of planning, management, organization and human resources, technical, environmental and financial management, effectively and efficiently," and includes "the management of resources for the patient and for the organization's operations". Therefore, the management responsibilities are traced to a theoretical and practical background in management but also to a leadership that draws on organizational and personal characteristics.

Some managerial models were generated on the leadership were generated, among which the most interesting is the approach Leader Member Exchange (LMX), an approach that focuses on the way in which the leader is able to maintain its position through a specific approach with his staff. LMX theory is based on the model of social exchange and gives the leader an active role in a relationship of equal exchange.

The objective of this research is to identify if and how a good relationship between the coordinator and collaborator, influence the organizational support and commitment. It will use a quantitative tool which the questionnaire with Likert scored, to analyze the correlations between LMX and these organizational outcomes. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the Leader Member Exchange within the Department of Rehabilitation of a hospital near Verona (Italy), in order to identify which strategies the coordinator can use to establish a good relationship with its employees.

## 2. Leader Member Exchange (Lmx)

The theory of the Leader Member Exchange (LMX), discussed for the first time by Dansereau et al. in 1975, has its origins in the vertical dyadic linkage theory, whose object of study was, specifically, the single dyadic relationship between the coordinator and each of its employees (Dansereau, Gren, Haga, 1975; Graen, Uhl-Bien, 1995). This "vertical dyad" is the result of the delegated coordinator's or assignment of employee work roles. Since this process can trigger two main exchange relations between the coordinator and collaborator (Kreitner, Kinicki, Buelens, 1999):

- In-group exchange: as coordinator and collaborator develop a partnership characterized by reciprocity and sharing,
- Out-group exchange: where the coordinator expressed a strong need to control through formal requests.

Compared theory dyadic vertical, LMX theory focuses on the determinants of dyadic relationship and its effects in terms of the achievement of organizational goals, in which a key is to be gratitude, a kind of obligation on the part of employees to reciprocate quality reports (Blau, 1964). With this theory, the coordinator develops different forms of exchange relationships with his staff tailored to the needs of the person and their characteristics (Graen, Uhl-Bien, 1995; Scandura & Lankau, 1996; Liden et al. 1997).

LMX theory argues that the quality of the relationship between the coordinator and co-worker plays an important role in the responses of the staff within the work environment. The pivot of this theory concerns the dyadic relationship that forms between the coordinator and each employee in terms of respect, trust, and mutual obligations, motivating the employee to act effectively against the organization (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). This exchange and this reciprocity, over time, allow the development of a report that is based on an incremental influence (Dienesch & Liden, 1986). This behavior represents the mutual basis of support for a mutually beneficial relationship (Blau, 1964; Liden et al. 1997).

Labor relations that arise between a worker and his supervisor are usually referred to the LMX (Graen, 1976; Graen and Scadura, 1987). In order for the relationship established with the employee to be of high quality and be so effective, the coordinator must:

- Lead the employee to achieve the objectives set,
- Motivate the employee to involve, to share and to envisage the future,
- Promote the possibilities of action of the employee through trust, collaboration and sharing, - Encourage the employee to try to raise expectations and rewarding individual efforts aimed at achieving the objectives,
- Communicate and inform the employee through constant feedback and also through "face to face" discussions
- Support for, and listening to, the problems and frustrations especially when the employee is whipped from work and has difficulty accepting for example the process of change. This can be through counseling and training,
- Praise small victories reinforcing the results obtained when the conduct of the employee go in the direction of the desired change without negative consequences.

High levels of LMX indicate a supportive relationship between superior and subordinate, to whom he entrusts responsibility and guarantees support, all of which go beyond formalities instead established within the organization (Wayne et al., 1997). Employees with a poor relationship with their coordinator, do not feel part of the group, do not accept new responsibilities and a greater commitment to work and describe the behavior of their coordinator as transactional or contractual (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995; Liden et al. 1997). In that case, the coordinator is forced to negotiate with the employee to obtain trust, respect, and conduct effective labor (Danserau et al. 1975; Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995; Liden et al., 1997).

A quality of the LMX relationship includes four dimensions:

- Contribution, defined as the degree of stress related to work performed;
- Loyalty, in showing public support in the relationship collaborator-coordinator;
- Influence, described as the appreciation in the interpersonal dyad between collaborator and coordinator;
- Professional respect refers to the degree to which each member of the dyad has built a credible reputation (Liden & Maslyn 1998 Laschinger et al. 2007).

According to the theory LMX, employees who have high-quality relationships with their coordinator are in the enviable position of having greater access to the attention of the coordinator, to the resources and support than do others who have lower quality relationships. Employees who have effective relationships with their leaders are more influential (Gajendran & Joshi, 2012). LMX theory has proven to be one of the most compelling theories for the understanding of the effects of leadership on organizational behavior (Schriesheim, Castro, and Cogliser, 1999). Supervisor-subordinate relations have become an area of interest to research organizations for a number of reasons. From a general point of view of competitiveness, supervisors can play an important role in organizations influencing attitudes, behavior, and overall performance related to the work of their subordinates (Harris, Kačmár, & Witt, 2005).

## **2.1 Relations of organizations in LMX**

Over the past 20 years, there has been a lot of research on the importance of relations within organizations. Research has shown that there are significant positive associations between the positive quality of LMX and individual and organizational outcomes such as job satisfaction, commitment and work performance (Graen & Cashman 1975; Gerstner & Day 1997; Liden & Maslyn 1998; Laschinger et al. 2007), leading to a large body of studies that have shown the explanatory power of social exchange compared a variety of attitudinal and behavioral outcomes related to work (Coyle-Shapiro et al. 2005).

