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# Beyond Stereotypes: An Analytical Framework for Effective Women Leadership in the Middle East

Nadine Hojaili

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# THÈSE DE DOCTORAT

## Au-delà des stéréotypes: un cadre analytique pour un leadership efficace des femmes au Moyen-Orient

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**Présentée en vue de l'obtention  
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# **Au-delà des stéréotypes : un cadre analytique pour un leadership efficace des femmes au Moyen-Orient**

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## ABSTRACT

**Title:** Beyond Stereotypes: An Analytical Framework for Effective Women Leadership in the Middle East

This study investigates the relationships between procedural justice, interactional justice, leader-member exchange, and job satisfaction in Lebanese small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Grounded in the Social Exchange Theory, the research explores how fairness perceptions and gender influence leader-member relationships and employee satisfaction during crises. Using data from 1,127 participants in Lebanese SMEs, structural equation modeling was employed for analysis. Results reveal that interactional justice positively impacts leader-member exchange, fostering strong ties through fair and respectful treatment. Surprisingly, procedural justice does not exhibit a direct positive effect on leader-member exchange, implying contextual factors may override procedural fairness. Moreover, leader-member exchange significantly enhances job satisfaction, highlighting the importance of positive leadership in promoting employee well-being. However, contrary to hypotheses, leader-member exchange does not mediate the relationship between procedural justice and job satisfaction. Gender is not a significant moderator of relationships between procedural justice, interactional justice, leader-member exchange, and job satisfaction, suggesting universal relevance within Lebanese SMEs. Theoretical implications from the Social Exchange Theory stress the need for fair communication and personalized leadership styles to build trust and positive relationships. Managerial implications underscore adopting gender-inclusive and responsive approaches, alongside crisis management strategies prioritizing procedural and interactional justice, for fostering resilience in organizations. **Keywords:** procedural justice, interactional justice, leader-member exchange, job satisfaction, gender-inclusive, Lebanese SMEs.

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## RÉSUMÉ

**Titre:** Au-delà des stéréotypes: un cadre analytique pour un leadership efficace des femmes au Moyen-Orient.

Cette étude examine les relations entre la justice procédurale, la justice interactionnelle, l'échange leader-membre et la satisfaction au travail dans les petites et moyennes entreprises (PME) libanaises. Fondée sur la théorie de l'échange social, la recherche explore comment les perceptions de l'équité et le genre influencent les relations entre les leaders et les membres et la satisfaction des employés pendant les crises. En utilisant des données de 1127 participants dans les PME libanaises, la modélisation d'équations structurelles a été utilisée pour l'analyse. Les résultats révèlent que la justice interactionnelle a un impact positif sur l'échange leader-membre, favorisant des liens solides grâce à un traitement équitable et respectueux. Étonnamment, la justice procédurale n'a pas d'effet positif direct sur l'échange leader-membre, ce qui suggère que des facteurs contextuels peuvent supplanter l'équité procédurale. De plus, l'échange leader-membre améliore significativement la satisfaction au travail, soulignant l'importance d'un leadership positif pour promouvoir le bien-être des employés. Cependant, contrairement aux hypothèses, l'échange leader-membre ne médie pas la relation entre la justice procédurale et la satisfaction au travail. Le genre n'est pas un modérateur significatif des relations entre la justice procédurale, la justice interactionnelle, l'échange leader-membre et la satisfaction au travail, ce qui suggère une pertinence universelle au sein des PME libanaises. Les implications théoriques de la théorie de l'échange social soulignent la nécessité d'une communication équitable et de styles de leadership personnalisés pour instaurer la confiance et des relations positives. Les implications managériales soulignent l'adoption d'approches inclusives et réactives en matière de genre, ainsi que des stratégies de gestion de crise privilégiant la justice procédurale et interactionnelle, pour favoriser la résilience au sein des organisations.

**Mots clés:** Justice procédurale, justice interactionnelle, LMX, satisfaction au travail, inclusif pour le genre, PME libanaises.

*"True leadership knows not to go to extremes but knows how to confront and appreciate challenges."*

**Lubna Olayan**

*To my grandmother*



## DEDICATION

This research is dedicated to the most important people in my life, who have been my pillars of strength and support. To my beloved father, Mansour HOJAILI, and my dear mother, Houda HOJAILI, your unwavering love and encouragement have been the driving force behind my pursuit of knowledge and academic excellence. Your belief in me has instilled in me the confidence to overcome any challenge.

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Lastly, to all my friends, your encouragement, and camaraderie have made this research journey enjoyable and memorable. Your presence in my life has enriched it in countless ways.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

LMX	Leader-Member Exchange
SME	Small and Medium Enterprise
SET	Social Exchange Theory

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background and Statement of the Problem

Gender inequality and the underrepresentation of women in leadership and management positions is a pervasive and ongoing global issue that continues to spark dialogue and garner attention (Barth, 2018). Despite the tireless efforts of scholars over the past few decades to investigate gender-related issues in the Middle East using a wide range of theoretical and methodological frameworks, the critical role and position of women in the region still languish in obscurity, being largely neglected, and underestimated in academic literature (Afshar, 2016; Afiouni, 2014; Sidani et al., 2015). The striking absence of women from strategic and leadership roles is particularly alarming in the Middle East and needs to be put to the forefront of discussions and academic research (Tlaiss, 2015).

Unfortunately, this situation not only affects individual women and their prospects for career advancement, but it also has broader implications for the development and progress of society (Braun & alii, 2019). When women are excluded from leadership roles, their unique perspectives and talents are also excluded from decision-making processes, resulting in a narrower range of ideas and solutions being considered. This lack of diversity can limit progress and innovation in various fields, as different viewpoints and experiences are not being considered (Rive, 2022).

Furthermore, the underrepresentation of women in leadership roles can perpetuate harmful stereotypes and biases, creating a self-reinforcing cycle of gender inequality. Women who do attempt to enter leadership roles may face significant barriers and discrimination, making it difficult for them to succeed and thrive in their careers. This can create a discouraging environment for future generations of women, limiting their aspirations and opportunities (Tlaiss and Mendelson, 2014). To address these challenges, it is crucial for researchers to prioritize the study of women's roles and experiences in the Middle East, with a particular focus on leadership and strategic positions. By shedding light on the obstacles and



opportunities facing women in these roles, we can work towards creating a more equitable and inclusive society, where everyone has the chance to contribute and succeed.

In recent years, women in the Middle East have made notable strides in advancing into leadership positions. However, despite this progress, the representation of women in executive roles and on corporate boards remains disturbingly low. According to The World Bank (2022), a mere 4.1 percent of board positions in the Arab world are occupied by women, and only 5.4 percent hold senior executive roles. The female labor force participation rate in the Middle East and North Africa is just 19.4 percent, with Lebanon's rate slightly rising at 31.8 percent (The World Bank, 2022).

In consideration of the advancements accomplished thus far, gender inequality remains pervasive in the Arab world, and Lebanon continues to suffer from one of the lowest rates of women's labor market participation in the world (Bastian et al., 2019). It is worth noting that Lebanon's ranking on the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Index has fallen to 145th out of 153 countries in 2020 (World Economic Forum, 2020), underscoring the urgent need for gender parity initiatives to be implemented in the region.

The female deficit in business leadership has been a topic of concern for many scholars who have sought to analyze the various obstacles faced by Arab women in gaining access to board and senior executive positions. Regardless of the progress made in recent years, the region still faces gendered stereotypes that hinder women from achieving their full potential. Researchers have identified several factors that contribute to the gender and leadership gaps, but there is still disagreement among theorists as to the root causes of this deficit. Some scholars have studied the glass-ceiling phenomenon, which refers to the barriers faced by women due to gender discrimination, to shed light on the issue (Al- Manasra, 2013; Rishani et al., 2015; Singh, 2019). Others have focused on the social construct of gender stereotypes and how they are reflected in leadership roles in the Arab world (Sikdar and Mitra, 2012). Finally, there are those who have attributed the underrepresentation of women to organizational, societal, and cultural barriers (Tlaiss and Kauser, 2010).

Despite the various factors identified, the fact remains that women are still significantly underrepresented in business leadership roles in the Arab world. It is important for scholars

to continue studying and addressing these issues to promote greater gender diversity and equality in the workplace.

A significant number of studies have been conducted to examine the status of women in management across several Middle Eastern countries, including Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, Palestine, UAE, Jordan, Qatar, Syria, and Oman. The choice of these countries was based on their shared language, cultural heritage, identity, and religious similarities. However, despite the various studies conducted, most of them tend to focus solely on identifying barriers that impede women's career progression in management positions. Unfortunately, these studies do not provide a comprehensive view of women's overall status in leadership roles.

Researchers who have carried out studies in this area include Abalkhail (2017), Al- Ahmadi (2011), Jamali et al. (2010), Karam and Afiouni (2017), Koburtay et al. (2022). Their findings aim to bring to light the challenges that women face in management positions across the Middle East, with an overarching objective of identifying factors that impede their career advancement and their progression in leadership roles. Nonetheless, more research is needed to gain a comprehensive understanding of women's overall status in leadership positions and practice.

While several studies have attempted to examine the status of women in management in the Middle East, the current body of research has certain limitations. They tend to focus more on female labor participation and do not provide a comprehensive understanding of the broader picture and status of women in leadership positions. Indeed, examining the status of women in leadership positions in the Middle East is an important and pressing issue, given the significant gender disparities that exist in the region. While some progress has been made towards increasing female labor force participation, women continue to face significant challenges in accessing leadership positions and advancing their careers (Hutchings et al., 2010). Ultimately, examining the status of women in leadership positions in the Middle East is essential for promoting gender equality, advancing women's rights, and building more inclusive and prosperous societies. It is a complex and multifaceted issue that requires a concerted effort from stakeholders across all sectors to address.

The study of women's leadership and management has gained considerable attention among researchers in the Western world, but most studies have been limited to European and North American contexts. Scholars have conducted extensive research on what constitutes good management and effective leadership, exploring topics such as leadership traits, behaviors, styles, and the importance of building organizational culture based on trust, accountability, and responsibility. However, given the significant cultural and religious differences between the Western world and the Middle East, these findings may not be applicable to the Arab world. As a result, there is a pressing need for research that examines Arab women's approaches to leadership, including their conception of leadership and their leadership practices.

Even though Arab women are increasingly entering the workforce and assuming leadership positions in both public and private sectors (Budhwar and Malahi, 2018; Metcalfe and Mimouni, 2011), their leadership perspectives and practices have been largely overlooked by business researchers. To gain a better understanding of the complexities of the leadership process, it is essential to explore women's diverse conception of leadership practices within the sub-region of the Arab world, specifically in Lebanon, which has been referred to as the "Switzerland of the Middle East." (Aziz et al., 2022). Therefore, through a comprehensive examination of prominent leadership theories as they are applied in real-world contexts, this research endeavors to illuminate the distinctive leadership approaches of Arab women. It aspires to offer valuable insights that contribute significantly to our understanding of this fundamental realm.

## **1.2 Purpose of the Study**

LMX, or Leader-Member Exchange, is a theory that can provide valuable insights into the leadership practices of women managers in the Middle East. As Budhwar et al. (2019) point out, the region has relatively less available literature related to the field of human resources management, and leadership practices remain a relatively unexplored terrain.

Therefore, understanding how the quality of LMX can impact employee perceptions of justice and influence work outcomes such as job satisfaction is crucial. Women managers in the Middle Eastern context can use LMX as a framework to develop and display their leadership skills with their subordinates, ultimately contributing to better organizational performance. By exploring how LMX can be effectively utilized to promote women's leadership and management capabilities, we can enhance our understanding of women's leadership in the Middle East and contribute to the broader discourse on the subject. In doing so, we can help bridge the gap in the available literature related to human resources management in the region and pave the way for more research on this topic. Consequently, it is imperative to examine the role of women managers as leaders in the context of LMX theory and explore how LMX can be harnessed to promote their leadership and management capabilities.

Effective female leadership is a vital topic that requires further exploration, and LMX plays a vital role in this area. By examining the intersection between theory and practice and its contribution to human resources management, we can gain a better understanding of how effective female leadership influences employee perceived fairness and its impact on work attitudes. Despite the limited research on managerial processes, this study will add to the small amount of knowledge available on the role of female leadership in the workplace. It will specifically shed light on the mediating role of LMX between performance appraisal fairness and employee job satisfaction (Valax, 2022).

This study is fundamental in highlighting the significance of LMX as a tool for advancing workplace fairness, showcasing how effective leadership can influence employee attitudes and outlooks. It will also underscore the importance of female leadership in cultivating positive work attitudes while offering guidance on enhancing relationships between leaders and employees.

From a leadership perspective, great leaders excel by creating effective interpersonal relationships and one-on-one connections with others. The Leader Member Exchange (LMX) theory asserts that leaders develop unique and personalized relationships with each subordinate, and therefore use different leadership approaches with different subordinates. This approach extends to the point where dyadic leader-subordinate relationships broaden to become a leader-shareholder perspective that allows leaders to fulfill their social responsibilities (Martin et al., 2018).

In fact, LMX research heavily relies on Social Exchange Theory, which represents the quality of the social exchange relationship between a supervisor and employee (Porter, 2018; Cropanzano et al., 2017). According to Erdogan and Bauer (2015), LMX is the most prominent dyadic theory in leadership literature. LMX provides a framework for leaders to develop personalized relationships with their subordinates, tailor their leadership approaches, and fulfill their social responsibilities, resulting in better overall organizational outcomes. By understanding and implementing LMX theory, leaders can establish more effective relationships with their subordinates and create a more cohesive, productive work environment.

LMX has gained considerable attention in contemporary leadership management scholarship and is suggested to be an important source for improving work attitudes such as employee satisfaction. Indeed, research has strongly reinforced the positive effect of LMX on employee satisfaction which has often been investigated as a consequence of LMX (Epitropaki and Martin, 2016; Malik et al., 2015). Several Empirical research confirmed from a social exchange perspective that high quality LMX stimulates employee intrinsic and extrinsic factors of job satisfaction and pushes them to do their job well and become better performers. It is the quality of exchange between supervisors and their subordinates that make a significant point of satisfaction and more positive attitudes in the job (Day et al., 2016; Erdogan and Bauer, 2014).

Moreover, recent research has suggested that the quality of the LMX relationship has a significant impact on employee attitudes and behaviors, including job performance, organizational commitment, and turnover intentions. Furthermore, LMX theory suggests that these individual relationships can have a positive impact on the organization, as

employees who have positive relationships with their supervisors are more likely to engage in behaviors that benefit the organization, such as going above and beyond their job requirements. Overall, LMX theory highlights the importance of building strong, individualized relationships between leaders and followers, which can ultimately lead to improved outcomes for both individuals and organizations.

It is important to understand how effective leadership using LMX approach impacts employee fairness perception since it encompasses dyadic exchanges between supervisors and subordinates. Effective leadership is a key determinant of employee perceptions of fairness within an organization. Specifically, the Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) approach plays a critical role in shaping such perceptions since it involves interpersonal exchanges between supervisors and subordinates. As such, it is incumbent upon organizational leaders to ensure that they cultivate positive and productive relationships with their employees. This is not only their responsibility to their staff but also to their organization's stakeholders. Given that LMX relationships can vary in quality (ranging from high to low), it is important to recognize that these relationships can impact employee perceptions of organizational justice or fairness. Several studies have highlighted the significant influence of LMX practices on such perceptions (Dusterhoff et al., 2014; Parks et al., 2015; Selvarajan et al., 2018).

Therefore, organizations must prioritize LMX practices that foster positive and fair relationships between leaders and employees to promote a healthy workplace culture. This in turn reflects not only their responsibility as organizational leaders towards their employees but their respective organizations "shareholders" as well (Very, 2018).

For the past decade, several research have investigated LMX in conjunction with organizational justice (Ali et al., 2019; Gwynne, 2014; Ilyas Sindhu et al., 2017; Leow and Khong, 2015; Williams et al., 2016;). These studies were mainly concerned with employees' perception of fairness within organization, beginning with Adams' Equity theory labelled as distributive justice; to Fairness in allocation process known as Procedural Justice and the interpersonal aspects of fair treatment in organizations categorized as interactional justice. Subsequently, the interactional aspect of justice was broken into two subdimensions: justice associated with the fairness perception of the information shared in terms of clarity and transparency; and interpersonal justice, associated with the fairness of interaction between

leaders and employees. These four dimensions are distinct from each other but highly related to each other (Ambrose and Arnaud, 2005; Greenberg and Colquitt, 2013; Rupp et al., 2017; Yean, 2016).

According to Cropanzano et al. (2015), the four aspects of justice are strongly related to social exchange in organizational context (Colquitt and Rodell, 2015), either with the organization (i.e., procedural justice) or with the supervisor (i.e., interactional: interpersonal and informational justice), whereas distributive justice is related more to an economic exchange relationship between stakeholders including shareholders, supervisors, and subordinates. Moreover, Cropanzano (2015) also notes that employees who perceive their organizations as fair and just are more likely to be motivated, committed, and engaged in their work. Besides, Organizational justice is a key factor in the implementation of performance appraisal systems that are perceived as fair and effective. Knowing that performance appraisal justice refers to the degree to which employees perceive that the performance evaluation process is fair and just (Colquitt et al., 2013).

The four dimensions of organizational justice, including distributive justice, procedural justice, interpersonal justice, and informational justice, are all relevant to the perception of performance appraisal justice. distributive justice pertains to the fairness of the outcomes or rewards resulting from the performance appraisal process, such as promotions, bonuses, or pay raises. Procedural justice refers to the fairness of the process used to evaluate employee performance, such as the criteria and methods used in the appraisal process. Interpersonal justice relates to the quality of the communication and treatment that employees receive during the performance appraisal process, while informational justice relates to the degree to which employees receive adequate information and feedback regarding their performance.

Moreover, recent studies have shed light on the significant impact that Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) has on how employees perceive performance appraisal justice. Studies have demonstrated that the quality of LMX relationships can greatly affect employees' perceptions of fairness in the appraisal process, providing valuable insight into the crucial role that leaders play in promoting fairness and justice within the organization (Ionescu and Iliescu, 2021; Pichler, 2016; Selvarajan et al., 2018; Wang et al., 2019). Noting that Performance Appraisal is one of the most critical human resource practices in managing

organizations with the aim of effectively managing employee performance. It is mainly utilized for two main purposes developmental and evaluative using formal reviews, feedback sessions, work objectives, set of performance goals and other measurable factors. It is often considered as a practical tool for employee motivation and job satisfaction especially when employees perceive their performance appraisal mechanism as accurate and fair. The overall quality of the exchange relationship is prompt to have repercussions over rater's behaviors as well as actions and resulting perceptions of fairness.

According to Royes (2015), employees are motivated and show a positive reaction towards their job when they perceive fair treatment of the appraisal system in the workplace and when it reflects concurrently and accurately an individual's performance. In a performance management system, distributive justice refers to the perceived fairness of the means in which pay is related to performance or the amount of reward or compensation received by employees based on their performance results such as salary adjustments, bonuses, training, promotions, or any other resources that an organization can provide to employees. Procedural justice tackles the fairness of methods in planning performance in terms of policies, procedures and rating methods or scales used within departments. Interactional justice, on the other hand, focuses on the perceived fairness of the feedback, explanations and evaluation employees receive during the appraisal review sessions (Gupta and Kumar, 2012; Nutakor, 2019).

