

The Moderating Role of Trust in Relationship between Leader–Member Exchange and Safety Citizenship Behaviour among Gem Miners in Ratnapura Divisional Secretariat of Sri Lanka

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Abstract

Promoting voluntary safety behaviour is vital in high-risk industries such as gem mining, which significantly contributes to Sri Lanka's informal economy. Such behaviour minimises workplace accidents and strengthens organisational safety culture. This study investigates the influence of leader–member exchange (LMX) dimensions—respect, affection, loyalty, and contribution—on safety citizenship behaviour (SCB) and examines the moderating role of trust in this relationship. Despite growing global interest in occupational safety, limited research has explored how leadership quality affects voluntary safety behaviours in informal, high-risk sectors like gem mining. The main objective of this study is to assess how LMX dimensions impact SCB and to determine whether trust moderates this relationship. A quantitative research design was adopted, involving 275 gem miners selected through stratified random sampling. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire and analysed using descriptive statistics, regression, and moderation analysis via SPSS. Findings revealed that the LMX dimensions of respect, loyalty, and contribution significantly and positively influenced safety citizenship behaviour, whereas affection had no significant effect. Among these, respect and contribution demonstrated the strongest positive influence, indicating that miners are more inclined to engage in voluntary safety behaviours when they feel respected and their efforts are recognised. This highlights the importance of task-oriented leadership relationships over emotional bonds in high-risk environments. Trust, tested as a moderating variable, did not significantly alter the relationship between LMX dimensions and SCB. While trust remains conceptually important, its moderating effect appears limited in influencing voluntary safety behaviour. The findings suggest that leadership development initiatives emphasising these qualities play a critical role in promoting a strong safety culture among gem miners in Sri Lanka.

Keywords: leader-member exchange, occupational safety, safety citizenship behaviour, trust