As part of the coordinator's role, are duties such as delegating work to employees, assessing their performance, making decisions, using resources and making them available. These features lead the employee to accept their coordinator as representative of the organization. Therefore, the relationship established between the employee and the coordinator is important in influencing the perception that an employee may have with respect to the organizational support (Einsanberger et al. 1986; Wayne et al. 1997).

As Cheney (1983) suggested, organizational identification can be promoted through formal and informal communication between the manager and employees, because, through such communication, the subject can internalize the values, procedures, and organizational identity. Therefore, there may be a positive relationship between organizational identification and the quality of LMX. In a positive LMX, context employees may feel an obligation to reciprocate and perform citizenship behaviors that will be beneficial to the coordinator, colleagues, and the organization (Setton, Bennett, and Liden, 1996).

The quality of the relationship between supervisor and co-workers also determines security benefits for accidents and injuries (Hofmann & Morgeson, 1999): a high quality relationship between supervisor and staff allows for safer behaviors. The quality of the relationship is poorer when coordinator and assistant are different in kind and when the number of employees that refers to a single coordinator is high (Graen, Anderson, Shivers, 1996).

As demonstrated by Gomez and Rosen (2001), there is a positive link between the coordinator exchange and staff empowerment. Employees who have a high quality coordinator-collaborator exchange environment make more effort, work more, and often engage in tasks that go beyond what is required (Graen 1976; Liden & Maslyn 1998). Based on the theory of LMX, we have analyzed the relationship between leadership and individual climate, achieving a significant and positive relationship between the two variables (Dunegan, Tierney, and Duchon, 1992; Scott and Bruce, 1994). Leadership has been identified as one of the key factors (González-Rome, 2008).

According to Kačmár, Witt and Gully (2003) the importance of the relationship depends on the frequency with which the coordinator and co-workers interact. When the coordinator provides performance feedback to employees, the latter benefits in terms of security. On the contrary, when there is a good relationship there is little communication. If the relationship quality is low, the coordinator is more inclined to use power and authority (Fairhurst & Chandler, 1989), communication tends to be top-down, one-way with little attempt to motivate the employee (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995).

Good coordinator/collaborators relationships permit adequate information, support (Gerstner & Day, 1997), mutual respect, ability to meet user needs and improve the perception of autonomy and quality of care (Lohlke, Duhan, 2000) . Employees who receive support from their coordinator are more likely to reciprocate the support, doing more than what is asked of them when disbursing assistance and optimally (Wayne et al. 1997; Podsakoff et al. 2000). The little existing research on the relationship between LMX and Innovation on an individual level shows the existence of a positive relationship between the two constructs (Dunegan et al, 1992; Sanders, Moorkamp, Torka, Groeneveld, and Groeneveld, 2010; Scott and Bruce, 1994; 1998).

Surprisingly, there have been few studies that apply the framework of social exchange for the frame working of care (Trybou et al. 2013).

## **2.2 LMX and team**

Although the LMX theory is clearly group focused, most of the research was conducted on an individual or dyadic level (Henderson, et al., 2009). Recent reviews of theoretical LMX theory have highlighted the need to consider the differentiation of LMX in order to get a more complete view of the role played by the head-member exchange at group level (Henderson et al, 2009; Schyns & Day, 2010). Recently, research has focused on LMX analysis at the group level (Le Blanc & González-Rome, 2012; Naidoo, Scherbaum, and Goldstein, 2008; Schyns & Day, 2010), in response to various authors who have defended the need to consider the relationships of the head-user as a system of interdependent or dyadic intertwined relationships (Graen & Scandura, 1987; Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995), rather than as a set of independent dyads.



This perspective leads to the proposal that when leaders develop high quality relationships with all their staff, better results are achieved in the group (Graen, Novak, and Sommerkamp, 1982; Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995).

The fact that LMX research conducted at individual level has shown a significant positive relationship between this construct and the innovative climate suggests that LMX exists at group level and affects the innovative climate of the team. The development of the innovation team environment requires that team members feel supported and supported by their organizations and leaders when new proposals are implemented (González-Rome, 2008).

Although the correlations and influences are not yet clear, the consideration of LMX-level analysis of the group has incorporated the concept of differentiation in the relationship quality. The degree of differentiation is understood as a result of dynamic and interactive exchanges that occur between leaders and members, the nature of which may differ from all dyads within a workgroup (Henderson et al., 2009). This refers to the degree to which the leader establishes different relationships in terms of quality, with each member of his team. A high level of differentiation indicates that there is a big difference in how the different group members perceive their relationship with the leader. A low level of differentiation indicates that all team members perceive the quality of their relationship with the leader in a similar way.

Recently, several studies have analyzed the influence of the differentiation of LMX on the different processes and results of the team (Boies & Howell, 2006; Henderson, Wayne, Shore, Bommer, and Tetrick, 2008; Le Blanc & González-Rome, 2012; Schyns, 2006), in some cases by finding positive effects of differentiation and in other cases, negative. As Henderson et al. (2009) suggest, a variety of factors can interact with the differentiation of LMX in the team (perceptions of justice in the group regarding the LMX differentiation, individual levels of LMX in the group, etc.) to explain certain individual, group and organizational results. In the same way, Schyns and Day (2010) believe that the key issue is to determine under what conditions this differentiation produces positive results and under what conditions it does not.

Therefore, it may not be enough to pay attention to the quality of the reports and the level of differentiation as separate variables; instead, their interaction may be what it should be to influence the processes and results of the group. In particular, Schyns and Day (2010) suggest that the most advantageous situation for the groups is one in which there is a high and a low LMX differentiation, that is, situations where the coordinators develop high quality relationships with all members of the group. Although several limitations (time, resources, availability, etc.) may limit the coordinator to reach a state of LMX excellence, the results obtained indicate that this excellence is a desirable situation.