The objective of this study is to develop and categorize a comprehensive set of criteria based on all dimensions of the fairness of performance appraisal process. Additionally, the study aims to evaluate and validate the impact of leader-member exchange (LMX) on each of these measures. The study will focus mainly on the perceptions of interactional and informational justice, specifically, the fairness of information shared and interpersonal exchange between female leaders and their subordinates. This is because previous studies have shown that these factors are significant predictors of LMX (Byrne et al., 2012; Cropanzano et al., 2002; Rowland & Hall, 2012; Saragih et al., 2020; Warokka et al., 2012).

Indeed, the interpersonal and informational are viewed as being directly controllable by the supervisor (Colquitt, 2001) and are much more related to supervisory outcomes compared to procedural or distributive justice (Masterson et al., 2000), making them the most pertinent



forms of justice to investigate when examining the supervisor-subordinate relationship in a performance appraisal setting.

Many previous researchers have examined the chain of relationships between organizational justice, social exchange theories and job satisfaction and found out that LMX quality mediates the relationship between distributive, procedural and interactive dimensions of justice and job satisfaction. The importance of LMX is perceived as a powerful mediating mechanism and has been documented by numerous leadership scholars in the last two decades (Ali et al., 2019; Hassan and Jubari, 2010; Shan et al.; 2015). Indeed, Greener and Colquit (2013) findings show that distributive, procedural, and interactional fairness to be positively related to employee career satisfaction (Selvarajan et al., 2018). Likewise, longitudinal studies asserted the mediating role of LMX in the relationship between interactional as well as procedural justice and work outcomes in a sense where LMX acts as an underlying mechanism that positively impacts job satisfaction in the presence of interactional justice (Sparr and Sonnentag, 2008; Masterson and Lensges, 2015).

As we mentioned earlier, fairness perception is vital when considering a high – quality exchange relationship between leader and subordinate it creates reciprocal expectations defined as unstated mutual expectations of reciprocity (Wang et al., 2010) and is associated with employee’s intrinsic and extrinsic job satisfaction (Flickinger et al., 2016; Judge et al., 2020; Leow and Khong, 2015). Nevertheless, Numerous studies have examined the importance of Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) as a mediating mechanism in shaping employee perceptions of justice. These studies have explored the role of LMX in mediating all three dimensions of justice, but most have focused on each aspect independently or included them in a single management research (Colquit et al., 2015; Masterson et al., 2000).

However, only a few studies have analyzed the subdimensions of informational and interpersonal justice, with most research examining the broader concept of interactional justice. Additionally, only a handful of studies have evaluated perceptions of fairness in general or overall justice perceptions in the context of a specific event such as a performance evaluation. Therefore, it is important for future research to explore the mediating role of LMX on each dimension of justice, particularly the subdimensions of informational and interpersonal justice, as well as to assess perceptions of overall fairness in specific events. By doing so, a better understanding of the impact of LMX on employee perceptions of

justice can be attained, which can be beneficial for organizations seeking to enhance workplace fairness and promote a positive organizational culture.

Despite the extensive research on Leader-Member Exchange (LMX), few studies have explored the potential moderating relationship between gender and LMX in terms of how gender characteristics may influence the LMX relationship, particularly for female leaders. This gap in the literature suggests that a gender perspective could make valuable contributions to the understanding of leadership practices. To address this, it is important to examine the relationship between female leadership practices in the Middle East and employee perceptions of fairness in performance appraisals on one side, and employee job satisfaction on the other. Such a study would shed light on how gender may shape the LMX relationship in this context and contribute to the broader leadership literature. Furthermore, a better understanding of how gender impacts LMX can lead to more effective leadership practices that promote fairness and equity and enhance employee job satisfaction.

Consequently, there is a need for future research to explore the moderating role of gender on the LMX relationship, particularly in the context of female leaders in the Middle East.

### **1.3 Significance of the Study**

In the management field, there has been a growing interest in the working lives of Arab women over the past decade (Abalkhail, 2019; Afiouni, 2014; Afshar, 2016). With women gradually entering the workforce and rising to managerial and leadership positions in both the public and private sectors, the role of women in Arab societies has undergone rapid change. Although women in the Middle Eastern countries still lag behind their counterparts in other regions, they can no longer be stereotyped as domestic caretakers or regarded as inferiors. The pace of change in the region has been brisk, and as more women join the workforce, they are beginning to find their collective voice and are advocating for equal opportunities on a much broader platform than before. The emergence of Arab women in the workforce is not only significant for gender equality but also for the region's economic and social development.

Therefore, it is essential for researchers to continue examining the working lives of Arab women and to explore ways to promote gender equity in the workplace. By doing so, we can help ensure that women in the Arab region have access to equal opportunities for career advancement, and that their contributions to the workforce are fully recognized and valued.

Despite the growing presence of women in leadership roles, the Middle Eastern region has comparatively little literature available on the topic. This is partly due to the cultural and societal norms that have traditionally placed men in positions of power and leadership in this region, as well as the lack of research and resources dedicated to studying the experiences of women in leadership roles (Abalkhail, 2017; Hejase et al., 2013; Hodges, 2017). Accordingly, it is crucial to focus on the leadership practices and challenges faced by female Arab leaders in reaching leadership positions.

This study aims to investigate a specific leadership theory, the LMX model, which focuses on the dyadic relationship between superiors and subordinates. While LMX theory has been applied primarily in Western settings, few studies have examined the LMX theory in non-Western cultures (Elanain, 2014). By examining the mediating role of LMX between employee fairness perception of performance appraisal and job satisfaction, this study seeks to explore the applicability of LMX in the Middle Eastern cultural context. Furthermore, few studies have explored the association between gender and leadership in the Middle East,

and none have directly examined the effects of gender on LMX in the Lebanese framework. This study will assume that gender moderates the three-path mediation model in a specific Middle Eastern cultural context, as the case of Lebanon can be applicable to the Levant region and most countries in the Middle East. By addressing this research gap, this study can contribute to the broader understanding of the role of gender in leadership and the applicability of LMX in non-Western contexts. Such insights are crucial for developing effective leadership practices that consider cultural and gender-specific factors and promoting gender equity and diversity in the workplace.

The LMX model has been extensively studied in the literature, and previous investigations have indicated that supervisors develop different styles of relationships with their subordinates, forming varying levels of quality relationships (Erdogan and Bauer, 2013). However, few studies have explored how individual characteristics, such as gender, may influence the LMX relationship. Gender has been shown to impact organizational processes and outcomes suggesting that it may also be an important factor in the LMX model (Park et al., 2017; Wang et al., 2017). This study aims to fill this research gap by examining the moderating role of gender in the relationship between LMX and justice perceptions in the performance appraisal context, as well as LMX and employee job satisfaction. Specifically, this study will investigate how the gender of the leader and subordinate influences the strength of these relationships.

Since there is a call for gender research using an LMX perspective in the Middle East, this study will add to the little that is known about the effect of gender on LMX and how it contributes to employees' work attitudes in a specific organizational factor, such as performance management. Likewise, LMX has rarely been studied as a mediator mechanism in the organizational justice and job satisfaction relationship construct, particularly in the Middle East specifically Lebanon. Therefore, this study's findings will contribute to the existing literature on leadership and gender in the Middle East and enhance our understanding of the LMX model's applicability in non-Western cultures.

#### **1.4 Nature of the Study and Research Question**

The scarcity of literature on human resource management in the Middle Eastern region has hindered the advancement of knowledge and understanding of managerial processes in the region (Afiouni, 2014; Karam and Afiouni, 2017). This lack of research is particularly apparent in the study of LMX and its influence on perceived performance appraisal fairness and its subsequent effect on job satisfaction among employees in Lebanese organizations. As such, this study aims to contribute to the limited body of knowledge by examining the mediating role of LMX in the relationship between performance appraisal fairness and job satisfaction. The findings of this study will provide a deeper understanding of the complex interplay between LMX, performance appraisal fairness, and job satisfaction in the specific cultural context of Lebanon and will help fill the gap in the literature regarding the effects of LMX on employee outcomes in the Middle Eastern region.

The aim of this fundamental research is to investigate the relationship between gender, LMX (leader-member exchange), perceived performance appraisal fairness, and job satisfaction in a Middle Eastern context. Specifically, the research question being explored is: What is the relationship between these factors, and how does gender moderate this relationship? The study seeks to contribute to the understanding of how gender impacts the experience of LMX, performance appraisal fairness, and job satisfaction in the Middle Eastern context.

This study investigates the interrelationships among gender, leader-member exchange (LMX), perceived performance appraisal fairness, and job satisfaction within the Middle Eastern context. Specifically, it explores the influence of gender on LMX, perceived performance appraisal fairness, and job satisfaction. The study seeks to address questions such as: How does perceived performance appraisal fairness affect job satisfaction in the Middle East? It places particular emphasis on examining the moderating role of gender in this context. By delving into these inquiries, the research aims to advance our comprehension of how gender shapes work-related experiences and outcomes in the Middle East, contributing to scientific rigor and precision in the study's formulation.

Furthermore, this study explores in depth a contemporary leadership approach by analyzing the mediating role of LMX between employee fairness perception of performance appraisal and job satisfaction. Hence, it is assumed that gender will moderate this three-path mediation

model in a specific middle eastern cultural context. Lebanon case can be applicable to the Levant region and several countries in the Middle East.

Accordingly, we hypothesized that Leadership practices mediates sequentially all aspects of performance appraisal fairness and has a positive impact on job satisfaction; therefore, we assume that those variables will be positively related and will play a major role in enhancing performance at work. Besides, gender is assumed to significantly influence this three-path mediation model such that, the relationship between leadership and justice perceptions in the appraisal context as well as Leadership and job satisfaction will prove to be sturdier in some cases and delicate in others with the latest events that rocked Lebanon after its economic collapse which plunged this country into the worst economic recession for the past 30 years (ESCWA, 2021).

This research will undeniably examine the role and impact of gender on LMX quality approach in times of crisis by bringing new ideas and different perspectives on how female impacts perceived performance appraisal fairness and employee job satisfaction in a country that is facing one of the worst crises the world has ever seen. The influence of gender on leadership attitudes will be analyzed and examined in depth since leader's gender capabilities of interactions and motivation differ. This study aims to enhance the field of leadership literature by examining leadership practices and challenges experienced by female Lebanese leaders as they advance to leadership roles. Specifically, it explores the extent of the connection between female leadership practices or the gender of supervisors and how employees perceive fairness. It also investigates how these factors relate to employee job satisfaction.

This study will explore several key relationships. First, it will examine the relationship between two dimensions of fairness, including procedural and interactive fairness, and LMX. Both dimensions are important facets of performance appraisal fairness, as noted by Selvarajan et al. (2018). Second, the study will assess the validity of the relationship between LMX and job satisfaction through empirical evaluation. Finally, the study will investigate Gender Leadership in Lebanon. These findings are expected to have broader implications for the Middle East as a whole, given the region's geopolitical and economic instability, conflict-related stress, and shared cultural issues.

This thesis is structured as follows:

Chapter 2 of this research provides a comprehensive literature review of the relationship between LMX and organizational justice. The chapter is divided into four sections. Section 2.1 examines the mainstream literature on LMX and organizational justice, summarizing the key findings and theories that have been developed in this area. Section 2.2 provides a theoretical framework for the study, drawing on previous research to develop a conceptual model that outlines the expected relationships between LMX and organizational justice. Section 2.3 contextualizes the research by discussing the specific cultural and organizational factors that are relevant to the Middle Eastern context. Finally, Section 2.4 presents the hypotheses that will be tested in the study, outlining the specific research questions and predictions that will guide the data analysis. Overall, the literature review in Chapter 2 provides a strong foundation for the research, establishing the theoretical and empirical basis for the study and setting the stage for the subsequent data collection and analysis.

As for Chapter 3 of this research, it outlines the methodology that will be used to investigate the relationship between LMX and organizational justice in the Middle Eastern context. The chapter is divided into four sections. Section 3.1 describes the data collection process, outlining the sources of data that will be used and the procedures that will be followed to collect and manage the data. Section 3.2 explains the sampling method that will be used to select participants for the study, including the criteria that will be used to identify eligible participants and the procedures that will be used to recruit them. Section 3.3 provides an overview of the empirical framework that will be used to analyze the data, including the statistical techniques that will be employed and the assumptions that underpin them. Finally, Section 3.4 outlines the characteristics of the variables that will be measured in the study and the measurement scales that will be used to operationalize them. Overall, the methodology chapter provides a detailed and rigorous plan for investigating the research questions outlined in the preceding chapters, ensuring that the study is methodologically sound and able to generate valid and reliable findings.

Chapter 4 highlights the results of the study and provides a discussion of their implications. The chapter is divided into four sections. Section 4.1 presents the results of the data analysis, including descriptive statistics and inferential statistics, and offers interpretations of these findings. Section 4.2 provides a comprehensive discussion of the implications of the results,

drawing on the theoretical framework outlined in Chapter 2 to explain the relationships between the variables under investigation. Section 4.3 acknowledges the limitations of the study and discusses the potential sources of bias or error that may have affected the findings. Finally, Section 4.4 suggests avenues for further research, outlining the areas where additional investigation is needed to build on the current study and extend its findings. Overall, the results and discussion chapter provide a critical evaluation of the study's findings, situating them within the broader literature on LMX and organizational justice and highlighting their implications for theory and practice.

Finally, Chapter 5 presents the conclusions that can be drawn from this study and discusses its implications. The chapter is divided into four sections. Section 5.1 outlines the contributions of the study, highlighting the originality and significance of its findings and the new insights that it provides into the relationships between LMX and organizational justice in the Middle Eastern context. Section 5.2 summarizes the major findings of the study, including the relationships between the variables under investigation and the factors that influence them. Section 5.3 discusses the theoretical implications of the study, drawing on the existing literature to situate the findings within the broader theoretical framework of LMX and organizational justice. Finally, Section 5.4 offers practical implications of the study, suggesting ways that organizations can use the findings to improve their management practices and enhance the job satisfaction of their employees. Overall, the conclusion chapter provides a comprehensive and insightful summary of the study's findings, highlighting their significance for both research and practice.



## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 Mainstream Literature**

##### **2.1.1 Leadership Era**

Leadership is widely believed to be an essential factor in effective organizational functioning, and it has become a prominent subject of research in both western and eastern studies. Despite the complexities of the leadership process, researchers have proposed various theoretical approaches to leadership over the past decades. Antonakis and Day (2018) noted that the concept of leadership has evolved, and it has been conceptualized in numerous ways. Armstrong (2016) defined leadership as the process of motivating people to do their best to achieve desired results, while Northouse (2021) described it as the process of an individual influencing a group of individuals to achieve a common goal. Leadership encompasses not only top executives within large organizations but also those who are appointed to lead smaller teams, divisions, or departments. While some leaders exhibit good managerial skills, some managers may be successful leaders. Leaders can use different approaches and styles to exert influence on their followers, and it can positively impact employee attitudes towards their jobs.

In today's organizations, the role of leaders has evolved, and the success of any organization relies on the leadership styles practiced by the leaders. Although there are various theoretical approaches to leadership theories and behaviors, there are ongoing debates on whether leaders and managers have distinct roles and responsibilities or if leadership and management are complementary and difficult to separate in practice. Algahtani (2014) argues that leadership and management are different, while Ford and Harding (2018) and Kibbe (2019) suggest that managers should utilize diverse leadership styles and behaviors based on the situation, needs, and abilities of their followers or subordinates to lead effectively and positively influence their employees. In fact, effective leadership is crucial for organizational success, and leaders should use various styles and behaviors to lead and manage their teams effectively. While there are ongoing debates on the distinct roles of leaders and managers, both leadership and management play an essential role in

organizational functioning. Therefore, leaders should strive to utilize diverse approaches and styles to lead and manage their teams effectively based on the situation, needs, and abilities of their followers.

The evolution of leadership theories has been extensively studied over the past decades and can be divided into four major eras: trait, behavioral, situational, and new leadership (Benmira and Agboola, 2021). Each era has contributed to the development of various leadership styles, and although the leadership arena is crowded with theories, each one offers a unique dimension and perspective on leadership. Each of these eras has led to the development of various leadership styles and approaches, each offering a unique perspective on what constitutes effective leadership.

Despite the large number of theories that have emerged, each theory has its own valuable contribution to the study of leadership. For example, the trait theory was one of the first attempts to study leadership and focused on identifying the inherent traits of effective leaders. In contrast, behavioral theory focused on the behaviors of leaders, while situational theory emphasized the importance of adapting leadership style to different situations. New leadership theory, on the other hand, focuses on the leader's ability to inspire and motivate followers to achieve a common goal (Benmira and Agboola, 2021). As for Northouse (2021), he identified and examined sixteen distinct theories of leadership, ranging from the trait leadership theory, which was one of the first attempts to study leadership, to more recent approaches such as servant and adaptive leadership emphasizing the importance of leaders serving their followers and adapting to changing circumstances, respectively.

Regardless of the abundance of leadership theories, it is important to note that effective leadership cannot be reduced to a single theory or approach. Rather, it is a complex and dynamic phenomenon that requires ongoing research and development to fully understand and effectively implement in various contexts. Leaders must be able to adapt to changing circumstances and utilize diverse styles and approaches to be able to lead effectively and positively influence their followers.

## **Leadership Trait Era**

First, the trait era of leadership theories can be categorized into the Great Man Theory and the trait theory. The former argues that great leaders possess innate qualities such as personality, physical and mental characteristics, and that these attributes are what make them exceptional leaders. According to this theory, great leaders are a product of their time, and they emerge when the situation calls for their unique skills and abilities. Proponents of this theory argue that great leaders possess qualities that cannot be learned, and that they are destined for greatness from the moment of their birth.

The trait theory, on the other hand, suggests that leadership traits can be inherited or acquired through training and practice. According to Zaccaro (2007), "Leadership traits can be classified into five broad categories: cognitive abilities, personal characteristics, motives and values, social and emotional intelligence, and expertise.". According to this theory, effective leaders possess a set of core traits that include intelligence, confidence, sociability, determination, and integrity. The Trait Theory proposes that individuals who possess these traits are more likely to be effective leaders, regardless of their position or the situation they find themselves in.

One of the strengths of the Trait Theory is that it provides a framework for assessing and developing leadership potential. Researchers have developed several psychometric tools, such as the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator and the Five Factor Model of Personality, to measure leadership traits and identify individuals who are likely to be effective leaders. However, the Trait Theory has also been criticized for oversimplifying the complex nature of leadership and for ignoring the influence of situational factors on leadership effectiveness.

Also, numerous studies have been conducted to identify the specific traits that are associated with effective leadership. For example, research has shown that leaders who exhibit high levels of emotional intelligence are more effective in managing teams (Goleman, 2004). Similarly, individuals with high levels of conscientiousness and openness to experience are more likely to exhibit effective leadership behaviors (Judge et al., 2002).

Furthermore, studies have also suggested that effective leadership is associated with having a positive attitude, being able to inspire and motivate others, and being able to make difficult

decisions (Yukl, 2012). Despite the significant research that has been conducted in this area, there is no consensus on what specific traits are most essential for effective leadership. Nevertheless, the trait theory has helped to broaden our understanding of the factors that contribute to effective leadership and has provided a framework for assessing and developing leadership potential (Mango, 2018).

In conclusion, the Great Man Theory and the Trait Theory represent two distinct approaches to understanding leadership. While the Great Man Theory suggests that great leaders are born with innate qualities, the Trait Theory proposes that effective leadership can be learned and developed through the cultivation of specific traits. Both theories have their strengths and weaknesses, and contemporary leadership theories have built on these earlier models to provide a more nuanced understanding of what makes effective leaders.

**Table 1: Leadership Trait Era Review**

<b>Author</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Theoretical Approach Proposed</b>
Stogdill	1948	Trait Theory
Mann	1959	Skills Approach
Kirkpatrick and Locke	1991	Great Man and Trait Approach
McCall and Lombardo	1983	High-Potential Trait Theory
Zaccaro	2007	Leader Trait Emergence

These authors have made significant contributions to the development of leadership theories during the Leadership Trait Era, which emphasized the importance of identifying the personal characteristics and attributes of effective leaders. Stogdill's (1948) Trait Theory proposed that certain traits were common among successful leaders, while Mann's (1959) Skills Approach focused on the skills and abilities necessary for leadership effectiveness. Kirkpatrick and Locke's (1991) Great Man and Trait Approach proposed that leadership was innate and inherited, while McCall and Lombardo's (1983) High-Potential Trait Theory identified certain characteristics that distinguished high-potential leaders from others. Zaccaro's (2007) Leader Trait Emergence model focused on how certain traits and behaviors contribute to leaders emerging in groups or organizations.



## **Leadership Behavioral Era**

Second, the Behavioral Theory of leadership focuses on what leaders do and how they act towards their followers in various organizational contexts. This theory posits that leaders are not born, but rather made, and categorizes them based on their skills, styles, and behavior (Northouse, 2021). Researchers have identified specific behaviors that effective leaders exhibit, and these behaviors can be broadly categorized into two types: task behaviors and relationship behaviors.

Task behaviors are focused on goal accomplishment and describe how leaders help individuals and teams achieve their objectives, while relationship behaviors are focused on creating a positive work environment where followers feel comfortable and motivated to achieve their goals. Numerous studies have been conducted in this area, leading to the development of various frameworks for understanding leadership behavior, such as the Ohio State Studies, the Michigan Studies, and Blake and Mouton's Managerial Grid (Nawaz et al., 2016)). In their Managerial Grid model, they identified two dimensions of leadership behavior: concern for people and concern for production (Blake et al., 1981). This model suggested that leaders could be more effective by balancing these two dimensions, and that a high concern for both people and production would result in the most effective leadership style. These frameworks are commonly used in organizational training and development programs and leadership training courses to help individuals develop effective leadership skills and behaviors.

Another important theorist in the development of the Behavioral Theory was Douglas McGregor, who introduced the concepts of Theory X and Theory Y. Theory X assumes that individuals are inherently lazy and require strict supervision to be productive, while Theory Y assumes that individuals are motivated by a desire to achieve their goals and will work hard if given the opportunity (McGregor, 1960). The Behavioral Theory suggests that leadership skills are mainly acquired rather than innate, and that every individual has a distinct leadership style that is effective in different situations. Researchers have introduced different leadership styles, such as democratic, autocratic, and laissez-faire, which are categorized based on the assumption that all leaders fit into one of these classifications. Autocratic leaders make decisions independently without involving subordinates, while

democratic leaders assess subordinates' perspectives and make appropriate decisions, and laissez-faire leaders take a hands-off approach and allow subordinates to make decisions independently (Yukl, 2012). Overall, the Behavioral Theory of leadership provides a framework for understanding how leaders can develop effective skills and behaviors. By identifying specific behaviors that effective leaders exhibit, this theory helps individuals understand how to act in different organizational contexts to achieve positive outcomes.

However, like all leadership theories, the Behavioral Theory has its limitations and has been criticized for oversimplifying the complex nature of leadership and ignoring the role of situational factors in leadership effectiveness.

**Table 2: Leadership Behavioral Era Review**

Author	Year	Theoretical Approach Proposed
Blake and Mouton	1961	Managerial Grid
Likert	1967	Participative Management
McGregor	1960	Theory X and Theory Y
Ohio State University	1945	Consideration and Initiating Structure
University of Michigan	1949	Employee-Centered Leadership and Job-Centered Leadership

These authors have made significant contributions to the development of leadership theories during the Leadership Behavioral Era, which emphasized the importance of understanding leadership behaviors and their impact on subordinates. Blake and Mouton's (1961) Managerial Grid proposed that leadership behavior can be classified based on a manager's concern for production and concern for people. Likert's (1967) Participative Management model focused on the importance of involving subordinates in decision-making processes. McGregor's (1960) Theory X and Theory Y proposed that managers hold either a negative or positive view of employee motivation and behavior. The Ohio State University (1945) and University of Michigan (1949) studies were seminal research efforts that identified the

leadership behaviors of consideration (relationship-oriented) and initiating structure (task-oriented), and employee-centered vs. job-centered leadership styles.

### **Situational Era**

Third, the situational era of leadership theory has gained significant attention in recent years as it recognizes the importance of considering various situational factors that can impact the effectiveness of leadership. This approach emphasizes that there is no one-size-fits-all approach to leadership and that leaders must be adaptable to different situations.

Blanchard (1993) and Fiedler (1981) introduced the situational leadership theory, which suggests that leaders must adapt their leadership style based on the readiness level of their followers. They categorized followers' readiness into four stages: unable and unwilling, unable but willing, able but unwilling, and able and willing. The theory proposes that leaders must use different leadership styles ranging from directing, coaching, supporting, and delegating depending on their followers' readiness level.

In addition to the situational leadership theory, the path-goal theory introduced by House (1975) suggests that leaders must modify their behaviors based on the situational factors, such as the nature of the task, followers' characteristics, and environmental conditions. The theory posits that leaders must provide their followers with a clear path to achieve their goals and motivate them to follow that path by providing rewards and removing obstacles. According to the theory, the leader's style should be contingent upon the follower's characteristics and the environmental factors, such as the task complexity and the degree of formal authority. The theory identifies four leadership styles: directive, supportive, participative, and achievement-oriented, which should be used based on the follower's characteristics and the environmental factors. The path-goal theory has been widely applied in various organizational contexts, including healthcare, education, and sports, and has been found to be effective in improving follower satisfaction and performance.

Another important perspective in the situational era is the contingency theory of leadership by Fiedler (1958), which emphasizes that the effectiveness of leadership is contingent on the match between the leader's style and the situational variables. Fiedler proposed that leadership style could be measured on a continuum from task-oriented to relationship-



oriented. He also developed the Least Preferred Co-worker (LPC) questionnaire to measure the leader's style. According to the contingency theory, leaders who are task-oriented are effective in situations with high control and low control, whereas relationship-oriented leaders are effective in situations with moderate control.

**Table 3: Situational Era Review**

<b>Author</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Theoretical Approach Proposed</b>
Hersey and Blanchard	1969	Situational Leadership Theory
Vroom and Yetton	1973	Normative Decision Model
Fiedler	1958	Contingency Theory
House and Mitchell	1975	Path-Goal Theory

The situational approach to leadership has significant practical implications and has been extensively used in organizational leadership development programs. It recognizes that leaders must be flexible and adaptive in their approach, and their effectiveness is dependent on the situation and the readiness level of their followers. However, the situational approach has also faced criticism for its complexity and the difficulty in measuring situational variables. Despite these criticisms, the situational approach continues to be a popular and widely recognized leadership theory.

## **New Leadership Era**

At last, the new leadership era brought about a fundamental shift in the way leadership is perceived and practiced in organizations. Traditional leadership approaches viewed leaders as individuals who possessed a set of traits or behaviors that separated them from followers. However, in the new leadership era, the concept of effective leadership is more nuanced and multifaceted. According to Avolio and Yammarino (2013), this era emphasizes the importance of interactions between leaders and followers, the environment, and the situation in general. Leaders are no longer viewed as separate from their followers, but rather as part of a complex and dynamic relationship.

The new leadership era also highlights the need for leaders to develop the leadership capacities of their subordinates. This is known as the transformational leadership approach, which is based on the idea that leaders can inspire and motivate their followers to achieve beyond their own self-interests (Bass and Riggio, 2006). This approach focuses on empowering followers and developing their skills and abilities.

Another significant development in the new leadership era is the emphasis on ethical leadership. In today's complex and diverse world, leaders are expected to not only achieve organizational goals but also to act with integrity and consider the ethical implications of their decisions (Brown and Treviño, 2006). Indeed, the new leadership era represents a paradigm shift in the way leadership is understood and practiced, emphasizing the importance of multifaceted processes and relationships rather than individual traits or behaviors.

The modern era includes several popular leadership theories, transformational and transactional leadership are two of the most widely researched and discussed leadership theories in modern times. Transformational leadership is a leadership style that focuses on inspiring and motivating followers to achieve their potential and go beyond their expectations. It is a relationship-based approach that emphasizes on building strong bonds between leaders and followers and encouraging followers to think beyond their own self-interests. Transformational leaders are typically described as charismatic, inspirational, and able to foster a sense of purpose and mission among their followers.

On the other hand, transactional leadership is a leadership style that focuses on the exchange between leaders and followers. It is a more task-oriented approach that emphasizes on the achievement of specific goals and objectives. Transactional leaders typically use rewards and punishments to motivate followers to meet performance targets and standards. They tend to be more directive and often rely on established processes and procedures.

The relationship between transformational and transactional leadership has been widely studied, with some researchers arguing that the two styles of leadership can complement each other. While transformational leadership is generally associated with positive outcomes, such as increased job satisfaction and organizational commitment, it may not always be the most appropriate leadership style for every situation. In fact, some studies have found that the effectiveness of transformational leadership may depend on the level of followers' self-efficacy and personal characteristics (Bass and Riggio, 2006). Transactional leadership, despite its focus on rewards and punishments, can still be effective in certain situations, particularly when the task at hand requires clear instructions and well-defined goals. Research has shown that transactional leadership can be effective in enhancing followers' performance, especially when the task is simple and repetitive (Bass et al., 2009).

Furthermore, recent years have seen the emergence of new leadership theories, such as authentic and servant leadership, which emphasize the importance of ethical and moral values in leadership.

Authentic leaders are those who display high levels of self-awareness, moral awareness, and ethical behavior, and who create a positive work environment for their followers (Avolio and Gardner, 2005). Authentic leadership is based on the idea that leaders who are self-aware and transparent about their values and beliefs create a more positive work environment for their followers. According to Avolio and Gardner (2005), authentic leaders can establish a sense of trust with their followers, which in turn results in higher levels of employee engagement, commitment, and job satisfaction. Authentic leaders are also able to effectively navigate complex and uncertain situations, as they are grounded in their values and beliefs. Servant leadership, on the other hand, is centered around the idea of serving others first. Greenleaf (2002) argued that the best leaders are those who prioritize the needs of their followers and are committed to helping them grow and develop.

Servant leaders view leadership as a responsibility to serve others, rather than exert power or control. This approach to leadership is based on the principles of humility, empathy, and selflessness. According to Liden, Wayne, Zhao, and Henderson (2008), servant leadership is positively associated with employee well-being, job satisfaction, and organizational citizenship behaviors. Servant leaders, on the other hand, prioritize the needs of their followers above their own and are committed to helping their followers grow and develop (Greenleaf, 2002).

Both authentic and servant leadership theories highlight the importance of ethical and moral values in leadership and emphasize the importance of building strong relationships between leaders and followers. As such, they offer a different perspective on leadership that moves away from the traditional top-down approach and towards a more collaborative and ethical approach to leadership.

At last, in this new era of leadership, the field of Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) research has reached a significant milestone and has become increasingly relevant and valuable. LMX theory highlights the importance of building a strong relationship between leaders and followers by forming unique and differentiated relationships. It is described as a foremost dyadic theory in the leadership literature (Liden et al., 1997) when compared to other contemporary leadership theories. With its origins in the Vertical Dyad Linkage (VDL) theory proposed by Dansereau et al. (1975) to what is presently conceptualized as relational leadership theory, Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) theory has gone through several evolutions, undergone extensive research and analysis, with hundreds of studies conducted on the subject. Indeed, Scholars have made significant progress in establishing LMX as a key construct in the leadership realm, with a growing body of empirical evidence to support its theoretical foundations and exploring new dimensions of the LMX construct and its implications for leadership and organizational outcomes that we will develop in the following section.

**Table 4: New Leadership Era Review**

<b>Author</b>	<b>Reference</b>	<b>Theoretical Approach Proposed</b>
Maxwell	"The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership: Follow Them and People Will Follow You" (1998)	Transformational Leadership
Covey	"The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People" (1989)	Principle-Centered Leadership
Bennis	"On Becoming a Leader" (1989)	Authentic Leadership
Goleman	"Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ" (1995)	Emotional Intelligence Leadership
Collins	"Good to Great: Why Some Companies Make the Leap... and Others Don't" (2001)	Level 5 Leadership
Senge	"The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization" (1990)	Systems Thinking Leadership

In conclusion, these authors and their approaches have had a significant impact on the field of leadership and have helped shape the way we think about effective leadership in the New Leadership Era. The complexity of leadership has been a subject of debate among scholars for decades, and there is still no consensus on what constitutes an effective leader. As Mango (2018) noted, this has led to a call for consolidation of all leadership theories to better understand the multifaceted nature of leadership. Benmira (2021) further emphasized the dynamic nature of leadership theory, which has undergone significant changes and adaptations over time to meet the demands of modern organizations, changing economies, and evolving workforce demographics. Despite these ongoing shifts, the importance of effective leadership in promoting organizational success and employee satisfaction remains a crucial focus of research and practice.

### **2.1.2 LMX Theory**

LMX theory suggests that leadership is not just about the leader's behaviors or traits, but also about the unique social exchange that occurs between a leader and their individual followers. This theory emphasizes on the fact that effective leadership involves more than just what a leader does or who they are; it crucially hinges on the quality of the interpersonal relationship and exchange between the leader and each follower. Scandura (1999) defines it as “the unique relationship-based social exchange between leaders and members”. It relies on social exchange theory and shifts the focus from the relationship between the leader and the group to the unique and differentiated relationships between leaders and individual members of their team.

This theory highlights the idea that leaders develop different levels of exchange and relationship quality with their followers, and these different levels of exchange can have significant implications for outcomes such as performance, job satisfaction, and turnover. In fact, Researchers have examined dyadic, one-on-one relationships between leaders and followers under the umbrella of Leader-member exchange (LMX) concept. It is centered on the interactions between leaders and followers defined as “the unique relationship- based social exchange between leaders and followers” (Bauer and Erdogan, 2015).

Like any other social exchange theory, LMX creates a sense of unique exchange relationship and requires mutual efforts from both parties. These dyadic exchanges range from high to low (Erdogan & Bauer, 2010; Henderson et al., 2008), indeed LMX differentiation concept reflects the extent to which some employees have high-quality relationship with their “leader”, while others have low-quality relationships. High LMX differentiation means that there are significant differences in the quality of relationships between the leader and various members of the work group, while low LMX differentiation means that there is relatively little variation in the quality of relationships across the work group.

Besides, LMX recognizes the fact that leaders do not have the same relationship with each of the followers, it varies from low quality exchange such that the employee is in the leader’s “Out-group” relationship which is strictly professional, or high-quality exchange where the employee is placed in the leader’s “In-group” relationship which is based on reciprocity and friendship (Yu and Liang, 2014). Moreover, High LMX differentiation has been associated

with negative outcomes, such as increased turnover and decreased job satisfaction, while low LMX differentiation has been associated with positive outcomes, such as increased group cohesion and performance.

The quality of LMX, or leader-member exchange, has been a significant area of research in the field of leadership studies. It refers to the quality of the relationship between a leader and their followers, based on mutual trust, respect, and support. High-quality LMX has been associated with positive outcomes such as increased job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and performance, while low-quality LMX has been linked to negative outcomes such as turnover and job dissatisfaction. Studies have shown that High quality of LMX enables subordinates to have more freedom in performing their work and are usually given better opportunities as well as work assignments. They also experience trust and loyalty in their relationship with their superiors. Martin (2018) stated that employees who benefits from a high leader member exchange are more likely to have greater job satisfaction, higher productivity at work and positive perception of fairness and justice (Bauer and Erdogan, 2014). While low leader member exchange is more limited to economic exchange (Anand et al., 2011; Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005).

Research has shown that the quality of LMX is influenced by a variety of factors, several scholars identified and analyzed antecedents and consequences associated with this construct as well as contextual factors that can influence LMX's relationship with other variables. Based on the model by Dienesch and Liden (1986) to Dulebohn et al. (2012) meta-analysis, antecedents can be categorized into follower characteristics, leader personality characteristics, leadership behavior, interpersonal as well as contextual variables and follower personality characteristics. For example, leaders who exhibit transformational leadership behaviors, such as individualized consideration and intellectual stimulation, are more likely to develop high-quality LMX relationships with their followers.

Furthermore, followers who exhibit proactive behaviors, such as seeking feedback and providing constructive suggestions, are more likely to develop high-quality LMX relationships with their leaders. Organizational culture can also play a role in shaping the quality of LMX. In organizations that emphasize collaboration, communication, and trust, leaders are more likely to develop high-quality LMX relationships with their followers. On the other hand, in organizations that emphasize competition, individual achievement, and

power, leaders may be more likely to develop low-quality LMX relationships with their followers.

Table 5: Foundations of LMX Theory

<b>Author</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Definition</b>
Graen and Uhl-Bien	1995	Developed the LMX 7-scale measure, which assesses the quality of the leader-member exchange relationship on seven dimensions
Graen and Cashman	1975	Introduced the concept of LMX by proposing that leaders have different types of exchange relationships with their followers, and that these relationships are related to follower outcomes
Dansereau et al.	1975	Developed the Vertical Dyad Linkage model, which suggests that the quality of the leader-follower relationship is based on the extent to which the leader and follower are able to meet each other's needs
Liden and Maslyn	1998	Proposed the LMX differentiation model, which suggests that leaders form different levels of relationships with different followers, and that these relationships are related to follower outcomes
Dienesch and Liden	1986	Introduced the concept of LMX differentiation, which refers to the extent to which leaders form different levels of relationships with different followers

Similarly, according to Dulebohn et al. (2012), high-quality LMX relationships have been linked to a variety of outcomes, including enhanced performance and organizational citizenship behavior, as well as positive attitudes such as organizational commitment and job satisfaction specifically.



Indeed, most of the empirical research examines the consequences or outcome of LMX and strongly supported the positive effects of LMX on follower job satisfaction (Epitropaki and Martin, 2005; Fisk and Friesen, 2012; Volmer et al., 2011). In addition, organizational justice or perceptions of justice have been examined as both an antecedent (Colquitt et al., 2013) and a consequence (Dulebohn et al., 2012) of LMX relationships. Scholars have been conducting research on both leader-member exchange (LMX) and justice perceptions simultaneously, given that organizational justice is primarily concerned with employees' perceptions of fairness within organizations.