Thus, Le Blanc and González-Roma (2012) observed that the groups with high and low levels of LMX differentiation showed high levels of commitment within the group and increased performance.

### **2.3 The health professions and LMX**

Compared to health rehabilitation, in literature it is difficult to find specific material that connects LMX theory. Instead, nursing has begun to develop research investigating this theory, even in the national context, and not only in the Anglo-Saxon. In fact, only recently studies have been performed on nursing management and the quality of LMX in relations between the coordinator and nurses, the impact on nurses and work results. The research identifies a positive relationship between LMX and the level of effective commitment for nurses (Brunetto & Farr-Wharton 2006, 2007). Chen et al. (2008) found that a high-quality LMX is positively associated with perception of the support collaborators receive from supervisors and organizational citizenship behavior of nurses. As for LMX and empowerment in nursing, in a study in Ontario, Canada, discovered that the quality of LMX was significantly and positively correlated with structural empowerment (Laschinger et al. 2009).

Blau et al. (2010) reported that the quality of LMX has been linked to the operation behavior of nurses. Squires et al. (2010) found that LMX was positively correlated with the perception of the nurses' working environment and secure environment.

Other studies of nursing management highlight the importance of the coordinator in aspects such as being physically present, open to listening and willing to send supportive messages in difficult times (Manojlovich 2005 Greek et al., 2006 , Cummings et al., 2007, Blau et al. 2010).

In addition, greater job satisfaction and lower turnover of nurses were associated with a greater quality of LMX, comparing a sample of nurses in the United States (Han and Jekel 2011). At the interpersonal level, the perceived quality of the relationship exchange between nurse and coordinator was found to be important. Recent studies have linked LMX satisfaction, trust and intention to leave (Trybou et al., 2013). Employees who work in teams are inclined to compare their inputs and outputs with their colleagues to get a sense of relative position within the group and this position affects their attitudes and subsequent behavior, particularly on their perception of fairness (Tyler & Blader 2003).

### **3. Organizational Support And Lmx**

Perceived organizational support (POS) is the perception by workers of what the organization assesses, the value of the contributions received and the well-being of their employees (Eisenberger et al. 1986); and refers to the employment history of an employee and the bond that he perceives with his employer (Kopelman, Brief & Guzzo, 1990). The construct relates to the degree to which the organization rewards, strengthens, and supports the employee. It is possible that, by the norm of reciprocity (Gouldner, 1960), people perceive to be assumed by the organization (high POS), reciprocate this support taking action from which the organization can benefit (organizational citizenship behaviors).

Studies of Shore and Shore (1995) show that high levels of Perceived Organizational Support indicate a positive work environment, one that is recognized as safe by the workers and supportive in an organization that is interested in meeting the needs of its employees. According to Wayne and co-workers, high levels of POS create a feeling of obligation for which the employees not only perceive a link with their employers, but also perceive the obligation to return its commitment to employers up taking behaviors that support business goals (Wayne, Shore & Liden, 1997).

Research shows, in fact, that there is a positive link between perceived organizational support and organizational citizenship behaviors (Shore & Wayne, 1993), job satisfaction, affective commitment, job performance, (Eisenberger, Fasolo, & Davis-LaMastro, 1990), presence at work (Eisenberger et al. 1986); there is a negative relationship with turnover (Allen, Shore & Griffeth, 2003; Shore & Shore, 1995; Shore & Tetrick, 1991).

The theory behind the concept of POS is the social exchange theory (Blau, 1964), which together with the rules of reciprocity (Gouldner, 1960) has been recently applied in organizational research to describe the motivational bases that guide the attitudes and behavior of workers in organizations (Wayne, Shore, Bommer and Tetrick, 2002). The theory of organizational support (Eisenberger et al., 1986; Eisenberger, Armeli, Rexwinkel, Lynch, and Rhoades, 2001; Rhoades and Eisenberger, 2002), therefore, suggests that the implementation of organization of management strategies of human resources that demonstrate support towards workers is of fundamental importance for them.

Since the organization is often too abstract and distant from the worker (Reichers, 1985), the perception of organizational support develops in the individual, through a process of "personification" of the organization (Shore and Shore, 1995; Wayne, Shore and Liden, 1997), based on the experience accumulated of systems, awards and punishments they receive over time from their hierarchical superiors. This means that the relationship established between the employee and his immediate superior could play an important role in the perception of the worker of organizational support (Settoon, Bennett, and Liden, 1996; Wayne et al., 1997).

The theory of organizational support (Eisenberger, Aemeli, Rexwinkel, Lynch & Rhoades, 2001; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002) refers to the degree to which an employee perceives that the organization cares about their well-being and evaluates his contributions, describing as such the employees' opinions about the degree of involvement that the organization may have towards him. The relationship of the worker with his superior is one of the most important relationships within an organization. Work relations that arise between a worker and his supervisor are usually related to the exchange-leading collaborators, Leader Member Exchange. High levels of LMX indicate a supportive relationship between superior and subordinate, to whom he entrusts responsibility and trust, thus guaranteeing support.

In summary, employees with high-quality LMX relationships reward their leaders with organizational citizenship behaviors and participation which, in turn, have a positive impact on the quality of organizational life (Ghislieri, Quaglino, 2009). It is thus appropriate to examine the role of LMX as a determinant of organizational support. Furthermore, recent studies have also shown that the POS is an important antecedent of attitudes to work as organizational commitment and job satisfaction. In fact, workers who perceive to be supported by their organization increase their feeling of belonging and obligation towards it, exerting a significant influence on behavior at work and thus contributing to the achievement of the objectives (Eisenberger, Armeli, Rexwinkel, Lynch, and Rhoades, 2001). If you want to stimulate the POS in a company, according to the model developed by Allen et al. (2003), it can be considered his three antecedents: participation in decision making, equality in the rewards and opportunities for growth.

#### **4. Commitment and Lmx**

If there were a less literal term than the English 'commitment' (in this case "organizational commitment") we should understand it as that/those individual behaviors and/or group that can be defined in terms of commitment, sense of responsibility and sense of duty. These terms are not sufficient nor do they do justice to the complexity and richness of this concept. Multiple definitions of organizational commitment are found in literature.

The best known is that of Mowday et al. (1979), who consider it "a state of identification of the individual with a specific organization; the acceptance of the values and goals of the organization; the commitment to achieve these objectives and the desire to maintain their membership in the organization". Other definitions are derived from Porter et al. (1974) who identified three major components of organizational commitment as "a strong belief and acceptance of the goals of the organization, the willingness to exert considerable effort on behalf of the organization, and a definite desire to maintain organizational membership ". Sheldon (1971) defines the commitment as a positive assessment of the organization and objectives of the organizations. Meyer and Allen (1991) and Dunham et al. (1994) have identified three types of commitment:

1. affective commitment (emotional attachment),
2. Continuative commitment (related to the perception of the negative consequences derived from the loss of a job)
3. Normative commitment (sense of moral obligation to the organization).

The normative commitment is a relatively new aspect of organizational commitment having been defined by Bolon in 1993.

### **1) Affective Commitment (AC)**

The Affective Commitment is defined as the emotional attachment, identification, and involvement that an employee has with his organization and goals (Meyer & Allen, 1993). Porter et al (1974) further characterize the AC by three factors (1) beliefs and acceptance of the goals and values of the organization, (2) desire to focus efforts on helping the company achieve its goal, and

(3) Desire to maintain membership in the organization. Mowday et al (1979) add that the affective communication is "when the employee is identified with a particular organization and its objectives, in order to maintain the membership to facilitate the goal." Prevails when this type of commitment "individuals remain in the organization because they want to" (Cortese, 2005).

### **2) Continuative Commitment (CC)**

The Continuative Commitment is the will to stay in an organization for "no transferable" investment. No transferable investments include aspects such as retirement (Reichers, 1985). It also includes factors such as years of work or benefits that the employee may receive (Reichers, 1985). It is experienced more as a necessity than as desire. If this kind of commitment prevails "individuals remain in the organization because they need to" (Cortese, 2005).

### 3) Normative Commitment (NC)

The Normative Commitment (Bolon, 1993) is "the impulse perceived by the individual to act in order to pursue the goals and interests of the organization, because he believes this is the right thing to do from an ethical point of view" (Wiener, 1982). Weiner defines the legal commitment as a "generalized value of loyalty and duty"- Meyer and Allen (1991) have defined this type of regulatory commitment as "a feeling of obligation". In addition, argue that the normative commitment is a natural because of the way in which we grew up in society. The NC can be explained by other commitments such as marriage, family, religion, etc., for which an employee feels as if he had a moral obligation to the organization (Wiener, 1982). When this type of commitment prevails "individuals remain in the organization because they feel obliged to" (Cortese, 2005).

For workers daily commitment towards work and the company is a positive relationship that can potentially add meaning to their working lives, such as increasing the perceived value of the quality of their work; for the organization to have high and widespread commitment among employees means getting a surplus given by heightened performance and the reduction of the rate of absenteeism. Organizational commitment, however, is not the solution to every intra organizational conflict, nor the only antecedent of harmful behavior toward the worker and the social context in which the individual lives and the organization operates.

It would therefore seem desirable for an average level of organizational commitment, a kind of physiological indication from the organization of the net benefits for both the individual and for the company. Commitment can be assumed by the organization but also directed also towards colleagues or to the work that goes on by employees.

Some researchers have identified effective supervisor-employee relations as the factor most likely to enhance commitment (Taunton et al. 1997, Cohen 2006). People who build good trade relationships increase the commitment to the organization, which is considered as the most accurate predictor of turnover (Wagner 2007; Takase et al. 2008). Tourangeau et al. (2009) have shown that when the relationship exchange between nurse and supervisor is of high quality, nurses report a strong intention to remain in the organization.

Research has shown that a positive LMX is linked to organizational commitment, job satisfaction, and intentions to remain in the organization (Scandura & Graen 1984; Scandura et al. 1986; Graen & Uhl-Bien 1995; Settoon et al. 1996; Harris et al. 2005; Tse & Lam 2008). These results are consistent with the characteristics studied in Magnet Hospitals, compared with maintenance of nurses (Kramer & Schmalenberg 2002).

The objective of this research is:

- Identify which strategies the coordinator can use to establish a good relationship with its employees.

Have been formulated the following hypotheses:

*Hypothesis 1 (H1):* the relationship between the coordinator and co-workers is positively correlated with the perception of operators to be supported.

*Hypothesis 2 (H2):* the relationship between the coordinator and co-workers is positively related to the sense of belonging to the Company.

## 5. Method

The study is carried out within a hospital near Verona(Italy), at the Department of Functional Rehabilitation Hospital-Territory, established by Resolution 347 of the General Manager of 03.07.2014, and is targeted at health professions rehabilitation, class II (Health Ministry Decree 118/2001), pertaining to that Department.

This survey is an observational study, approved by the Executive Health Service Professions of a hospital near Verona (Protocol n. 39041 of 17/07/2014). The research, on a voluntary basis, was performed using a structured questionnaire accompanied by informed consent to the processing of data (Appendix 1), delivered to each of the rehabilitation technicians (physical therapists and speech therapists) of the Department of Functional Rehabilitation Hospital -Territory.