### **2.1.3 LMX and Job Satisfaction**

The quality of LMX is an important factor to consider in understanding the dynamics of leadership relationships and their impact on individual and organizational outcomes. By fostering high-quality LMX relationships, leaders can promote positive outcomes for their followers and their organizations. Indeed, Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) theory has been extensively studied in relation to various outcomes, including job satisfaction. As per Locke's (1976) definition, job satisfaction is a broad construct that encompasses an individual's positive emotional state arising from their evaluation of their job or work experiences. It includes multiple facets of satisfaction, such as pay, work, supervision, promotion opportunities, and working conditions.

Similarly, Clegg and Wall (1981) have characterized job satisfaction as a positive attitude or emotional orientation towards intrinsic and extrinsic elements of the job. According to them, job satisfaction arises from the extent to which individuals feel that their job provides them with opportunities to fulfill their needs, goals, and values.

LMX theory suggests that leaders develop different quality relationships with their subordinates, which in turn affects their job satisfaction (Uhl-Bien and Maslyn, 2000). Research has consistently shown that employees who perceive high-quality LMX relationships with their supervisors report higher levels of job satisfaction (Harris et al., 2009; Mardanov et al., 2008; Martin et al., 2005). Additionally, LMX theory proposes that job satisfaction is also influenced by the extent to which subordinates feel that they are part of their leader's in-group, or high-quality exchange relationship, as opposed to the out-group, or low-quality exchange relationship. Employees who feel like they are part of their leader's in-group tend to have higher job satisfaction because they receive more resources, support, and feedback from their supervisors (Graen and Uhl-Bien, 1995).

On the other hand, employees who feel like they are part of their leader's out-group tend to have lower job satisfaction because they receive less attention and fewer rewards from their supervisors (Erdogan et al., 2002). LMX theory provides a useful framework for understanding the relationship between leaders and followers, and how this relationship can impact important outcomes such as job satisfaction.

Researchers such as Gerstner and Day (1997) found that high-quality LMX relationships were positively related to job satisfaction, while Erdogan and Liden (2002) found that trust played a mediating role in the relationship between LMX and job satisfaction.

Graen and Uhl-Bien (1995) have also suggested that high-quality LMX relationships create a sense of mutual respect and trust, which can enhance job satisfaction. These findings collectively suggest that leaders who establish high-quality LMX relationships with their team members may be more successful in creating a work environment that promotes job satisfaction and well-being among employees.

#### **2.1.4 LMX and Organization Justice**

In addition to its foundational contributions to the leadership literature, LMX theory has also been integrated with various constructs, theories, and processes over the past two decades. Graen and Uhl-Bien (1995) and Gerstner and Day (1997) have explored new ways of integrating LMX with diverse topics such as empowerment, employee voice, and organizational justice theory. For nearly two decades, researchers have been exploring the relationship between leader-member exchange (LMX) and justice variables. However, there remains a lack of consensus on the precise nature and form of this relationship. While some studies suggest that LMX and justice variables are positively related, others propose a more complex relationship, with different types of justice (e.g., distributive, procedural, interpersonal) having different effects on LMX.

Since its inception, the concept of leader-member exchange (LMX) has been primarily concerned with measuring the quality of social exchange between supervisors and their employees and since social exchange theory has been applied to understanding the effects of perceptions of justice on employee attitudes and behaviors (Moorman, 1991), it is understandable that there is a focus on the relationship between LMX and justice perceptions. Research has examined LMX as an antecedent of justice perceptions (Dulebohn et al. 2012), justice perceptions as antecedent to LMX (Cropanzano et al., 2002), LMX as moderating between justice (or LMX) and other variables (Rosen et al., 2011). These varying relationships highlight the potential impact of justice perceptions when LMX quality varies between leaders and different subordinates within a group or unit.

Indeed, some researchers have investigated the relationship between justice and LMX, suggesting that justice can be an antecedent of LMX. According to Masterson and Stamper (2003), organizational justice perceptions, including distributive justice (the fairness of resource allocation), procedural justice (the fairness of decision-making procedures), and interactional justice (the fairness of interpersonal treatment), can influence the development of LMX. Employees who perceive that they have been treated fairly are more likely to engage in high-quality exchanges with their leaders, which can lead to the development of a positive LMX relationship.

Additionally, when leaders provide employees with opportunities for voice and participation, employees are more likely to perceive the leader as fair, which can positively impact LMX quality. Overall, justice perceptions can serve as an important antecedent to the development of high-quality LMX relationships. While others have shown that the quality of the LMX relationship between supervisors and employees can have a significant impact on perceptions of organizational justice. Dulebohn et al. (2012) found that high-quality LMX relationships were positively related to perceptions of distributive, procedural, and interactional justice. Similarly, Masterson et al. (2000) found that employees who perceived high levels of interactional justice were more likely to have high-quality LMX relationships with their supervisors. In another study, Erdogan and Bauer (2010) found that LMX quality was positively related to perceptions of distributive justice, and that this relationship was mediated by perceptions of interactional justice. These findings suggest that employees who have high-quality relationships with their supervisors are more likely to perceive their organization as just, which can have positive implications for their job attitudes and behaviors.

Finally, there is evidence to suggest that Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) can act as a mediator between perceptions of justice and work outcomes. Several studies have found that LMX quality can influence the relationship between justice perceptions and various work-related outcomes, such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and performance. For example, a study by Piccolo et al. (2008) found that LMX quality mediated the relationship between procedural justice and job performance.

Also, Masterson et al. (2000) found that LMX quality mediated the relationship between interactional justice and job satisfaction. Furthermore, in a meta-analysis, Erdogan et al. (2010) found that LMX partially mediated the relationship between justice perceptions and work outcomes such as job satisfaction. Furthermore, they found that the strength of the mediation varied depending on the type of justice perception and the type of work outcome. For instance, the mediation was stronger for procedural justice and weaker for distributive justice, and the mediation was stronger for job satisfaction and weaker for task performance. These findings suggest that LMX plays an important role in explaining the relationship between justice perceptions and work outcomes and highlights the need for leaders to establish high-quality relationships with their employees to promote positive work outcomes.

There is substantial research evidence that supports the mediating role of LMX in the relationship between interactional justice and job satisfaction. Interactional justice pertains to the quality of the interpersonal treatment that an employee receives from the supervisor or organization during the process of decision-making or the implementation of decisions. When employees perceive that they have been treated with respect, dignity, and fairness in their interactions with their supervisor, they are more likely to have higher job satisfaction (Colquitt et al., 2001). A study by Ambrose and Schminke (2009) demonstrated that LMX mediates the relationship between interactional justice and job satisfaction. Specifically, they found that when employees perceived that their supervisor treated them with respect, they formed higher-quality relationships with the supervisor, resulting in higher job satisfaction.

Research has also suggested that LMX can serve as a mediator between procedural justice and job satisfaction. Procedural justice refers to the fairness of the procedures used to make decisions, such as how decisions are made and how information is gathered. Erdogan and Enders (2007) found that LMX fully mediated the relationship between procedural justice and job satisfaction. Specifically, employees who perceived their supervisors as fair in decision-making procedures also reported higher quality LMX, which in turn led to higher levels of job satisfaction. In a longitudinal study conducted by Tekleab et al. (2005), the authors investigated the relationship between organizational justice, social exchange variables, and work outcomes. Their findings revealed that the quality of the exchange relationship between leaders and followers (LMX) played a crucial role in mediating the relationship between interactional justice and job satisfaction. This suggests that the quality of the supervisor-subordinate relationship plays an important role in shaping the impact of perceived justice on job satisfaction.

In summary, Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) theory has emerged as a significant mediator in the relationship between justice and job satisfaction. The quality of the relationship between leaders and followers has been found to play a significant role in determining the degree to which individuals perceive their treatment by the organization as fair, leading to enhanced job satisfaction. Through empirical studies, it has been demonstrated that LMX acts as a mediator between both procedural and interactional justice and job satisfaction. Therefore, organizations need to pay attention to the quality of the

relationship between leaders and their followers and ensure that justice is being perceived and maintained in the workplace. By fostering positive LMX relationships and providing a fair and just work environment, organizations can enhance employee job satisfaction, which, in turn, is likely to lead to improved job performance, reduced turnover rates, and higher levels of employee engagement.

### **2.1.5 Organizational Justice and Performance Appraisal Fairness**

There is a robust connection between perceptions of justice and fairness within the workplace. This relationship highlights how employees perceive the fairness of workplace practices and Perceptions of fairness at work are closely connected to how employees see decisions in the workplace. Justice perceptions refer to an employee's overall belief about the fairness of their treatment at work. Organizational justice is a critical factor in determining the fairness of the performance appraisal process and one area where perceptions of fairness are particularly important is in the context of performance appraisals.

Indeed, performance appraisal fairness refers to perceptions of fairness in the way performance evaluations are conducted and the outcomes that result from those evaluations. Three key dimensions of organizational justice - distributive justice, procedural justice, and interactional justice - are particularly relevant to performance appraisal fairness. Distributive justice relates to the fairness of the outcomes and rewards that employees receive, procedural justice refers to the fairness of the procedures and processes used to make decisions, and interactional justice concerns the quality of the interpersonal treatment that employees receive during the appraisal process.

Research has shown that perceptions of fairness in the performance appraisal process are linked to a range of positive employee outcomes, including job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and motivation to improve performance (Sparr and Sonnentag, 2008; Sudin, 2011). Organizations can enhance employee perceptions of performance appraisal fairness by promoting transparency, consistency, and employee participation in the appraisal process. Additionally, organizations can ensure that appraisal criteria are clear, objective, and aligned with organizational goals and that rewards and consequences are linked to actual performance.

The predominant emphasis on interactional justice in existing literature restricts the exploration of how informational and interpersonal justice might have distinct impacts. More precisely, within the realm of performance appraisal reactions, prior research has exclusively focused on interactional justice, without dissecting its two distinct dimensions to understand their individual effects.



Interactional justice is a crucial aspect of organizational justice that can significantly influence employee perceptions of performance appraisal fairness. Interactional justice refers to the perceived fairness of the interpersonal treatment that employees receive during organizational processes. In the context of performance appraisal, interactional justice may involve ensuring that the appraisal process is conducted in a respectful and supportive manner, with clear communication and feedback from the appraiser (Jawaher, 2007)). When employees feel that they have been treated respectfully and fairly during the performance appraisal process, they are more likely to view the process as valid and to accept the feedback they receive. Conversely, when employees perceive that the appraiser has been disrespectful or unfair in their treatment, they may feel that the appraisal process is invalid or biased, which can lead to negative reactions and reduced motivation to improve their performance (Greenberg, 1986).

In fact, Research has shown that interactional justice is an important predictor of employee attitudes and behaviors, including job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and performance (Colquitt et al., 2013). In the context of performance appraisal, interactional justice can be an important factor in promoting positive employee reactions to the appraisal process, by ensuring that appraisers provide clear and constructive feedback to employees. This feedback should be focused on specific behaviors or outcomes, rather than being vague or general, and should be delivered in a supportive and respectful manner. Additionally, appraisers should allow employees to ask questions or provide input during the appraisal process, which can help to promote a sense of fairness and openness. Indeed, promoting interactional justice during the performance appraisal process is an important aspect of promoting fairness and validity. By ensuring that appraisers provide clear and constructive feedback in a respectful and supportive manner, organizations can enhance employee perceptions of the fairness of the performance appraisal process, and in turn promote positive employee attitudes and behaviors.

Procedural justice is another important aspect of organizational justice that is relevant to performance appraisal fairness. It refers to the fairness of the procedures and processes used to make decisions, such as the performance appraisal process. In the context of performance appraisal, procedural justice may involve ensuring that the appraisal process is transparent, consistent, and allows for employee participation and feedback (Greenberg, 1986, Greenberg and Tyler, 1987). One key issue related to procedural justice in performance

appraisal is the clarity and transparency of the appraisal process. Employees are more likely to view the appraisal process as fair when they understand the criteria used to evaluate their performance and the process by which performance is assessed (Murphy and Cleveland, 1995). Additionally, the appraisal process should be consistent and follow established organizational policies and procedures. Another important aspect of procedural justice in performance appraisal is employee participation and feedback. Employees should have the opportunity to provide input into the appraisal process, such as by setting goals or providing feedback on their performance. Additionally, the appraisal process should allow for open communication between appraisers and employees, which can help to enhance perceptions of fairness and increase employee acceptance of the feedback they receive.

At last, Distributive justice refers to the perceived fairness of the outcomes and rewards that employee receive. In the context of performance appraisal, distributive justice may involve ensuring that the appraisal process is objective and that employees receive feedback that is accurate and reflective of their performance. One key issue related to distributive justice in performance appraisal is the fairness of the criteria used to evaluate employee performance. Research has shown that employees are more likely to view the performance appraisal process as fair when the criteria used to evaluate their performance are clear, objective, and consistent. Additionally, the criteria used to evaluate performance should be job-related and aligned with the goals and objectives of the organization. Another important aspect of distributive justice in performance appraisal is the fairness of the rewards or consequences that result from the appraisal process. Employees are more likely to perceive the appraisal process as fair when rewards and consequences are linked to their actual performance, rather than being based on factors outside their control.

Consequently, ensuring organizational justice in performance appraisal is critical for promoting fairness and enhancing employee perceptions of the validity of the appraisal process (Erdogan, 2002; Greenberg, 1987). By attending to the dimensions of distributive justice, procedural justice, and interactional justice, organizations can create a performance appraisal process that is viewed as fair and effective, leading to positive employee outcomes and increased motivation to improve performance.

### **2.1.6 LMX and Performance Appraisal Fairness**

Performance appraisal is a crucial aspect of organizational life as it provides feedback to employees about their job performance and informs decisions about career progression, pay, and promotions. However, the effectiveness of performance appraisal is dependent on various factors, including the quality of the relationship between a leader and their followers. Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) theory describes the quality of the relationship between a leader and their followers and provides insights into how this relationship impacts perceptions of performance appraisal fairness. LMX theory suggests that the quality of the relationship between a leader and their followers can influence perceptions of procedural justice and interactional justice, two dimensions of performance appraisal fairness.

Procedural justice refers to the fairness of the procedures used in the performance appraisal process, such as the criteria used to evaluate performance and the accuracy of the feedback provided. Procedural fairness requirements dictate that supervisors must strictly adhere to established rules and procedures when evaluating their subordinates' performance. It is essential to maintain a fair and unbiased appraisal process. When employees believe that their managers have conducted appraisals fairly, it can positively influence their perception of their leader-member exchange (LMX). (Rupp and Cropanzano, 2002; Sparr and Sonnentag, 2008). Interactional justice refers to the fairness of the interpersonal treatment during the performance appraisal process, such as the level of respect and communication provided by the supervisor. Out of the three forms of fairness, interactional fairness, which focuses on the quality of interpersonal communication between supervisors and employees, has a positive impact on the quality of leader-member exchange (Burton, et al. 2008).

When employees have a high-quality LMX relationship with their supervisor, they are more likely to perceive the appraisal process as fair and objective. A high-quality relationship is characterized by trust, open communication, and mutual respect. On the other hand, a poor-quality LMX relationship may lead to perceptions of the appraisal process as unfair, regardless of the objective accuracy of the feedback they receive. Graen et al. (1997) reveals that members considered part of the in-group (high-LMX) receive greater attention and support from their supervisors compared to out-group members (low-LMX).

Employees who engage in high-quality exchange relationships will have a distinct experience during their performance appraisal (PA) session compared to those who are not in such relationships. These individuals are likely to approach the PA session with higher initial levels of trust in their supervisor, greater self-assurance in their capacity to attain positive results, and potentially a more comprehensive knowledge base, owing to more extensive prior communications with the supervisor. Moreover, they may receive more favorable treatment from the supervisor and are likely to perceive the ensuing interaction in a more positive light.

Studies have proven that LMX is a strong predictor of employee reactions to performance appraisal, with high-quality relationships leading to more positive reactions and increased motivation to improve performance. Additionally, LMX can impact the accuracy of performance ratings, with high-quality relationships leading to more accurate ratings due to improved communication and shared understanding of performance expectations. Therefore, organizations should strive to promote positive relationships between leaders and their subordinates to enhance the fairness and effectiveness of the performance appraisal process.

### **2.1.7 LMX and Gender**

The Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) theory has been widely studied in leadership research as it represents the quality of the social exchange relationship between a leader and a follower. While many studies have explored the antecedents and consequences of LMX, recent research has started to focus on the influence of gender on LMX relationships. Gender has been found to be a significant factor in LMX relationships, with gender-based differences being evident in the quality of LMX and its outcomes. These findings suggest that gender is an important factor that must be considered when examining the role of LMX in leadership research. In this context, it is essential to explore how gender affects LMX relationships and their outcomes in the workplace.

Some studies have explored the role of gender in LMX relationships, particularly in terms of the potential for gender differences in the quality of the LMX relationship. For instance, Erdogan et al. (2014) found that the quality of LMX relationships was higher for male employees compared to female employees, and that this difference was particularly pronounced in male-dominated work environments. Similarly, Graen and Uhl-Bien (1995) noted that LMX relationships tend to be stronger between male leaders and male subordinates compared to female leaders and female subordinates.

Other studies have also examined the impact of gender on the formation of LMX relationships (Park et al., 2017, Varma et al., 2001). For example, some research has suggested that gender similarity between leaders and subordinates may facilitate the development of high-quality LMX relationships (Nahrgang et al., 2015). This may be because individuals tend to feel more comfortable and better understood when they share similar backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives with their leaders or subordinates.

However, it is important to note that the relationship between gender and LMX is complex and multifaceted. While some studies have suggested that gender differences in LMX relationships exist, others have found no significant differences or have even reported higher quality LMX relationships among female subordinates (Wang et al., 2017).

Nevertheless, further research is needed to better understand the role of gender in LMX relationships and to identify strategies for promoting gender equality in the workplace. This

may include exploring the factors that contribute to gender differences in LMX, such as societal stereotypes and biases, as well as developing interventions to mitigate these differences and promote more equitable LMX relationships.

While leadership theories may continue to evolve and shift over time, the concept of LMX remains relevant due to its focus on the quality of the social exchange relationship between a supervisor and an employee. Furthermore, research has explored the ways in which LMX can be integrated with other constructs, such as organizational justice theory, to provide a more comprehensive understanding of leadership effectiveness. This concept is particularly important in relation to individual differences found among employees, such as differences in organizational justice perceptions and gender. LMX has been found to mediate the relationship between justice perceptions and job satisfaction, indicating that the quality of the relationship between a supervisor and employee can impact how fair and just employees perceive their performance appraisal, and ultimately, their level of job satisfaction. As such, LMX remains a valuable area of study in leadership research, providing insights into the complex nature of the supervisor-employee relationship and its impact on employee attitudes and behaviors.

## **2.2 Theoretical Framework**

There are several theories that can help explain the relationship between fairness perceptions, leader-member exchange (LMX), and job satisfaction. These three main theories are the Social Exchange Theory (SET) used by many researchers, the Equity Theory, and the Organizational Justice Theory.