In July and August 2014, the objectives of the research, the presentation of the questionnaire and the method of completion were preceded by phases of awareness through meetings with the Director of the Department and the Coordinators. By appointment, the questionnaires were distributed and presented the research to all employees of the department. The questionnaire was collected in containers in turn distributed at each site. The containers were recovered over 2/3 weeks. Throughout the pipeline, there have been moments of supervision, meeting, explanation, and reinforcement with the groups involved in the study, in particular to reassure them on data privacy and on anonymity.

## **5.1 Sample**

The search uses a quantitative methodology through the use of a structured questionnaire, composed of a first part relating to the acquisition of personal and social data relating to the working environment and a second consists of 3 rating scales with Likert score ranging to investigate variables related to the quality of the collaborator/coordinator relationship, organizational support and commitment. The research was conducted on the entire population of 44 rehabilitation technicians in service in September 2014, in 5 UUOO/premises belonging to the Department of Functional Rehabilitation Hospital-Territory in hospital near Verona. The groups pertaining to individual locations were briefed on the objectives and methods of data collection through meetings held the first days of September 2014.

The criterion for inclusion is to belong to the class II of health rehabilitation (Health Ministry Decree 118/2001) of the Department of Functional Rehabilitation Hospital-Territory in hospital near Verona. The locations involved were 5, 44 questionnaires administered, those withdrawn 40, those deemed valid 40. 40 rehabilitation technicians responded to the questionnaire, 17.5% male, and 82.5% female.

## **5.2 Measure**

They used a structured questionnaire composed of a first part dedicated to the collection of personal and professional social data and a second part consists of three rating scales with Likert score. The scales used are mainly drawn from the recent literature on the subject, translated, and validated in Italian. The measures used are:

- Leader Member Exchange (LMX), 6 items on a Likert scale (1: untrue; 5: completely true). It was measured through the use of the Graen and Uhl-Bien scale (1995), the items detect the strength of the relationship between the mutual work coordinator and his staff physiotherapists or speech therapists. Sample item: "My coordinator uses his organizational position to help solve problems in my work."

- Perception of organizational support, 4-item Likert scale (1: untrue; 5: completely true). To measure the organizational support the Eisenberg et al questionnaire was used. (1986): "Perceived Organizational Support". Organizational support refers to the measure of the degree to which employees perceive that their department evaluates their contributions and cares about their welfare. It was found to support the perception of the department and the Coordinator in the only form of media in general (and not in that of support for change). Sample item: "My department takes account of my goals and my values."

- Organizational Commitment (affective, continuative, normative), 18 items on a Likert scale (1: untrue; 5: completely true). This is the sense of attachment to their company. To detect the strength of the bond that the therapist feels towards their company the questionnaire developed by Meyer & Allen (1993) was used; 18 items in total in three distinct factors of six items each measuring respectively:

- Affective Commitment: indicates the affective bond with the organization: they are in this organization because "I want to be there." Sample item: "I really feel as though some problems of my company were my own";

- Normative Commitment: indicates the moral bond with their company, they are in this company because "I feel morally obligated." Sample item: "I could betray the trust you have given me if I left my current company."

- Continuative Commitment: indicate the connection instrumental, "I am in this department because I have added advantages, or because I have no alternative." Sample item: "I continue to work for this company because I do not think that another might offer me the same benefits."

### 5.3 Data Analysis

To measure the association between these variables the coefficient correlation of Spearman's rank was used. The coefficient is calculated as a Pearson applied correlation to the ranks of the variables (Conover, 1999). For the calculation of the estimates the Stata 12 software (StataCorp, 2011) was used.

In the first phase of data analysis, descriptive statistics were used to process the results with respect to the individual variables. The sample consisted of 40 subjects (Table 1).

**Table 1: Frequency and percentage of the sample against all the variables considered**

Variable	N	%
<i>Sex</i>		
Females	33	82.5
Men	7	17.5
<i>Basic training</i>		
Regionalschool of physiotherapy	6	15
Diploma or degree of physiotherapy	26	65
Diploma or degree of speech therapy	8	20
<i>Postgraduate training</i>		
Nothing	36	90
Master	2	5
Masters degree in rehabilitative sciences	1	2.5
Haunting LM or relevant master	1	2.5
<i>Training future intentions</i>		
Nothing	33	82.5
LM o relevant master	5	12.5
LM or irrelevant master	2	5
<i>Type of work contract</i>		
Full time or permanent	34	85
Temporary part time	6	15

Considering the quantities in the sample, it is not interesting to analyze the value of "media" as sensitive to extreme values. It was instead decided to consider the more robust value "median", for our investigation.

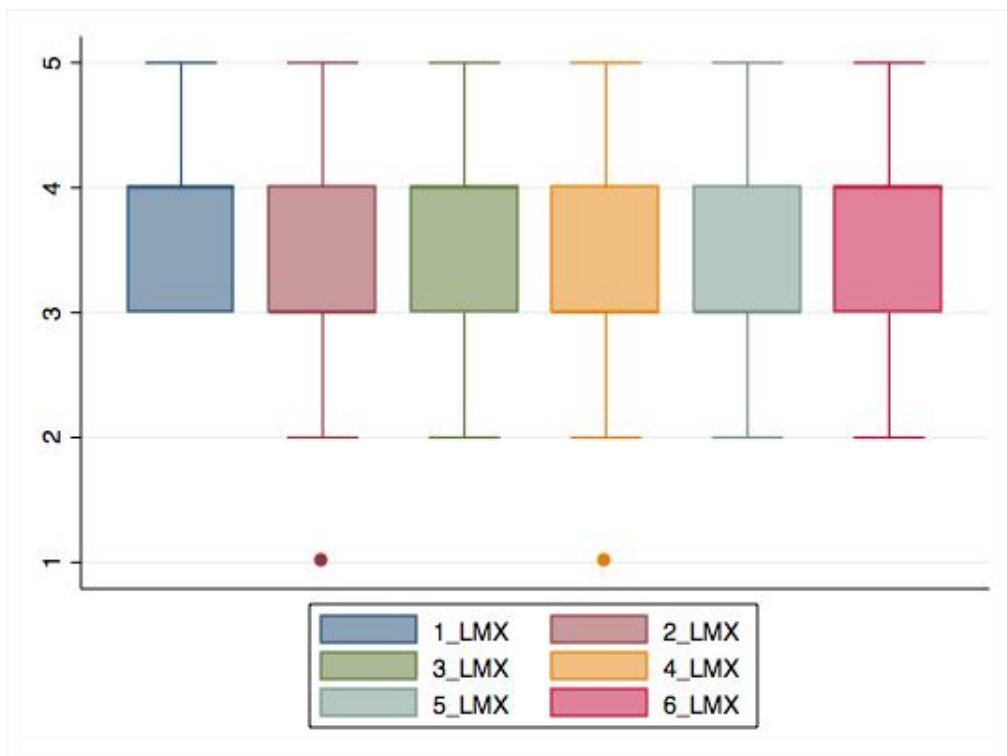
The internal consistency of the different scales has been calculated using the coefficient alpha reliability. From the box plot and the relative median sample, subjects evaluated:

- Leadership with medium-high scores (Figure 1). The Cronbach's alpha for this group of variables (scale reliability coefficient) was equal to 0.9339;

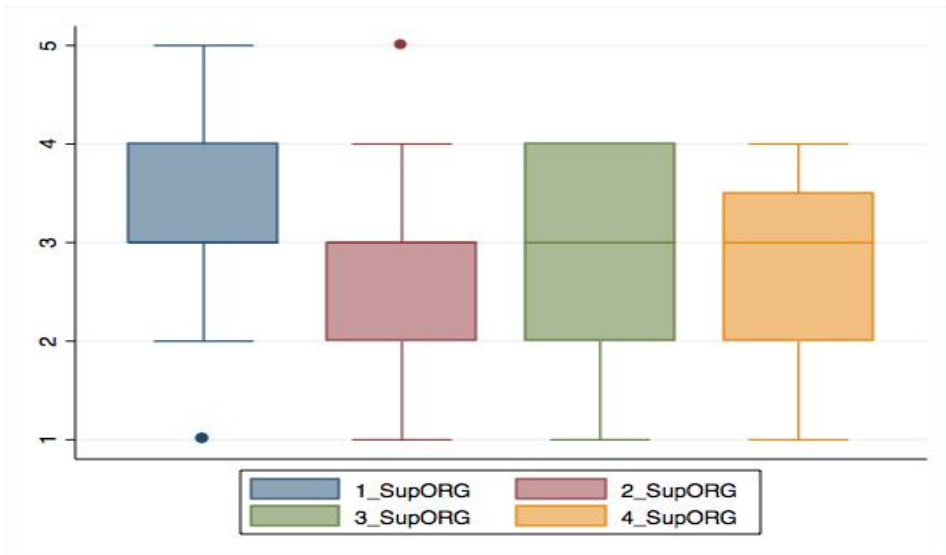
- Support by the Company with average scores (Figure 2). The Cronbach's alpha for this group of variables (coefficient scale reliability) was equal to 0.8996;

- The sense of belonging to the Company with low and average scores (Figure 3). The alpha Cronbach for comcc variables was equal to 0.7055, 0.8588 comac for variables, and the comnc variables 0.9032.

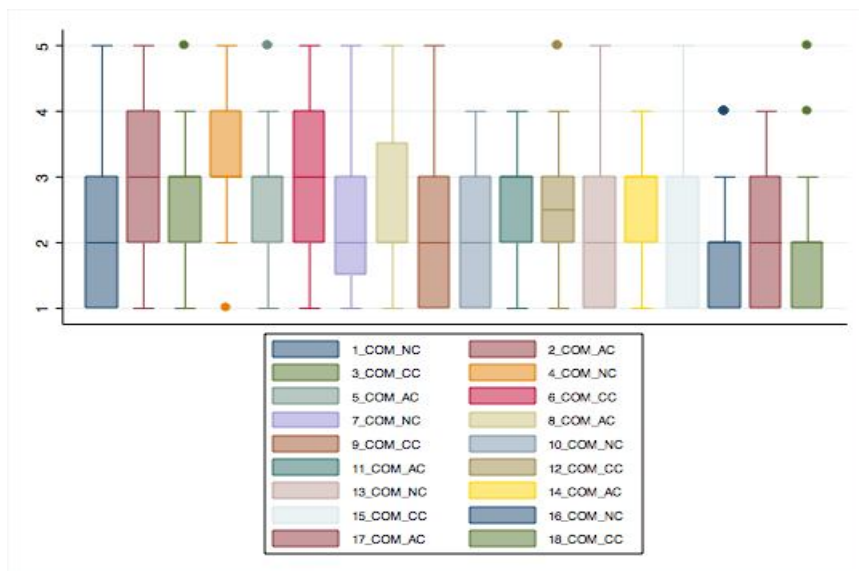
**Figure 1: Boxplot on questions relating to the evaluation of LMX**



**Figure 2: Box plot on questions related to evaluation support by the department.**



**Figure 3: Box plot on questions related to organizational commitment.**



#### 5.4 Features of the variable relationship between the coordinator and his collaborators

The relationship between the coordinator and his staff provide a scale analysis of the relationship between the roles of coordinator and collaborator that develops along a continuum; from one extreme low score that describes a relationship cold and not very active, in an opposite high score synthesis of an attitude of trust and respect, positively correlated with the degree of productivity and employee satisfaction, turnover negatively (Table 2).