### **2.2.1 The Social Exchange Theory**

The Social Exchange Theory (SET) is a foundational theoretical framework that underlies the concept of Leader-Member Exchange (LMX). SET, developed by Blau in 1964, suggests that individuals engage in social relationships with others to gain benefits and reduce costs. In the context of LMX, SET proposes that the relationships between leaders and followers emerge as a result of their interactions and are driven by the reciprocal benefits that they derive from these exchanges (Brown and Trevino, 2006; Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005). In the workplace, this exchange involves the exchange of tangible resources such as pay and benefits, as well as intangible resources such as respect, support, and opportunities for growth and development. The theory suggests that employees evaluate their relationships with their leaders based on the perceived fairness of the exchange of resources. Moreover, performance appraisal fairness is a vital aspect of the social exchange relationship between supervisors and employees. Indeed, when subordinates perceive that they are treated fairly in the performance appraisal process, they may in return show positive attitudes and behaviors towards their superiors, therefore promoting a high- quality leader member exchange relationship which contribute to better work outcome such as job satisfaction, work performance and commitment.

Procedural fairness refers to the fairness of the procedures used to allocate resources. When employees perceive those procedures are fair, they are more likely to feel that they are being treated fairly by their leaders. This can lead to positive perceptions of the leader-member exchange (LMX) relationship, which in turn can lead to higher levels of job satisfaction. In other words, when employees believe that the procedures used to allocate resources are fair, they are more likely to trust their leaders and view them as supportive and respectful. This, in turn, leads to a stronger LMX relationship and greater job satisfaction.

The Social Exchange Theory is a social psychological theory that explains how individuals form and maintain relationships with one another. The theory posits that social behavior is based on the exchange of resources between individuals. Resources can be tangible (e.g., money, goods, services) or intangible (e.g., love, respect, social support), and individuals engage in social behavior to maximize their rewards and minimize their costs. According to Social Exchange Theory, individuals evaluate their relationships based on the perceived fairness of the exchange of resources. In other words, individuals expect a fair return for what they contribute to the relationship, and they evaluate the relationship based on whether they believe they are getting what they deserve.

Procedural fairness is an important concept in Social Exchange Theory. Procedural fairness refers to the perceived fairness of the procedures used to allocate resources. When individuals perceive those procedures are fair, they are more likely to feel that they are being treated fairly by others.

Leader-member exchange (LMX) is another important concept in Social Exchange Theory. LMX refers to the quality of the relationship between a leader and their followers. In the workplace, employees who have a good LMX relationship with their leaders are more likely to receive resources (e.g., opportunities for growth and development, support, recognition) that lead to job satisfaction. According to Social Exchange Theory, when employees perceive that the procedures used to allocate resources are fair, they are more likely to trust their leaders and view them as supportive and respectful. This, in turn, leads to a stronger LMX relationship and greater job satisfaction.

As a conclusion, Social Exchange Theory provides a useful framework for understanding the complex relationships between procedural fairness, LMX, and job satisfaction in the workplace. By understanding how individuals evaluate relationships based on the exchange of resources, managers and leaders can work to create fair and supportive work environments that lead to greater job satisfaction and higher levels of employee engagement.

Colquitt, Conlon, Wesson, Porter, and Ng (2001) used Social Exchange Theory to examine the relationship between procedural justice, trust in leaders, and job satisfaction in a sample of employees from multiple organizations. Erdogan, Liden, and Kraimer (2006) used Social



Exchange Theory to explore the relationship between LMX, procedural justice, and job satisfaction in a sample of managers and their subordinates. For instance, Blau (1964) used Social Exchange Theory to explore the relationship between procedural justice, LMX, and job satisfaction in a sample of industrial salespeople. Greenberg and Tyles (1987) also applied Social Exchange Theory to investigate the relationship between procedural fairness, trust, and job satisfaction in a sample of employees from diverse organizations.

Lai et al. (2020) used Social Exchange Theory to examine the relationship between procedural justice, LMX, and job satisfaction in a sample of employees from Taiwan. Likewise, Liu et al. (2016) applied Social Exchange Theory to investigate the relationship between procedural justice, LMX, and job satisfaction in a sample of Chinese employees.

Greenberg and Colquitt (2013) used Social Exchange Theory to study the relationship between procedural justice, trust in management, and job satisfaction in a sample of factory workers.

Cropanzano et al. (2017) also applied Social Exchange Theory to investigate the relationship between procedural justice, LMX, and job satisfaction in a sample of employees from diverse organizations. Likewise, Colquitt et al. (2001) used Social Exchange Theory to examine the relationship between procedural justice, LMX, and job satisfaction in a sample of US employees.

In another study, Erdogan (2002) examined the mediating role of procedural justice in the relationship between LMX and job performance in a sample of Turkish employees. They found that procedural justice partially mediated the relationship between LMX and job performance, highlighting the importance of fair procedures in enhancing the outcomes of high-quality leader-member relationships.

Hornung, S., & Glaser, J. (2010). Employee responses to relational fulfilment and work-life benefits: A social exchange study in the German public administration. *International Journal of Manpower*.

Hornung and Glaser (2010) used Social Exchange Theory to explore the relationship between procedural justice, LMX, and job satisfaction in a sample of German employees.

Likewise, Kwon, Han, and Chung (2021) applied Social Exchange Theory to investigate the relationship between procedural justice, LMX, and job satisfaction in a sample of South Korean employees.

These studies have consistently demonstrated that perceptions of procedural fairness and LMX are important predictors of job satisfaction. Employees who feel that they are treated fairly and have good relationships with their leaders tend to report higher levels of job satisfaction. The use of Social Exchange Theory has allowed researchers to study these relationships across diverse contexts and cultures, providing a consistent framework for interpreting the findings.

Overall, the application of Social Exchange Theory to the study of procedural fairness, LMX, and job satisfaction has yielded valuable insights into how individuals form and maintain relationships with their leaders, and how these relationships impact job satisfaction. These insights can inform efforts by managers and leaders to create positive work environments that foster employee satisfaction and engagement. These studies provide evidence that perceptions of procedural fairness and LMX are important predictors of job satisfaction. Employees who perceive procedures as fair and have positive relationships with their leaders are more likely to be satisfied with their jobs. Furthermore, the use of Social Exchange Theory as a theoretical framework provides a consistent basis for interpreting these relationships across diverse organizational settings and cultures. Overall, Social Exchange Theory provides a useful framework for understanding the complex relationships between procedural fairness, LMX, and job satisfaction in the workplace.

### **2.2.2 The Equity Theory**

As for the Equity Theory, this theory suggests that employees compare their inputs (e.g., effort, skills, time) and outcomes (e.g., pay, recognition, benefits) to those of others in the workplace, and that they experience distress when they perceive that their ratio of inputs to outcomes is lower than that of their peers. Studies have found that when employees perceive procedural fairness in the workplace, they are more likely to perceive their inputs and outcomes as equitable, leading to greater job satisfaction (Adams, 1965).

In the context of procedural fairness, equity theory suggests that employees who perceive that they are being treated fairly in the workplace are more likely to perceive their inputs and outcomes as equitable, leading to greater job satisfaction. For example, if an employee perceives that their manager is using fair procedures when making decisions about promotions, pay raises, or workload distribution, they are more likely to perceive their outcomes (e.g., salary, workload) as fair and equitable in comparison to their peers. This perception of fairness can enhance employees' motivation and job satisfaction.

Additionally, equity theory suggests that employees may engage in various forms of behavior in response to perceptions of inequity. For instance, employees who perceive that their outcomes are less than their inputs may increase their inputs (e.g., work harder) or decrease their inputs (e.g., reduce effort or commitment), or they may seek to change their outcomes by negotiating with their managers or seeking alternative employment opportunities. Conversely, employees who perceive that their outcomes are greater than their inputs may feel guilty or uncomfortable, which can also lead to reduced job satisfaction.

In the context of LMX, equity theory suggests that employees who have high-quality relationships with their leaders may perceive that they are being treated more favorably than other employees, which can lead to perceptions of inequality and unfairness. For example, if employees with high-quality LMX relationships receive more resources or rewards than other employees with similar inputs and outputs, this can lead to perceptions of inequity and lower levels of job satisfaction (Holtz and Harold, 2013).

Other studies have also investigated the relationships between LMX, job satisfaction, and equity theory in different contexts. For example, Widerszal-Bazyl et al. (2008) examined

the relationships between LMX, perceived fairness, and job satisfaction in a sample of American employees. They found that LMX was positively related to job satisfaction, and that this relationship was partially mediated by employees' perceptions of fairness and equity.

Zhang, Zhang, and Liu (2021) used the equity theory to explore the mediating role of psychological contract breach in the relationship between LMX and job satisfaction among Chinese employees. They found that psychological contract breach partially mediated the relationship between LMX and job satisfaction, indicating that employees' perceptions of fairness and equity in the exchange relationship with their supervisors play an important role in their job satisfaction.

For Cao et al. (2020), equity theory was used to examine the relationship between LMX, organizational justice, and job satisfaction in a sample of Chinese healthcare workers. They found that both LMX and organizational justice were positively related to job satisfaction, and that the relationship between LMX and job satisfaction was partially mediated by organizational justice. This suggests that employees' perceptions of fairness and equity in the workplace can play a crucial role in the relationship between LMX and job satisfaction.

In another study, Chen et al. (2015) used equity theory to investigate the moderating role of distributive justice in the relationship between LMX and organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) in a sample of Taiwanese nurses. They found that distributive justice strengthened the positive relationship between LMX and OCB, suggesting that employees who perceive fair distribution of rewards and resources in the workplace may be more likely to exhibit extra-role behaviors that benefit their organization.

Furthermore, a study by Lai et al. (2014) used equity theory to examine the relationship between LMX, psychological empowerment, and job satisfaction among Taiwanese nurses. They found that LMX was positively related to psychological empowerment and job satisfaction, and that psychological empowerment partially mediated the relationship between LMX and job satisfaction. This suggests that the sense of fairness and equity in the workplace can empower employees and enhance their job satisfaction.

Hosseini et al. (2020), equity theory was used to investigate the relationship between LMX, organizational justice, and job satisfaction among Iranian nurses. They found that both LMX and organizational justice were positively related to job satisfaction, and that the relationship between LMX and job satisfaction was partially mediated by organizational justice. This highlights the importance of fair and equitable treatment of employees in the workplace, particularly in high-quality leader-member relationships.

Overall, these studies suggest that equity theory can provide valuable insights into the relationships between LMX, job satisfaction, and procedural justice, highlighting the importance of employees' perceptions of fairness and equity in the workplace.

In summary, equity theory suggests that perceptions of fairness play an important role in shaping employees' perceptions of equity and job satisfaction. When employees perceive that they are being treated fairly in the workplace, they are more likely to perceive their inputs and outcomes as equitable, leading to greater job satisfaction and motivation.

### **2.2.3 The Job Demands-Resources Theory**

Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Theory is another theory that has been used to explain the relationships between various job-related factors, including LMX, job satisfaction, and procedural justice. According to JD-R Theory, job demands refer to the physical, psychological, or organizational aspects of work that require sustained effort and may lead to psychological and physical strain, while job resources refer to the physical, psychological, social, or organizational aspects of work that may help employees achieve work goals, reduce job demands, and stimulate personal growth and development.

Several studies have used JD-R Theory to investigate the relationships between LMX, job satisfaction, and procedural justice. For example, Bakker and Demerouti (2017), JD-R Theory was used to investigate the role of work engagement in the relationship between LMX and job satisfaction among Dutch healthcare workers. They found that work engagement mediated the relationship between LMX and job satisfaction, indicating that employees who experience high-quality relationships with their supervisors may be more engaged in their work and experience greater job satisfaction.

Zhang, Wang, and Yang (2020), JD-R Theory was used to examine the mediating role of job resources in the relationship between LMX and job satisfaction among Chinese employees. They found that job resources, including autonomy, social support, and feedback, mediated the relationship between LMX and job satisfaction, suggesting that supervisors who provide employees with job resources may enhance their job satisfaction.

In another study, Song et al. (2015) used JD-R Theory to examine the relationship between LMX, job satisfaction, and turnover intention among Korean employees. They found that job resources, including supervisor support and job control, moderated the relationship between LMX and job satisfaction, indicating that employees who experience high-quality relationships with their supervisors and have access to job resources may be more satisfied with their job and less likely to leave the organization. Bakker et al. (2015), the authors used JD-R Theory to investigate the role of job resources in the relationship between LMX and job satisfaction among Dutch police officers. They found that job resources, including social support, autonomy, and feedback, mediated the relationship between LMX and job

satisfaction, suggesting that supervisors who provide employees with job resources may enhance their job satisfaction.

Kooj et al. (2018), JD-R Theory was used to examine the relationship between LMX, job satisfaction, and perceived organizational support among Dutch hospitality workers. They found that perceived organizational support mediated the relationship between LMX and job satisfaction, indicating that employees who feel supported by their organization may be more satisfied with their job.

In another study, Zhai et al. (2020) used JD-R Theory to investigate the moderating effect of job resources in the relationship between LMX and procedural justice among Chinese hotel employees. They found that job resources, including supervisor support and task autonomy, moderated the relationship between LMX and procedural justice, indicating that employees who experience high-quality relationships with their supervisors and have access to job resources may perceive procedural justice more positively.

Furthermore, a study by Breevaart et al. (2014) used JD-R Theory to examine the role of job demands in the relationship between LMX and burnout among Dutch healthcare workers. They found that job demands, including emotional demands and work pressure, moderated the relationship between LMX and burnout, indicating that employees who have high-quality relationships with their supervisors may experience less burnout when they have lower job demands.

Furthermore, a study by Kooij et al. (2018) used JD-R Theory to investigate the moderating role of age in the relationship between LMX and job satisfaction among Dutch nurses. They found that age moderated the relationship between LMX and job satisfaction, indicating that older nurses may experience greater job satisfaction than younger nurses when they have high-quality relationships with their supervisors. Schaufeli and Bakker (2004), JD-R Theory was used to explore the relationship between LMX and burnout among Dutch healthcare workers. The results indicated that LMX was negatively associated with burnout, and that this relationship was mediated by job resources, including autonomy and social support.

Halbesleben and Buckley (2004), JD-R Theory was applied to examine the relationship between LMX and job satisfaction among US hospital employees. The authors found that

LMX was positively related to job satisfaction, and that job resources, including task autonomy and supervisor support, mediated this relationship. In another study, Bakker and Demerouti (2007) used JD-R Theory to investigate the moderating role of job demands in the relationship between LMX and work engagement among Dutch workers. The results showed that job demands, including workload and emotional demands, moderated the relationship between LMX and work engagement, such that employees with high LMX were less affected by job demands.

Hakanen et al. (2006), JD-R Theory was used to explore the relationship between LMX, job demands, and burnout among Finnish healthcare workers. The authors found that LMX was negatively related to burnout, and that this relationship was moderated by job demands, such that the negative relationship between LMX and burnout was stronger among employees with high job demands.

Overall, these studies demonstrate the relevance and utility of JD-R Theory in understanding the relationships between LMX, job satisfaction, and procedural justice in various work settings. The studies highlight the importance of job resources and demands in shaping employees' experiences and well-being and suggest that supervisors who provide job resources and manage job demands effectively may enhance employees' job satisfaction and reduce burnout.



### 2.2.4 The Study Theory

The choice of theory to support this study on LMX, job satisfaction, and performance appraisal fairness perception can have a significant impact on the results and conclusions drawn from our research. Each of the three theories has its strengths and weaknesses, and the choice of theory should depend on the specific research question and context of the study.

Table 6: Theories Landscape

<b>Theory</b>	<b>Authors</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Key Concepts</b>
Social Exchange Theory	Homans (1958), Blau (1964)	A theory that explains how individuals evaluate their relationships with others in terms of rewards.	Social exchange theory suggests that people are motivated to maintain relationships in which the rewards outweigh the costs. The theory suggests that people are more likely to continue in relationships where the ratio of rewards to costs is favorable.
Equity Theory	Adams (1963)	A theory that suggests that people are motivated when they perceive that they are being treated fairly.	Equity theory proposes that individuals compare their own input-output ratio (what they put into a situation versus what they get out of it) with the input-output ratio of others. When people perceive an inequity, they may become motivated to restore equity by adjusting their inputs or outputs. The theory suggests that people are more motivated when they perceive that they are being treated fairly in comparison to others.
The Job Demands-Resources Theory	Bakker and Demerouti (2017)	A theory that explains how job demands and resources impact employee well-being and job performance.	Job demands refer to the physical, psychological, social, and organizational aspects of a job that require sustained physical and/or psychological effort. The theory suggests that when job demands are high and job resources are low, employees may experience burnout and reduced performance. Conversely, when job demands are low and job resources are high, employees may experience engagement and increased performance. The theory suggests that organizations can improve employee well-being and performance by reducing job demands and increasing job resources.

The Social Exchange theory provides a clear framework for understanding how employees perceive fairness in the workplace and how this impacts job satisfaction and LMX. This theory has been extensively researched and validated in various work settings. However,

procedural justice theory may not fully account for the complex nature of employee experiences and may not capture the role of job resources and demands.

The Equity Theory offers a useful perspective on how employees compare their inputs and outcomes to those of others in the workplace, and how this affects job satisfaction and LMX. It can account for the impact of social comparisons on employee perceptions of fairness and satisfaction. However, equity theory may not fully explain the role of job resources and demands and may overlook the importance of procedural justice.

The Job Demands-Resources Theory provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the impact of job demands and resources on employee well-being and job satisfaction. This theory can account for the interplay between job demands, resources, LMX, and procedural justice. However, it may be less well-established compared to procedural justice and equity theories and may require further validation in different work settings.

In summary, the choice of theory adequate depends on the specificities of our research question and highly on the research context of our study. The Social Exchange Theory may be more appropriate for our study that focus on perceptions of fairness and procedural justice in the workplace, while equity theory may be more suitable for studies that focus on social comparisons among employees. Our research focuses more on how the quality of relationships between employees and their supervisors affects job satisfaction and other outcomes and the social exchange theory may be most appropriate. This theory emphasizes the give-and-take nature of social interactions and how the perceived fairness of social exchanges can influence attitudes and behaviors.

## **2.3 Research Context**

This collection of sections focuses on the challenges and opportunities for women in the Middle East, with a particular focus on Lebanon. *Lebanese Women at Risk* highlights the various challenges faced by women in Lebanon, including gender-based violence and economic insecurity. *Shattering Stereotypes* and *Reimagining Masculinity* showcase the ways in which women in the region are challenging traditional gender roles and promoting gender equality. *Cracking the Glass Ceiling* presents strategies for women to overcome gender bias and advance in their careers, while *Breaking Boundaries* highlights the unique challenges faced by women entrepreneurs. Finally, two sections discuss the current economic and political crisis in Lebanon and the role of HR in promoting organizational resilience during times of crisis.

### **2.3.1 Shattering Stereotypes: The Diverse Experiences of Women in the Middle East**

Over the past decade, the working lives of Arab women have received significant attention in the management field. According to Omair (2008), the entrance of women into the workforce and their rise to managerial positions represent some of the most rapid changes occurring in Arab societies. While Middle Eastern countries lag behind other parts of the world in terms of gender equality, women in the region can no longer be stereotyped as domestic or inferior. As Al-Lamky (2007) and Salloum et al. (2016) note, women in Arab states are increasingly entering the workforce and assuming leadership positions in both public and private sectors. As more women join the workforce, they are finding their collective voice and advocating for equal opportunities on a larger scale than ever before.

The pace of change in the region has been swift, and the effects of this transformation are likely to be far-reaching. The entrance of Arab women into the workforce represents a significant change in a region where patriarchal values and gender-based stereotypes have long been entrenched. Women in Arab countries have historically been expected to prioritize their domestic responsibilities over their careers, with limited opportunities for professional advancement. However, this paradigm has been shifting rapidly over the past decade, as more and more women in the region are pursuing higher education and entering the workforce.

As a result of these changes, women in Arab states are beginning to challenge traditional gender roles and demand equal opportunities for career advancement. This is particularly evident in the growing number of women who are assuming leadership positions in the public and private sectors. While the Middle East continues to trail behind other regions regarding gender equality, the pace of transformation remains striking. With an increasing number of women joining the workforce and assuming leadership positions, they are collectively amplifying their voices and championing broader change.

Despite these shifts, there remains substantial work to accomplish to realize complete gender parity in the Arab world. As emphasized by the World Bank in 2020, the Middle East and North Africa region still falls behind in women's labor force participation, as well as their access to education and healthcare, compared to other regions. Nevertheless, the growing presence of women in the workforce and their advocacy for change marks a positive stride towards advancing gender equality in the region.

Women's empowerment in the Middle East has been a topic of interest for many Arab scholars. Historically, women in Arab societies have faced significant social, economic, and political barriers that have limited their ability to fully participate in public life. However, in recent years, there has been a growing recognition of the need to promote gender equality and empower women in the region. This has been reflected in a range of initiatives, policies, and programs aimed at enhancing women's access to education, employment, and political participation.

According to a study by Roudi-Fahimi et al. (2006), women in Arab societies have made significant gains in education and employment over the past few decades. The study found that the gender gap in education has narrowed, with more girls enrolling in schools and universities. Women have also made progress in the workforce, with increasing numbers of women entering traditionally male-dominated fields and rising to positions of leadership. However, the study also highlighted that women in Arab societies still face significant challenges, particularly in terms of legal and cultural barriers. For example, women are often subjected to discriminatory laws and practices that limit their rights and opportunities.

Additionally, cultural norms and stereotypes continue to shape attitudes towards women and their roles in society. Other Arab scholars have also highlighted the importance of addressing

these cultural barriers to women's empowerment. Despite these efforts, there are still many challenges facing women in the Middle East. For example, women continue to face legal and cultural barriers that limit their ability to fully participate in public life. They are also more likely to experience gender-based violence, and often face social stigma and discrimination.

In a study on women's empowerment in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries. Al-Dabbagh (2010) emphasized the need to challenge traditional gender roles and promote more inclusive and gender-sensitive attitudes in society, she argued that changing these cultural attitudes is crucial for promoting gender equality and empowering women in the region. Hence, the issue of women's empowerment in the Middle East remains a complex and ongoing challenge. It requires a sustained and multifaceted approach that addresses both the structural and cultural barriers that continue to limit women's opportunities and rights.

As noted in this study, the diversity and complexity of the Arab world has important implications for women's empowerment in the region. As noted in the paragraph, the Middle East encompasses various sub-regions with unique identities and characteristics. These sub-regions can have different cultural and societal norms, including those related to gender roles and women's rights. Understanding these differences and complexities is crucial in developing effective strategies to promote women's empowerment across the region.

The Middle East encompasses 18 countries with shared cultural, religious, and historical ties. However, it is important to acknowledge the many sub-regions within the Middle East, each with their own unique identities and characteristics. The MENA region, for example, includes North African countries such as Morocco, Algeria, Libya, Egypt, Yemen, and Tunisia. The Levant area, on the other hand, encompasses Lebanon, Jordan, Syria, Palestine, and Iraq. The Gulf countries listed under the GCC zone, which include Bahrain, Qatar, Oman, United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, represent yet another distinct sub-region. Despite the diversity of the Arab world, one unifying characteristic is the prevalence of Arabic as the primary language. This linguistic commonality has both facilitated and complicated communication and cultural exchange across the region.

The Middle East has a long history of limited women's leadership roles due to societal and cultural norms that prioritize men's contributions. Nonetheless, there has been notable progress in recent years towards greater gender equality. In certain countries, such as Qatar and the United Arab Emirates, women are occupying high-ranking positions in government and the private sector. Saudi Arabia has granted women the right to drive and participate in local elections, representing a significant stride towards greater gender inclusivity. Also, women in the region are playing an increasingly active role in civil society organizations, including human rights groups, environmental organizations, and women's rights groups.

Despite these advancements, women's leadership remains restricted in certain areas, with legal and cultural barriers impeding women's participation in the workforce, such as travel restrictions, dress codes, and the need for male guardianship. Women also face significant challenges in accessing education and training opportunities, necessary to advance in their careers. Despite these challenges, the increasing visibility and presence of women in leadership positions is a positive indication of progress towards greater gender equality in the Middle East. Such progress is encouraging and provides a foundation upon which future improvements can be built. Nevertheless, much work remains to be done to address the persistent cultural and societal barriers that limit women's leadership roles and to ensure that women have access to equal opportunities and resources to advance in their chosen careers.

### **2.3.2 Reimagining Masculinity: The Key to Overcoming Patriarchal Societies**

Islam is the primary religion in the Middle East, and its principles and values influence people's way of life. However, for centuries, rules and regulations have been designed and implemented by men, leading to patriarchal societies throughout the region. Although progress has been made, particularly in more modern countries, many aspects of these patriarchal systems remain, especially in more traditional countries and families.

The Arab culture is strongly collective, masculine, and patriarchal, with well-defined gender roles. Women's participation in the political, economic, and social arenas in the region can be complicated in a male-dominated society. It is deeply rooted in tradition, with a strong emphasis on gender roles that are firmly distinguished and defined (Tlaiss, 2015; Al-Asfour, 2017). These gender roles are often patriarchal, with men traditionally occupying positions of authority and decision-making power in families and communities. Women, on the other hand, are often expected to prioritize their roles as wives and mothers and to adhere to strict gender norms and expectations (Al-Asfour and Khan, 2014). As a result of these deeply ingrained gender norms, women's participation in the political, economic, and social arenas of the Arab world is often complicated (Shalaby, 2016). Women face significant barriers to entry and advancement in these spheres, including cultural and societal biases, legal barriers, and limited access to education and training opportunities (Tlaiss and Dirani, 2015).

Despite these challenges, women in the Arab world are increasingly asserting their rights and challenging traditional gender norms (Moghadam, 2003). Women are taking on leadership roles in civil society organizations, advocating for their rights and the rights of other marginalized groups, and making significant strides in the political arena. To overcome the barriers to women's participation in the political, economic, and social spheres of the Arab world, it is essential to create a more inclusive and equitable society. This requires not only changes to laws and policies but also a shift in cultural attitudes and beliefs (Joseph and Slyomovics, 2011). It is essential to promote gender equality, empower women, and provide them with the resources and opportunities they need to succeed (Tlaiss and Kauser, 2011). By working together, men and women in the Arab world can build a more inclusive, equitable, and prosperous future for all.

### **2.3.3 Cracking the Glass Ceiling: Strategies for Overcoming Gender Bias and Inequality**

Gender equality and women's rights to education and employment have been hotly debated issues in the Middle. While education has helped pave the way for young women to enter the workforce, the challenges of securing employment and the quality of available jobs have proved to be significant obstacles. Despite the United Nations' declaration that all women in the region have the right to access education, the situation for girls' education varies widely across the region.

However, the quality of education also varies significantly from one country to another, with ongoing local conflicts resulting in education halts or reduced availability. There are notable differences in government approaches. The United Arab Emirates (UAE), for example, has made significant strides towards gender equality since its establishment in 1971 (Al Yateem et al., 2020; Kemp., 2013). The country's founding ruler, Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, was a strong advocate for women's education and gender equality, which has resulted in more women than men completing tertiary education, according to the World Economic Forum's 2020 Global Gender Equality Report.

The World Economic Forum's 2020 Global Gender Equality Report reveals that the MENA region has the lowest gender parity in the world, with a score of 61.1%. While the UAE ranks as the second-highest country in the region after Israel, it still ranks low at 120th globally. The report highlights the persistent gender gap that exists in the workplace across the Middle East, with only 14% of companies being female owned, 18% of women in senior management roles, and 36% reaching senior positions. The report also notes that the Middle Eastern region will require 140 years to achieve gender parity at the current rate of progress. This underscores the urgent need for policies and reforms to address the gender gap in the workplace, promote equal opportunities for women, and foster an environment that values and supports women's contributions to the workforce.



**Table 7: Key Statistics related to Women's Empowerment in Lebanon**

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Value/Statistic</b>
Global Gender Gap Index ranking (2021)	145th out of 156 countries
Female labor force participation rate (2019)	24.9%
Gender wage gap (2018)	Women earn an average of 34% less than men
Women in parliament (2021)	6.5%
Women in ministerial positions (2021)	0%

On the other hand, The World Bank's 2020 report on the Levant highlights the alarmingly low participation of women in the labor market in the region. The report reveals that only 26.3% of Lebanese, 15.1% of Jordanians, and 13% of Iraqi women are considered active members of society, making these figures among the lowest in the world. The wage gap between men and women also plays a significant role, with women in Lebanon being paid 22% less than men for equal work, compared to 17% in Jordan and 18% in Iraq. Despite the progress made in educating women, their representation in the labor market is still lower than that of men, even among the educated population. In Lebanon, for example, while 95.3% of male graduates with the same level of education join the labor market, only 67.3% of female graduates do so. This disparity highlights the existence of gender-based barriers that hinder women's access to employment opportunities and limit their ability to fully participate in the economy.

Addressing these barriers and promoting gender equality in the workforce can bring significant economic benefits and improve the well-being of societies. This indicates that even though education is a key factor in enabling women to enter the workforce, there are still structural and societal barriers that prevent them from fully participating in the labor market. These barriers may include discriminatory hiring practices, lack of access to affordable childcare, and gender stereotypes that limit women's job opportunities. Therefore, it is crucial to address these issues and promote policies that encourage gender equality in the workplace, such as pay equity laws, parental leave policies, and flexible work arrangements.

Women face unique challenges at different stages of their lives that hinder their economic participation and professional development. These obstacles are rooted in social norms, legal barriers, and market failures, which not only impact their career advancement but also shape their role in society and their families. The four major stages where women face challenges are during the transition from education to the workforce, entering and maintaining a job, marriage, and maternity. The World Economic Forum highlights that when women reach junior management roles, their progression often slows down, and they become part of the "squeezed middle." This phenomenon is often referred to as the glass ceiling, where women struggle to break through to top-level positions in organizations despite their qualifications and experience.

### **2.3.4 Breaking Boundaries: Women Entrepreneurs Breaking the Mold**

In recent years, there has been a growing interest in the role of female entrepreneurship in driving economic growth and development. Female-led businesses not only have a positive impact on employment and economic growth, but they also contribute to the diversity of entrepreneurship within an economic system (Minniti and Naudé, 2010; Verheul et al., 2006) Furthermore, female entrepreneurship has the potential to provide opportunities for women to express themselves and achieve personal fulfillment (Brush, 2008). These findings highlight the crucial role that female entrepreneurship plays in promoting economic and social development and emphasize the need to support and encourage the growth of women-led businesses.

One area of business that has experienced remarkable growth is the entrepreneurship of women in the Middle East (Hattab, 2012; Hasan and Almubarak, 2016; Jamali, 2009). In fact, most countries in the Middle East region have expressed their commitment to upholding international standards aimed at promoting women's development, with several countries being signatories to the Millennium Development Goals. At the macro level, governments in the region are increasingly recognizing the importance of supporting women's entrepreneurship (Zamberi, 2011).

Despite this progress, gender-based regulations and policies continue to create obstacles for women entrepreneurs and government officials in the region often lack information about the challenges faced by female entrepreneurs (Welsh et al., 2014). In the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, women are empowered to establish and own businesses without the need for spousal consent. As for the women in the United Arab Emirates, they prefer to interact directly with the government to access funding (Nasr et al., 2009). In the early stages, entrepreneurial businesses tended to focus on home products or fashionwear that catered to women, and the customers visited the house during the day in a women-only area. Although these types of businesses continue to thrive, there has been significant growth in other areas, such as all-women law firms, architectural design, financial services for women, event organizers, and large fashion houses. Many female entrepreneurs have received financial assistance from their families, which means that male members of the household still control the finances.

However, this is not the case for everyone. In comparison to other countries in the Middle East, the circumstances for women entrepreneurs in Lebanon are relatively favorable. Lebanese women face no formal or legal discrimination when it comes to establishing their own businesses, obtaining formal loans from banks, or owning property and resources (Abdo and Kerbage, 2012). Some women have had to work hard to establish themselves and create not only their own financial independence but also generate enough income to support their families. These female business owners are mentoring others who are establishing their businesses, and they have established networks for entrepreneurial women, with speakers providing advice on running a small business and making introductions. Jamali (2009) found that women faced challenges with proper integration into the labor market and were discouraged by gender discrimination, leading them to explore entrepreneurship as a potential solution. However, women were also attracted to entrepreneurship by the promise of work flexibility, the opportunity to generate dual income for their families, and the chance to engage in challenging and creative work. As for Emirati, women are more influenced by factors like independence, social status and self-esteem (Itani et al., 2011).

**Table 8: Key Statistics related to Women's Entrepreneur in Lebanon**

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Value/Statistic</b>
Total Entrepreneurial Activity (TEA) rate (2020) - women	4.9%
Total Entrepreneurial Activity (TEA) rate (2020) - men	10.7%
Women-led new business ownership rate (2020)	3.7%
Women's share of early-stage entrepreneurial activity (2020)	31.5%
% Of female business owners who employ other people (2020)	22.9%
% Of female business owners who report accessing external finance (2020)	3.3%
% Of female business owners who report access to training and development (2020)	29.2%
% Of female business owners who report experiencing discrimination (2020)	22.9

In Lebanon, the culture encourages initiative and risk-taking, which has led to the emergence of numerous companies, even in the face of war, political conflicts, and instability. This entrepreneurial culture and acceptance of risk-taking is a quality that many Lebanese people possess, and it has led to a significant number of entrepreneurs in the country. This serves as a role model and reinforces the perception of entrepreneurship in society, which has sparked the interest of young women in entrepreneurship. The rise of women entrepreneurship in the Middle East is a testament to their ability and willingness to create

and manage businesses independently. Women in Lebanon have demonstrated significant entrepreneurial skills and capacity, proving that they can create and manage businesses despite the social stereotypes and prejudices against them (Bastian et al., 2018). Women are increasingly seeking autonomy, independence, and the opportunity to prove their skills beyond the limitations that society has traditionally imposed on them.

### **2.3.5 Lebanon: A Nation on the Brink of Collapse**

Over the past several years, Lebanon has been mired in a complex and multi-faceted crisis, encompassing political, economic, social, health, and institutional challenges that have converged to create a catastrophic situation. The country has been plunged into what is widely considered the worst economic recession of the past three decades, resulting in high unemployment rates, surging poverty levels, and a growing gap between rich and poor. According to ESCWA's 2021 report, a staggering 82% of Lebanon's population now lives in multidimensional poverty, a shocking increase from 42% in 2019. The situation has been compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic, which has placed additional strain on an already fragile healthcare system. To make matters worse, the World Bank (2021) recently warned that Lebanon's financial crisis could rank among the most severe in the world since the mid-nineteenth century, underscoring the gravity of the situation and the urgent need for swift action to address the crisis.

In the autumn of 2019, the introduction of new taxes by the government of Saad Hariri sparked widespread anger and frustration among the people of Beirut. The move was seen yet another example of the government's insensitivity to the plight of ordinary citizens, who were already grappling with a range of economic challenges, including rising inflation, stagnant wages, and high unemployment. In response, a protest movement quickly emerged, with demonstrators taking to the streets in massive numbers to demand change. Known as the "October Revolution," the protests were a powerful display of people power, with citizens from all walks of life coming together to call for the replacement of the entire corrupt and discredited political class. The protesters' rallying cry, "kellon ya'ni kellon" (which means "all, means all of them out"), captured the depth of the popular frustration with a system that was widely viewed as dysfunctional, inefficient, and unresponsive to the needs of the people (Devendra, 2020). The movement was not simply about money laundering or embezzlement of public funds by a handful of leaders, but about a broader sense of

disillusionment with a political system that had failed to deliver on its promises of progress and prosperity. Ultimately, the October Revolution represented a powerful expression of popular will, a bold challenge to the status quo, and a clear demand for a more accountable and responsive system of governance.

The rapid deterioration of the economic and political situation in Lebanon has raised serious concerns both domestically and internationally. One of the most pressing issues is the staggering level of public debt, which has reached a ratio of 172% of GDP, making Lebanon the fifth most indebted country in the world according to the World Population Review (2023). This represents a major challenge for the country's economic future, as the debt burden not only limits the government's ability to invest in critical areas like healthcare, education, and infrastructure but also poses a threat to financial stability and economic growth.

The situation has been compounded by a series of political crises, including the resignation of Prime Minister Saad Hariri in 2019 and the subsequent failure of the government to form a new cabinet, which has left the country without a functioning government for over a year. These developments have further eroded public trust in the political system and fueled a sense of frustration and despair among the Lebanese people, who are increasingly calling for a complete overhaul of the political establishment. The protests that erupted in 2019 and continue to this day have been a powerful expression of this sentiment, with citizens from all walks of life demanding greater transparency, accountability, and representation. In addition to these challenges, Lebanon has also been grappling with a range of other issues, including high levels of inflation, widespread unemployment, and a struggling healthcare system.

The impact of these factors has been felt across the country, with many ordinary citizens struggling to make ends meet and access basic services. According to the United Nations specifically the World Food Program, 40% of households reported challenges in accessing food and other basic needs (Al Jazeera, 2021). The situation has been compounded by political instability, with frequent changes in government and ongoing conflict adding to the sense of uncertainty and insecurity.

Despite ongoing efforts to address the challenges facing the country, the people of Lebanon continue to face a desperate situation on multiple fronts. The public service system remains large, ineffective, and dysfunctional, with services such as "L'Electricité du Liban" experiencing power cuts of up to 20 hours per day. This has had a significant impact on businesses, households, and public institutions alike, undermining economic activity, and exacerbating social tensions.

Likewise, the country's waste management system has been a persistent source of environmental pollution, with inadequate infrastructure and poor management practices leading to a catastrophic waste crisis in 2015 that sparked powerful protests across the country. Despite some progress in recent years, including the establishment of new waste management facilities and the adoption of stricter environmental regulations, the problem persists, with many areas still suffering from high levels of pollution and contamination. These issues are compounded by the broader economic and political challenges facing the country, including high levels of unemployment, inflation, and public debt, as well as ongoing political instability and sectarian tensions.

Lebanon's economic situation has had a particularly devastating impact on young people, who have found themselves with few opportunities and limited prospects for the future. With the country's unemployment rate soaring from 28% in 2020 to nearly 40% in the following year, many young people have been forced to emigrate in search of better opportunities abroad. This "brain drain" has not only deprived the country of much-needed talent and human capital but has also contributed to a sense of despair and hopelessness among those left behind. According to a report by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), "Lebanon has lost 25% of its skilled labor force due to emigration".