**Table 2: Features of the variable relationship between the coordinator and his collaborators (LMX)**

The relationship between the coordinator and his collaborators	Item number	Median	Cronbach'salpha*
On a Likert-type scale from 1 "not true" to 5 "completely true"	6	3 , 4	0.93

The therapists perceive a reasonable relationship with their coordinator. It concerns the use of the position of the coordinator to deal with the resolution of its employees work problems, the understanding of problems and business needs, the effectiveness of the working relationship with the coordinator, who in turn develops trust and respect.

#### 5.5 Variable organizational commitment features

The commitment is configured as the process by which individual interests are expressed in the performance of models of social and organization behaviors, which would be undertaken by individuals, as perceived as relevant to their own interests and needs. The instrument used in this research to detect the degree of commitment of the worker has analyzed the following three dimensions:

1. Affective commitment (emotional attachment);
2. Normative commitment (sense of obligation to the organization);

3. Continuative commitment (related to the perception of the negative consequences derived from job loss) (Table 3).

**Table 3: Variable organizational commitment features**

On a Likert-type scale from 1 "untrue" to 5 "completely true"	Item number	Median	Cronbach'salpha*
Affective	6	2, 3	0.85
Continuative	6	2, 3	0.70
Normative	6	2, 3	0.90

The therapists interviewed felt a reduced sense of belonging to the company in which they work, showing more feelings of desire and need to remain in the organization, rather than obligation.

### 5.6 Variable perception of organizational support features

The perception of support (POS) is the degree to which the employee perceives that the organization cares about their well-being and evaluates his contributions, describing in this way the employees' opinions about the degree of involvement that the organization has in its comparisons. In the present study only the size was taken into account:

- Organizational support: the degree to which the employee perceives that the organization in which they work (as a department) is concerned about his welfare proving regard for his needs and values (Table 4).

**Table 4: Variable organizational support features**

On a Likert-type scale from 1 "untrue" to 5 "completely true"	Item Number	Median	Cronbach'salpha*
Organizational support (my department actually cares about my welfare)	4	3	0.89

*\*Cronbach's alpha is the coefficient of reliability that is based on the average of intercorrelations among the items and measures the degree of internal consistency of variable. Un value alpha = .70 is the acceptable level of internal consistency and adequacy of the construct of the test built.*

Therapists receive sufficient support from the organization with respect to the creation of favorable conditions and seize their personal needs.

## **6. Results**

The research then continued with an analysis of the correlations between the variables studied, keeping the focus on the assumptions of the research:

H1: the relationship between the coordinator and co-workers is positively correlated with the perception of operators to be supported.

H2: the relationship between the coordinator and co-workers is positively related to the sense of belonging to the Company.

*The perception of the relationship with the coordinator is rated as follows:*

- Positively (0.4165) and significantly (p-value 0.0075) with organizational support;

- Positively (0.0694) with the commitment, but due to the low sample has not been possible to reach a level of statistical significance appropriate.

This means that a better relationship with the coordinator increases the perception of both of organizational support and of the employee's sense of belonging to the Company; the former quite significantly. It was also performed an analysis of the correlations between LMX and socio-demographic variables (Table 5).



**Table 5: Correlation LMX and socio-demographic variables**

Variable	Correlation (p-value)
<b>Age</b>	<b>-0.30 (0.06)</b>
Sex	-0.11 (0.49)
Basic training	-0.21 (0.17)
Postgraduate training	0.02 (0.86)
Formative Intention	-0.03 (0.82)
Type of contract	0.17 (0.26)
Tenureprofessional	-0.18 (0.25)
Tenure company	-0.14 (0.36)
Tenurecontext	-0.24 (0.13)

There was only a positive correlation with the post-base and in the long term to short term contract text. The only significant correlation was with the "age" variable.

Due to the low sample quantity (N = 40) it was not considered appropriate to apply a logistic regression (or possibly ordinal) variables of interest. In the future, it might be interesting to administer the questionnaire to operators of other hospitals to get a wider range of data, so to apply some model data.

## 7. Discussion

Based on the assumptions set out, we now proceed to refute the arguments:

*Hypothesis 1 (H1):* the relationship between the coordinator and co-workers is positively correlated with the perception of operators to be supported. This hypothesis was confirmed.

In fact, the statistical correlations of the relationship between the coordinator and his collaborators show a statistically significant and positive relationship with the perception of the latter being supported by the company for which they work. These correlations show that if there is a good relationship between the coordinator and co-worker, this also increases the perception of the employee with respect to organizational support.

The positive relationship between the two variables is supported in literature. Several studies carried out mainly in the industrial and commercial workplace argue that the coordinator's report on employees is critical in organizations as it can play an important role in influencing the perception of organizational support of the employee (Eisenberger et al. 1986; Wayne et al. 1997).

*Hypothesis 2 (H2):* the relationship between the coordinator and co-workers is positively related to the sense of belonging to the Company. This hypothesis was confirmed. Statistical correlations of the relationship between the coordinator and his collaborators show a positive relationship with organizational commitment. This correlation has emerged to be insignificant due to the low sample size. This correlation shows that if the relationship between the coordinator and co-workers is at a high level, even the perception of organizational commitment increases. The research reveals that there are significant positive associations between positive quality of LMX and commitment as well as supported by the literature (Graen & Cashman 1975 Gerstner & Day 1997 Liden & Maslyn 1998 Laschinger et al. 2007).

A coordinator / collaborator report of low quality with poor communication brings in uncertainty, insecurity, increased stress, lack of commitment for the co-worker (Ganster & Shaubroeck, 1991). In the health sector, the research identifies a positive relationship between LMX and the level of affective commitment for nurses (Brunetto & Farr-Wharton 2006, 2007). These results, emerged within a Department of Rehabilitation and turned to the health professions of class II, are in line with the findings in the literature to date, both in the industrial and commercial fields, and, above all, in health care, specifically , nursing.