Furthermore, the country is currently in the grips of hyperinflation, with the Lebanese pound losing more than 90% of its value in recent years, leading to a rock-bottom purchasing power. This has made basic goods and services increasingly unaffordable for ordinary citizens, exacerbating poverty and inequality and further eroding public confidence in the government's ability to manage the economy. Despite these challenges, however, young people in Lebanon remain resilient and determined, with many actively working to build a better future for themselves and their communities. Initiatives such as entrepreneurship programs, social innovation projects, and community-based activism are all helping to create

new opportunities and drive positive change. With the right support and investment, there is hope that Lebanon can overcome its current economic crisis and build a more prosperous and equitable future for all its citizens, particularly its young people.

In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic has added to the country's woes. The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic in Lebanon has been profound, exacerbating an already dire economic and political situation. The pandemic arrived in Lebanon in February 2020, and by mid-March, the government had imposed a nationwide lockdown to slow the spread of the virus. This led to the closure of businesses, schools, and public institutions, and many people lost their jobs as a result (Wehbi, 2020). The pandemic also put pressure on Lebanon's already fragile healthcare system, which had been struggling for years due to corruption, lack of funding, and brain drain. The country faced shortages of medical supplies, equipment, and personnel, as well as a lack of hospital beds and intensive care units (Bizri, 2022). This was particularly challenging as the number of Covid-19 cases surged in the country, putting a strain on healthcare resources.

Furthermore, the pandemic worsened Lebanon's economic crisis, as it led to a decline in economic activity, decreased revenue from tourism and remittances, and further depreciated the value of the Lebanese pound. The country was already facing a severe economic recession prior to the pandemic, and the crisis has only deepened since then. The World Bank estimated that the economy shrank by 20.3% in 2020, one of the worst declines in the world. The pandemic has also affected Lebanon's social fabric, with people struggling to make ends meet and access basic services like healthcare, education, and food. The closure of schools has disrupted children's education, and the lack of access to adequate healthcare has put vulnerable populations at risk.

One of the biggest challenges facing the country is the significant devaluation of its currency, the Lebanese pound. The value of the pound has plummeted, and the country is experiencing hyperinflation, which has severely impacted the purchasing power of its citizens. Lebanon also faces the currency crisis (Knecht and Francic, 2020). The country has almost completely depleted its dollar reserve and in an economy which is fully dollarized. Similarly, the banking sector has traditionally been regarded as the backbone of the Lebanese economy, earning the title of "top dog" due to its significant contribution to the country's financial system. However, recent events have exposed a different reality.



According to Knecht and Francis (2020), all local banks in Lebanon are currently facing bankruptcy. This situation has been triggered by a range of factors, including mismanagement of funds, high levels of debt, and an ongoing economic crisis that has plagued the country for several years. The Lebanese population has been unable to access their money in banks due to capital controls that were put in place in 2019 to prevent a run on the banks. As a result, people have been unable to access their savings, businesses have struggled to pay their employees, and the economy has suffered further setbacks. In fact, the restrictions set by the government have led to a shortage of cash in circulation, which has exacerbated the hyperinflation that has already been plaguing the country.

According to a report by the Carnegie Middle East Center (2021), the restrictions on withdrawing and transferring money have caused a "de facto devaluation" of the Lebanese pound and exacerbated the country's economic crisis. As a result, the economy has been struggling, with many businesses closing down and unemployment rates soaring. The combination of the currency devaluation and the capital controls has created a challenging economic environment for the people of Lebanon, and there is a great deal of uncertainty surrounding the country's economic future.

Furthermore, Despite the passing of decades since the end of the civil war that ravaged Lebanon from 1975 to 1990, the country still struggles with a host of issues that are rooted in the conflict and its aftermath. At the heart of these issues is a pervasive culture of corruption that has seeped into all aspects of the country's governance and administration. The same warlords who led the country into chaos and destruction are now the leaders of the country, and they continue to wield significant power and influence, using their positions to enrich themselves and perpetuate a system of patronage and cronyism. This has led to a deepening sense of frustration and disillusionment among the Lebanese people, who feel that their government is failing them on every front.

Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index (CPI) for 2018 gave Lebanon a score of 28 out of 100, with zero CPI considered to be highly corrupted and 100 is very clean, placing it among the most corrupt countries in the world (Youssef, 2020). The manifestations of corruption are numerous and varied, ranging from political interference in the judiciary to the bribery of public officials to secure basic services, to the manipulation of hiring processes based on connections rather than qualifications known as "Wasta". The garbage crisis that has plagued the country in recent years is yet another example of the

systemic failure of governance and administration. Furthermore, the lack of transparency at the borders has a significant impact on the import and export customs, and the government revenue, which exacerbates the country's already dire economic situation.

Finally, The Syrian refugee crisis has also had a significant impact on Lebanon's economy and social structure. The country is hosting over 1 million Syrian refugees, which has put a strain on its infrastructure and public services. According to a report by the World Bank, "the Syrian refugee crisis has cost Lebanon over \$18 billion in lost economic output since 2011." In addition to the economic impact, the refugee crisis has also had significant social and political implications in Lebanon. It currently hosts the highest per capita population of refugees in the world (Chbeir and Mikhael, 2018). The large influx of refugees has put a strain on social cohesion and created tension between Lebanese citizens and Syrian refugees. This has been exacerbated by a lack of resources and support from the government and international organizations. According to a study by the American University of Beirut, "the presence of Syrian refugees has increased competition for already limited resources, such as jobs, housing, and public services, leading to tensions between host communities and refugees."

The crisis in Lebanon is multidimensional and requires comprehensive and coordinated efforts to address. It is crucial for the government and international community to work together to address the root causes of the crisis and implement effective solutions to rebuild the country's economy and social structures. Indeed, Lebanon will need to address the underlying structural issues that have contributed to its current crisis, including corruption, sectarianism, and a lack of inclusive economic growth. Despite its difficulties, there are reasons for hope, as the country possesses significant human capital, a rich cultural heritage, and a strategic location at the crossroads of Europe, Asia, and Africa.

### **2.3.6 The Vulnerability of Lebanese Women: A Call to Action**

In addition to the economic and political challenges, women in Lebanon are also facing significant risks and obstacles. The Lebanese economy is sorely lacking the participation of women. In fact, Lebanon has been ranked 132 out of 156 countries in the World Economic Forum's 2021 Global Gender Gap Report, indicating significant gender inequality in the country. Women face discrimination in the workplace, with a gender pay gap of 28%, and are underrepresented in leadership positions.

However, it is worth noting that Lebanese women have been actively involved in various forms of activism and advocacy, particularly since the onset of the recent economic and political crisis in the country. In an interview with *L'Orient le Jour* (2019), Claudine Aoun who is the head of the National Commission for Lebanese Women and activist for women's rights, proudly declared that her utmost priority is to dedicate all her efforts towards elevating the status of Lebanese women and help them to retrieve their rights. She clarified that despite Lebanese women possessing high educational degrees, societal prejudices and stereotypes serve as the major obstacle hindering their progress.

Many women have played prominent roles in organizing and participating in protests, calling for political and economic reform and greater social justice. Indeed, the role of the Lebanese civil society sector in promoting women's political leadership has gained significant traction. Notably, in the 2018 parliamentary election, 113 women registered as candidates, representing a substantial increase from a mere 12 candidates in 2009. It is worth noting that most of the female candidates who participated in the election had a background in the civil society sector, ran independently or had a specific focus on gender equality issues. Additionally, a striking 89 percent of female candidates prioritized women's rights in their campaigns, underscoring the critical role of women's leadership in advancing women's concerns on the formal political agenda (El Kaakour 2020).

However, women remain underrepresented in political leadership and decision-making positions, and their voices are often excluded from the political process, out of the 24 ministers appointed, only one is a woman, which represents a significant regression in the number of women holding government positions (UN Women, 2021). Others have been involved in providing humanitarian aid and support to communities affected by the crisis,

including refugees and marginalized groups. Additionally, women's organizations and civil society groups have been working to promote gender equality and protect the rights of women and girls in the face of growing social and economic pressures (Women, U. N. (2021).

A report by the World Bank highlights that wage discrimination is one of the factors contributing to the low economic participation of women in Lebanon. The report shows that women are paid 22% less than men for doing the same work in Lebanon. The report argues that this extremely low participation of women in the labor market in the Levant region is largely due to the prevalence of wage discrimination, which is more significant in Lebanon than in Jordan or Iraq, where the gender pay gap is 17% and 18%, respectively. Although educated women are more likely to participate in the labor market, their participation rates are still lower than their male counterparts. In Lebanon, for instance, 67.3% of women with higher education join the workforce, compared to 95.3% of men with the same level of education. The report identifies wage discrimination as one of the main factors that discourages women from seeking employment, especially in Lebanon. In fact, discrimination against women in the workplace in Lebanon is a pervasive problem that starts as early as the recruitment phase.

According to Dima Jamali, a professor of management at the Olayan School of Business at the American University of Beirut, women face numerous stereotypes that lead to discrimination during the hiring process. These stereotypes include the belief that women are less committed to their work due to their domestic responsibilities or the assumption that they will leave their job as soon as they become pregnant (Jamali, 2009).

Research conducted by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in 2019 highlights that gender discrimination in the labor market has intensified in Lebanon due to the economic and financial crisis that started in 2019. The crisis has resulted in the loss of jobs and the reduction of salaries for both men and women, but women are disproportionately affected. The unemployment rate for women increased from 11.9% in 2018 to 21.1% in 2019, while the rate for men increased from 6.6% to 9.4% during the same period (UNDP, 2019).

Once hired, Lebanese women are often confined to less prestigious and lower-paid jobs than their male counterparts. In fact, the gender pay gap in Lebanon remains significant, with women earning 16% less than men with similar qualifications (UNDP, 2019). The joblessness rate among women in Lebanon is significant. A startling 75 percent of women are inactive in the labor force. Of the remaining 25 percent that are active in the labor force, 10 percent are unemployed, a figure that is twice as high as male unemployment rates which stands at 5 percent. This pattern of female unemployment varies across different governorates, with North Lebanon experiencing the highest female labor force participation rate, but also the highest female unemployment rate. Without an unemployment insurance scheme in place, remaining unemployed is not a viable option, leading many women to accept informal, low-productivity jobs.

Additionally, women are underrepresented in management positions and decision-making roles. According to a study conducted by the International Labour Organization (ILO) in 2019, only 24% of the managerial positions in Lebanon are held by women, compared to 76% by men (ILO, 2019). The situation is even more challenging for women who have caregiving responsibilities, as they face additional challenges in balancing work and family life. Lebanese women often bear the burden of caring for children, the elderly, and the sick, and are expected to prioritize their family responsibilities over their careers. This situation contributes to the underrepresentation of women in the labor market, particularly in high-skilled and high-paying jobs.

Briefly, discrimination against women in the workplace is a prevalent issue in Lebanon that affects their recruitment, career progression, and pay. The current economic and financial crisis has worsened the situation, leading to higher unemployment rates for women and exacerbating existing gender inequalities in the labor market. Policies and programs that promote gender equality in the workplace and address the systemic barriers that prevent women from realizing their full potential are urgently needed to improve the status of women in the labor market in Lebanon.

Besides, high rates of female unemployment in the region also contribute to low female labor force participation, amidst a general economic slowdown. "Female unemployment in the region is nearly double the male unemployment rate," the report says. The lack of secure public transportation and the high incidence of sexual harassment in these three countries

also limits female mobility, preventing them from entering the labor market. Additionally, the absence of affordable and quality childcare services is another barrier to women's employment in these three countries. The World Bank calls on authorities to take action to facilitate "public transportation and access to childcare services that prevent women from entering the labor market." Laws aimed at combating wage discrimination and providing paid leave in case of family illness would also facilitate access to employment for many women, according to the report, which underscores the importance of such measures. The report also suggests that if Lebanon can increase female labor force participation by 5% points by 2025, the country's economic growth rate could increase by 1.1% by 2035.

The situation of Lebanese women in the workplace has worsened after the recent economic and political crisis in Lebanon. Indeed, the crisis has hit women particularly hard, as they are more likely to work in low-paying and insecure jobs, and they face gender-based discrimination in the labor market. The share of women who have lost their jobs has increased significantly in comparison to men. According to a report by the International Labor Organization (ILO, 2021) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) published in October 2021, the labor force participation rate for women in Lebanon dropped from 23% in 2019 to 19% in 2020, the lowest level in the region. The report also states that women's unemployment increased from 20.3% in 2019 to 27.9% in 2020, compared to an increase in men's unemployment from 7.2% to 15.7% during the same period.

Furthermore, women are more likely to be working in the informal sector, which is less regulated and offers fewer protections than the formal sector. The situation is particularly challenging for women entrepreneurs, who face significant barriers to accessing finance and resources to grow their businesses. The crisis has led to a decrease in investment and a lack of access to credit, making it difficult for women entrepreneurs to sustain their businesses or start new ones.

The inclusion of women on boards of directors is an important step towards gender equality in the workplace, as noted by Randa Bdeir, ex Deputy General Manager at Bank Audi. However, the implementation of quotas remains a controversial issue. It is not enough to simply add women to these positions; the entire company culture must change to ensure that women are valued for their contributions and not seen as token hires. This sentiment is echoed by Lina Abirafeh, director of the Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World,

who argues that quotas alone will not solve the problem of gender discrimination in the workplace.

In addition to quotas, legislative reforms such as extended maternity leave and subsidized childcare could significantly improve women's employability. While Lebanon has made progress in extending maternity leave, more can be done to support working mothers. Farah Choucair, social cohesion project officer at the UNDP regional office for Arab States, suggests that Lebanon should follow Jordan's example and subsidize maternity leave from contributions paid by all companies. Additionally, the lack of subsidized nurseries in Lebanon is a major obstacle for working mothers. By investing in this type of infrastructure, Lebanon can support women's participation in the workforce and contribute to the country's economic growth.

According to a study by the United Nations Development Programme, "the lack of policies and programs that support women's participation in the workforce, combined with social norms and gender biases, result in significant gender disparities in labor force participation and employment outcomes" (UNDP, 2021). Furthermore, research conducted by Jamali et al. (2005) highlights the challenges faced by Lebanese women in the workplace, including gender stereotypes that lead to discrimination in the recruitment process and lower pay and job prestige compared to male colleagues.

Regarding the idea of quotas, Abirafeh and Dore-Weeks (2022) argues that it is crucial to change the overall culture of companies to make them more inclusive, as simply imposing quotas may not lead to sustainable change and may even create resentment among those who believe that women are only appointed because of the quota system. In terms of legislative reforms, Choucair (2019) suggests that Lebanon could follow Jordan's example and subsidize maternity leave through contributions paid by all companies, which could encourage employers to hire more women without fearing the costs associated with maternity leave. She also emphasizes the importance of promoting the role of fathers in the home and establishing subsidized nurseries to support working mothers.

The role of Lebanese women in the crisis is complex and multifaceted and deserves further investigation and analysis. The country needs to prioritize policies that promote women's economic empowerment, increase their access to formal employment, and support women

entrepreneurs to overcome the current challenges and build a more sustainable and inclusive economy. In addition, promoting gender equality in the workplace requires a multifaceted approach that addresses not only representation but also the underlying cultural and structural barriers that limit women's opportunities. Legislative reforms such as extended maternity leave and subsidized childcare can support women's participation in the workforce, but they must be accompanied by efforts to change company culture and promote women's leadership and contribution to the economy. As Lina Abi Fareh (2022) said: “We must collectively work to build the Arab world’s first feminist city. Women are the face—and the force—of Lebanon’s recovery and resilience. Male leadership in Lebanon has failed its population. It is finally time for Lebanon to allow women to fully rise from the ashes”.



### **2.3.7 From Disruption to Recovery: HR's Role in Times of Crisis**

The ongoing economic and political crisis in Lebanon has significantly impacted businesses and their human resource practices. Many companies are struggling to survive, and some have permanently closed due to the worsening economic conditions, inflation, and political instability. Subsequently, human resource departments are facing major challenges in managing their workforce. For instance, one of the most significant challenges for HR in Lebanon during the crisis is the inability to offer competitive salaries and benefits. According to a study conducted by Bitar et al. (2021), the depreciation of the Lebanese pound has made it difficult for companies to maintain competitive compensation packages, leading to low employee motivation and engagement.

Additionally, the high cost of living has made it challenging for employees to afford necessities, further exacerbating the situation. Another major challenge is the shortage of job opportunities, which has resulted in high unemployment rates. According to ILO's report (2022), the unemployment rate in Lebanon reached 29% in 2022, and the situation is expected to worsen in the coming years. As a result, companies are not recruiting new employees as they struggle to keep their current staff, which has resulted in a highly competitive job market. This situation has put pressure on companies to reduce their costs and offer minimum benefits to their employees, leading to high turnover rates and low retention of talent (Assaf et al., 2020).

Moreover, companies are facing difficulties in retaining their talent due to the limited opportunities for career development and growth. Many organizations in Lebanon have been forced to reduce their workforce, which has led to increased workload and decreased employee morale. Many employees are leaving the country in search of better job opportunities, resulting in a brain drain. This phenomenon has been studied extensively, and researchers have shown that lack of career opportunities and growth is one of the main reasons for employee turnover. Besides, the crisis has also led to a decrease in training and development opportunities for employees. Organizations are often unable to invest in employee training due to the financial constraints imposed by the crisis. This lack of development opportunities can lead to a skill gap, which can negatively impact the organization's performance on the long run. Consequently, companies in Lebanon need to

focus on providing their employees with career growth and development opportunities to retain their talent.

Finally, the ongoing crisis has impacted the overall workplace culture in Lebanon. Many employees are facing high levels of stress and anxiety due to the political instability and economic crisis. Companies are struggling to maintain a positive work environment, and the mental health of employees is becoming a major concern. The ongoing crisis has led to a rise in mental health issues among employees in Lebanon, and companies need to focus on providing support and resources to help their employees cope with stress and anxiety. According to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, employees require basic physiological needs such as food, shelter, and safety before they can meet higher order needs such as job satisfaction, growth, and self-actualization. However, the current crisis has made it difficult for companies to meet these basic needs, let alone higher-order needs. This situation can lead to employee disengagement, low morale, and decreased productivity. In fact, the lack of job security and financial stability has led to increased stress levels and decreased motivation among employees. This can result in increased absenteeism, decreased productivity, and decreased quality of work.

Human resource practices in Lebanon are shaped by cultural and economic factors, which create unique challenges for HR professionals. According to Dirani (2006), the paternalistic approach to management remains prevalent in Lebanon, particularly in family-owned businesses. This approach entails managers offering privileges and special treatment to employees based on personal relationships, rather than performance. This creates an environment where formal communication between managers and employees is limited.

Furthermore, according to a study by Giangreco et al. (2010), private organizations in Lebanon often adopt Western HR practices such as performance appraisal methods like rating scales, management by objectives, 360-degree feedback, and behaviorally anchored rating scales. However, these methods are not always effective due to the country's bureaucratic approach to management and a tendency to prioritize collective performance over individual performance. Furthermore, the lack of financial resources makes it difficult for companies to provide adequate rewards to employees, which can lead to decreased motivation and high turnover rates. Indeed, the lack of financial resources makes motivation *de facto*, consequently, organizations face difficulties to fund increases of remuneration or

career advancements (Giangreco et al., 2010). HR professionals in Lebanon must find ways to address these challenges and develop effective strategies that align with the cultural and economic context of the country.