What makes you think about the versatility of the role of the coordinator also refers to the strong commitment of the Director of Nursing to invest in terms of professional development on coordinators.

The overall results of the study paint a reality characterized by a discrete organizational wellbeing that still requires a commitment on the part of the corporate organization in order to maintain this situation. The data shows a positive work environment recognized as safe by the workers, so you have an organization that is care supportive to meet the needs of its workers.

Thus, the theory of organizational support is confirmed (Eisenberger et al., 1986; Eisenberger, Armeli, Rexwinkel, Lynch, and Rhoades, 2001; Rhoades and Eisenberger, 2002) for which there is the implementation of the organization and strategies of human resource management to demonstrate support for the workers.

The possibilities for improvement should focus on support, employee satisfaction, and motivation in need of connection to the business (organizational commitment), this will demonstrate greater self-motivation towards their work and help, most likely with the welfare of the organization through engaging in more spontaneous citizenship behavior. The manager could try to implement strategies aimed at involving and sharing some decisions that affect the future work of the therapists, for example through changes in the organization or training initiatives that increase the skills and conducive organizational climate. It could also stimulate the coordinator to focus on professional autonomy, skills, and the abilities of each employee to increase the involvement and participation of the same, mainly within the group but also the company.

This takes some of the concepts of "Magnet Hospital", where it is appropriate that the manager is able to create a good job and a supportive environment based on participative management and self-governance that develop autonomy and visibility of employees by giving them high value (Upenieks, 2002, 2003a, 2003b).

In fact, from the research, therapists of hospital near Verona, are most effectively involved (emotional commitment), therefore "individuals remain in the organization because they want to" (Cortese, 2005) and therefore require further efforts on the part of 'organization to encourage greater normative and continuous involvement in order to stimulate a kind of physiological rate of attachment to the organization that provides benefits both for partners and company.

This would increase the welfare of the worker and the development of organizational citizenship behaviors. Going for professional growth, this leads the group to the high perception of autonomy (Laschinger et al., 1997) and control over practice (Laschinger, Havens, 1996), as well as access to information, support, resources, all ' opportunities to grow professionally, by the possibility of flexible shifts and a strong alliance with other professionals (Aiken et al., 2002), stimulating the logic of continuous learning.

Finally, from the results it can be assumed that the whole group of health rehabilitation of hospital near Verona probably represents a context for change, on which therefore to be able to think in terms of different organizational projects and new projects. These results show a sufficiently adequate organizational climate in which they can develop innovation and change.

### **7.1 Limits of the study**

One of the main limitations of this study is certainly the small number of samples examined, even if it is the entire population present in the reality of the Health in which the project was carried out. Study participants also were divided into small groups, according to the realities of work in which they are inserted. From the data collected, certain distrust was shown with respect to the anonymity that seems to have led to some omission or modification in filling out the questionnaire. Another limitation is the recent allocation of some professionals. The speech therapists of the hospital near Verona have begun to refer to the figure of the Coordinator only by July 2014.

It can therefore be assumed that the answers to the questionnaire are not completely true, but dictated, probably, by first personal impressions of character, rather than their professional opinions.

## **8. Conclusions**

This project thesis is meant to represent an innovative study, aiming to generalize the results so far emerging from literature within the field of nursing. It aims to open the door to broader managerial reasoning that could find an initial response by the results of this study, in order to be considered in a transversal way to all health professions. The literature examined in the elaborate thesis has demonstrated the critical importance that the report assumes that the coordinator develops with collaborators in understanding the effects of leadership on organizational behavior (Schriesheim, Castro, and Coglisier, 1999). Supervisor-employee relations have become an area of interest to researchers because organizational supervisors can play an important role in organizations influencing attitudes, behavior, and overall performance related to the work of their subordinates (Harris, Kačmár, & Witt, 2005).

The coordinator who can establish a relationship of good quality with his co-worker can track and discriminate emotions and use this information to guide thinking and action to recognize and influence their emotional states and those of the collaborator in order to solve problems and choose behaviours. The relationship of the worker with his superior is one of the most important relationships within an organization.

High levels of LMX indicate a relationship between upper and supportive collaborator, to whom he entrusts responsibility, thus guaranteeing support. In summary, employees with high-quality LMX relationships reward their leaders with organizational citizenship behaviors and participation which, in turn, have a positive impact on the quality of organizational life (Ghislieri, Quaglino, 2009). Effective supervisor-employee relations have been identified as the factor most likely to enhance the commitment (Taunton et al. 1997, Cohen 2006). These considerations, found in nursing, are also supported by the data from the study conducted at the hospital near Verona, instead derived within rehabilitation.

In fact, from the statistical analysis, it appears that there is a positive correlation between both the relationship collaborator/coordinator and organizational support, both among collaborative relationship/coordinator and organizational commitment. These results depict a reality characterized by a discrete organizational well-being which requires a commitment on the part of the corporate organization in order to maintain this situation. A further and important point concerns the DPS that should stimulate the coordinator to develop personal relationships with their employees based on their individual needs and concerns, in order to develop a quality relationship, characterized by respect and alliance, which facilitates the possible future resistance.

As seen from the literature, a good coordinator / collaborator relationship is an important prerequisite to improve the organizational climate, and indirectly, the quality of care. This project aims to be a first step towards greater uniformity of the health professions that within the local health roles of coordinators or managers. Although the historical figure of reference for the leadership of Nursing is that of the nurse, with the legislative, organizational, and training changes, it takes a more complex and dynamic hold.

The organization, represented by the Service for the Health Professions, includes professionals with different solid cross-training in management. It would be interesting to conduct new research in management, referring to the various health professions, and on larger samples, who can verify the findings from this project. The goal is to produce scientific evidence on an area where there is still much to explore.

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