In addition to the economic and political challenges facing HR practices in Lebanon, there is also the issue of "Wasta," a social phenomenon that can greatly impact HR practices in the country. Wasta is a term used to describe the use of connections, networking, and nepotism in business and personal life. It is defined as connections, network, contact and nepotism affecting business life, where favors are used instead of merits (Whiteoak et al., 2006). According to a study made by Tlaiss and Kauser (2010), Wasta is deeply rooted in Lebanese society and can affect various aspects of HR practices, including promotions and hiring. The use of Wasta in HR practices can contribute to a culture of cronyism and corruption. This can damage a company's reputation and lead to legal consequences, as well as negatively impact employee morale and job satisfaction.

As noted by Tlaiss, HR professionals in Lebanon must be aware of the impact of Wasta on their practices and strive to develop fair and transparent processes for promotion and hiring. The social phenomenon of wasta can also impact performance appraisal in Lebanon. According to a study by Tlaiss and Kauser (2011), the use of wasta can lead to bias in the appraisal process, with managers favoring employees who are connected to them or to higher-ups in the organization. This can result in a lack of fairness and objectivity in the appraisal process and can negatively impact employee motivation and job satisfaction.

HR professionals in Lebanon may need to implement more formal and objective appraisal methods, such as 360-degree feedback, to ensure that all employees are evaluated fairly based on their job performance rather than personal connections.

Moreover, HR professionals may need to work to shift the culture within organizations to prioritize merit-based evaluations over social connections. This can involve providing training and education to managers and employees on the importance of fair and objective performance appraisal processes and promoting a culture of transparency and accountability. Additionally, the issue of wasta can also lead to potential conflicts of interest in the performance appraisal process. According to a study by Harbi et al. (2017), the use of wasta in the Middle East can significantly affect the performance appraisal process. Managers may

be more likely to provide positive evaluations for employees with whom they have personal connections, even if their performance is subpar. This can result in a lack of fairness and objectivity in the appraisal process. In addition, the study found that employees who receive positive evaluations through *wasta* may be more likely to receive promotions, leading to a culture of nepotism rather than meritocracy.

Furthermore, the use of *wasta* in performance appraisal can negatively affect employee motivation and job satisfaction. Employees who feel that their performance is not being evaluated fairly or objectively may become demotivated and disengaged from their work (Harbi et al., 2017). Therefore, HR professionals in Lebanon need to address the issue of *wasta* in the performance appraisal process and ensure that evaluations are based on objective criteria and performance metrics rather than personal connections. Another study by Dirani (2006) found that the use of *wasta* in Lebanon is deeply rooted in all communities and can have a significant impact on HR practices. The study found that the use of connections for personal interests, which commonly stands for cronyism and corruption, affects promotion procedures, where opportunities may be given based on social connections rather than personal competencies and qualifications. This can lead to a lack of fairness and transparency in the promotion process and can contribute to a culture of favoritism and nepotism in the workplace.

Therefore, HR professionals in Lebanon need to be aware of the potential impact of *wasta* on performance appraisal and take steps to ensure that the process is fair and based on objective criteria. One approach may be to introduce training programs that emphasize the importance of objective performance evaluations and provide managers with the skills and tools needed to conduct effective and fair appraisals. Another approach may be to implement multi-rater feedback mechanisms, such as 360-degree feedback, that allow for input from multiple sources and reduce the impact of individual biases. Finally, HR professionals can work to promote a culture of transparency and accountability, where promotions and rewards are based on merit and objective criteria, rather than personal connections.

## **2.4 Hypothesis Development**

The choice of a hypothetico-deductive research approach is driven by the need for systematic, structured, and scientifically rigorous investigation, especially in a context as diverse and dynamic as the Middle East. This approach enables the study to address its research questions effectively and contribute meaningfully to HR research. We will discuss the steps involved in hypothesis development, including the importance of prior knowledge and observations, the characteristics of a well-formed hypothesis, and the iterative process of hypothesis modification or rejection based on new evidence.

### **2.4.1 LMX and Fairness Relationship**

Leader-Member Exchange refers to the quality of the relationship between a leader and their subordinates. In recent years, research has concentrated on how procedural justice, or the fairness of the procedures used to make decisions, may influence the LMX relationship. One study by Scandura (1999) demonstrated that when leaders employed fair procedures, subordinates reported higher levels of LMX, indicating a positive relationship between procedural justice and LMX. This finding was supported by another study by Erdogan and Bauer (2010) who ascertained that leader who prioritized procedural justice maintained better LMX relationships with their subordinates.

However, not all research has confirmed a positive relationship between procedural justice and LMX. A study by Bernerth et al. (2007) established that while procedural justice was positively associated with LMX, this association was moderated by the personality traits of both the leader and the subordinate. Specifically, when leaders exhibited low levels of agreeableness and subordinates had high levels of neuroticism, the positive association between procedural justice and LMX was diminished. In addition, a study by Yukl et al. (2013) ascertained that the association between procedural justice and LMX was mediated by the leader's ethical leadership behaviors. Specifically, when leaders displayed ethical leadership behaviors, the positive association between procedural justice and LMX was enhanced.

Another study by Arnand et al. (2018) observed that the association between procedural justice and LMX was moderated by the power distance orientation of the leader. Specifically, when leaders had a high-power distance orientation, the positive association between procedural justice and LMX was more pronounced. Conversely, a study by Moorman et al. (1998) uncovered that the association between procedural justice and LMX was also influenced by the perceived organizational support (POS) of subordinates. Their research uncovered that when subordinates perceived high levels of organizational support, the positive association between procedural justice and LMX was bolstered. Furthermore, a study by Ansari et al. (2007) examined the mediating role of trust in the association between procedural justice and LMX. Their research determined that procedural justice was positively linked to LMX, and this link was mediated by trust. In other words, when leaders enacted fair procedures, subordinates trusted them more, which led to stronger LMX relationships.

Lastly, a study by Rockstuhl (2012) explored the boundary conditions of the relationship between procedural justice and LMX, specifically examining the impact of cultural values. The study found that the positive relationship between procedural justice and LMX was stronger in collectivistic cultures than in individualistic cultures.

Overall, these studies highlight the complex and multifaceted nature of the relationship between procedural justice and LMX. While there is generally a positive relationship between these two constructs, other factors, such as personality traits, power distance orientation, perceived organizational support, trust, and cultural values, can also impact this relationship. Therefore, it is important for leaders to consider these factors when striving to build positive relationships with their subordinates.

Based on the studies mentioned above, we hence propose the following hypothesis:

**H1: There is a positive relationship between LMX and procedural justice.**

In recent years, researchers have also explored the relationship between LMX and interactional justice, or the fairness of interpersonal treatment in the workplace. One study by Masterson (2000) found a positive relationship between LMX and interactional justice.

Specifically, the study revealed that when leaders treated their subordinates with respect and dignity, the quality of the LMX relationship was higher. As Sparr and Sonnentag (2008) indicated, the interactional justice experienced by subordinates mediated the relationship between LMX and job satisfaction. The study uncovered that when subordinates experienced higher levels of interactional justice, they reported higher levels of job satisfaction, which in turn strengthened the LMX relationship. However, not all research has identified a positive relationship between LMX and interactional justice.

Additionally, a study by Cropanzano (2002) investigated the moderating role of gender in the relationship between LMX and interactional justice. The study found that the positive relationship between LMX and interactional justice was stronger for female subordinates than for male subordinates. The authors suggest that this may be due to gender differences in social norms and expectations.

Furthermore, a study by Erdogan and Liden (2006) explored the boundary conditions of the relationship between LMX and interactional justice, examining the impact of organizational culture. The study determined that the positive relationship between LMX and interactional justice was stronger in organizations with a collectivistic culture than in organizations with an individualistic culture. In fact, a study by Fournier (2008) demonstrated that LMX was positively related to interactional justice and that this relationship was moderated by the leader's level of communication competence. Specifically, the authors demonstrated that the positive relationship between LMX and interactional justice was stronger when leaders had higher communication competence. Wang et al. (2021) revealed that the relationship between LMX and interactional justice was mediated by psychological safety, or the perception that it is safe to speak up and express opinions in the workplace. The study revealed that when subordinates perceived higher levels of psychological safety, the relationship between LMX and interactional justice was stronger.

In addition, a study by Karim (2011) examined the moderating role of employees' emotional intelligence in the relationship between LMX and interactional justice. The study showed that the positive relationship between LMX and interactional justice was stronger for employees with higher emotional intelligence. The authors suggest that emotional intelligence may help employees better understand and interpret the leader's interpersonal behaviors, leading to stronger perceptions of interactional justice.

Overall, these studies suggest that the relationship between LMX and interactional justice is complex and influenced by a variety of factors, including the leader's communication competence and emotional intelligence, the subordinate's psychological safety and emotional intelligence, and the organizational culture. Leaders should strive to treat their subordinates with respect and dignity, while also being mindful of these contextual factors to build strong and positive LMX relationships.

Based on the studies mentioned above, we hence propose the following hypothesis:

**H2: There is a positive relationship between LMX and interactional justice.**

#### **2.4.2 LMX and Job Satisfaction Relationship**

Another important construct in organizational behavior research is job satisfaction, which is broadly defined as the positive feelings' employees have towards their work. In recent years, researchers have explored the relationship between LMX and both intrinsic and extrinsic job satisfaction. One study by Mardanov et al. (2008) found that LMX was positively related to both intrinsic and extrinsic job satisfaction. Specifically, the study ascertained that when subordinates perceived higher quality LMX relationships, they reported higher levels of both intrinsic and extrinsic job satisfaction.

Hooper and Martin (2008) established that LMX was positively related to intrinsic job satisfaction and negatively related to extrinsic job satisfaction. The study indicated that when subordinates perceived higher quality LMX relationships, they reported higher levels of intrinsic job satisfaction, which is the satisfaction derived from the work itself. However, the study also showed that when subordinates perceived higher quality LMX relationships, they reported lower levels of extrinsic job satisfaction, which is the satisfaction derived from external rewards such as pay and benefits. However, not all research has discovered a consistent relationship between LMX and job satisfaction. A study by Liden and Wayne (2000) uncovered that the relationship between LMX and job satisfaction was mediated by psychological empowerment. The study suggested that when subordinates perceived higher quality LMX relationships, they also reported higher levels of psychological empowerment, which in turn was positively related to both intrinsic and extrinsic job satisfaction.



Likewise, a study by Han (2010) examined the moderating role of supervisor support in the relationship between LMX and job satisfaction. The study revealed that the positive relationship between LMX and job satisfaction was stronger when supervisors provided high levels of support to their subordinates. Erdogan and Enders (2007) examined the mediating role of perceived organizational support in the relationship between LMX and job satisfaction. The research indicated that perceived organizational support partially mediated the relationship between LMX and job satisfaction, suggesting that when subordinates perceive higher levels of support from their organization, they also experience higher levels of job satisfaction.

Furthermore, a study by Erdogan and Enders (2017) discovered that LMX was positively related to both intrinsic and extrinsic job satisfaction, and that this relationship was moderated by the subordinate's level of emotional intelligence. Specifically, the study confirmed that the positive relationship between LMX and job satisfaction was stronger for subordinates with higher emotional intelligence. In addition, a study by Collins et al. (2014) examined the role of employee gender in the relationship between LMX and job satisfaction. The research indicated that the positive relationship between LMX and job satisfaction was stronger for female employees compared to male employees. The authors suggest that this may be related to the fact that women tend to value interpersonal relationships more than men, and therefore may be more sensitive to the quality of the LMX relationship.

Likewise, a study by Amah (2018) examined the role of servant leadership in the relationship between LMX and job satisfaction. The research suggested that servant leadership partially mediated the relationship between LMX and job satisfaction, implying that when leaders demonstrate servant leadership behaviors such as empathy and humility, they can enhance the positive effects of LMX on job satisfaction.

Additionally, a study by Rayton and Yalabik (2014) examined the role of psychological contract breach in the relationship between LMX and job satisfaction. The study found that when subordinates perceived a breach in their psychological contract, the positive relationship between LMX and job satisfaction was weakened, suggesting that maintaining a positive and supportive LMX relationship is important for upholding the psychological contract between leaders and subordinates.

Based on the studies mentioned above, we hence propose the following hypothesis:

**H3: There is a positive relationship between LMX, intrinsic and extrinsic job satisfaction.**

### **2.4.3 LMX Mediator of Performance Appraisal Fairness and Job Satisfaction**

LMX has been shown to play a mediating role in the relationship between performance appraisal fairness and job satisfaction. Several authors have investigated this relationship and provided empirical evidence to support this notion. For example, a study by Sparr and Sonnentag (2008) examined the role of LMX in the relationship between performance appraisal justice and employee well-being among employees in Germany, Austria and Switzerland. The study found that LMX partially mediated the relationship between performance appraisal justice and job satisfaction, suggesting that when employees perceive fair treatment from their supervisors, they are more likely to form positive LMX relationships and which in turn led to improved well-being at work.

As for Selvarajan et al. (2018), they investigated the moderating role of LMX in the relationship between performance appraisal justice and motivation to improve performance among US and Mexican employees. The results of the study showed that perceived fairness of the performance appraisal process was positively related to employees' motivation to improve their performance. Additionally, the study found that LMX mediated the relationship between appraisal fairness and motivation to improve performance, such that the positive relationship was stronger when LMX was high.

A study by Jung et al. (2022) explored the mediating role of LMX in the relationship between procedural justice and employee motivation among South Korean employees. The study found that LMX fully mediated the relationship between procedural justice climate and employee motivation, suggesting that the positive effect of procedural justice on employee motivation is entirely mediated through LMX relationships. It showed that both LMX and procedural justice climate had positive effects on employee motivation and customer loyalty. Lai et al. (2020) explored the role of LMX in the relationship between performance appraisal justice and job satisfaction among Taiwanese employees. The study found that LMX partially mediated the relationship between procedural justice and job satisfaction, suggesting that LMX is an important factor in the process by which procedural justice affects job satisfaction.

Additionally, a study by Cropanzano et al. (2002) examined the role of LMX in the relationship between performance appraisal justice and job satisfaction among Chinese employees in the hospitality industry. The study found that LMX partially mediated the relationship between procedural and interactional fairness of performance appraisal and job satisfaction, highlighting the importance of LMX relationships in promoting job satisfaction. Harrington (2015) conducted the study on the perceived fairness of performance appraisal among employees in the US federal government. The study was conducted in the United States, specifically among employees of various federal agencies. LMX theory suggests that the quality of the relationship between a leader and a member of their team can influence the degree to which the member feels treated fairly.

In the context of performance appraisal, LMX theory suggests that the quality of the leader-member relationship may influence employees' perceptions of the fairness of the performance appraisal process. If an employee has a high-quality relationship with their supervisor, they may perceive the performance appraisal process as fair, even if they receive negative feedback. In contrast, if an employee has a poor-quality relationship with their supervisor, they may perceive the performance appraisal process as less fair, even if they receive positive feedback. Furthermore, when employees perceived the performance appraisal process as fair, they were more likely to experience higher levels of job satisfaction.

In addition, Moon (2019) tested the relationship between the specificity of performance appraisal feedback, trust in the manager, and job attitudes such as job satisfaction and organizational commitment. It proposes a serial mediation model, which suggests that the specificity of performance appraisal feedback can influence job attitudes indirectly through its effect on trust in the manager. Specifically, the study hypothesizes that when employees receive more specific feedback in their performance appraisals, they will develop a higher level of trust in their managers. This increased trust, in turn, will lead to more positive job attitudes. Knowing that trust in the manager is one of the key components of LMX, and it has been shown to have a strong positive relationship with LMX. When employees have a high level of trust in their managers, they are more likely to have a high-quality relationship with their manager and experience positive job attitudes.

Similarly, a study by Park et al. (2015) explored the role of LMX in the relationship between performance appraisal justice and job satisfaction among South Korean employees. The study found that LMX fully mediated the relationship between procedural justice and job satisfaction, highlighting the importance of LMX relationships in promoting job satisfaction among employees in South Korea. The study proposed a theoretical model that suggests that the relationship between LMX and job performance is moderated by justice. Specifically, the study hypothesized that high-quality LMX relationships would lead to better job performance, but only when employees perceive high levels of justice in their work environment. Given that Park et al.'s study found that high-quality LMX relationships were positively related to job performance, it is possible that LMX may also indirectly impact job satisfaction through its positive influence on job performance.

Furthermore, a study by Hassan and Jubari (2010) examined the mediating role of LMX in the relationship between performance appraisal justice and job satisfaction in the Middle East. The study determined that LMX fully mediated the relationship between procedural justice and job satisfaction, suggesting that the effect of procedural justice on job satisfaction is entirely channeled through LMX relationships in Germany. Finally, a study by Kim and Koo (2017) investigated the mediating role of LMX in the relationship between performance appraisal justice and job satisfaction among South Korean university employees. The research indicated that LMX fully mediated the relationship between procedural justice and job satisfaction, signifying that the influence of procedural justice on job satisfaction is completely conveyed through LMX relationships among South Korean university employees.

He et al. (2017) investigated the moderating role of LMX differentiation in the relationship between performance appraisal justice and job satisfaction among Chinese employees. The study found that LMX differentiation weakened the positive relationship between procedural justice and job satisfaction. However, the negative moderating effect of LMX differentiation was mitigated by high-quality LMX relationships, which can provide employees with social support and resources to cope with the negative effects of LMX differentiation. These findings suggest that LMX differentiation can attenuate the positive effects of procedural justice on job satisfaction, but high-quality LMX relationships can buffer the negative effects of LMX differentiation on employee outcomes. Therefore, organizations should not only strive to promote fair procedures but also build high-quality

LMX relationships to mitigate the negative effects of LMX differentiation and enhance employee satisfaction and well-being.

Based on the studies mentioned above, we hence propose the following hypothesis:

**H4a: LMX mediates the relationships between procedural justice and job satisfaction.**

**H4b: LMX mediates the relationships between interactional justice and job satisfaction.**

#### **2.4.4 Moderating Role of Gender with Fairness Perception, Job Satisfaction and LMX**

The relationship between fairness perception and LMX may be moderated by gender, according to several recent studies. For instance, a study by Fernández-Muñoz and Topa (2018) investigated the moderating effect of gender on the relationship between organizational justice and LMX among Spanish employees. The study revealed that the positive relationship between organizational justice and LMX was stronger for women than for men, indicating that gender moderates the relationship between fairness perception and LMX. A study by Bhal and Aafaqi (2007) explored the moderating role of gender in the relationship between perceived organizational support and LMX among Malaysian employees. The research showed that gender moderated the relationship between perceived organizational support and LMX, with women reporting a stronger positive relationship between perceived organizational support and LMX than men.

Also, Ouyang et al. (2015) examined the moderating effect of gender on the relationship between abusive supervision and LMX among Chinese employees. The study found that gender moderated the relationship between abusive supervision and LMX, with women being more sensitive to the negative effects of abusive supervision on LMX than men. Furthermore, a study by Yang (2014) investigated the moderating role of gender in the relationship between ethical leadership and LMX among Chinese employees. The study identified that gender moderated the relationship between ethical leadership and LMX, with women reporting a stronger positive relationship between ethical leadership and LMX than men.

Finally, a study by Gu et al. (2015) examined the moderating effect of gender on the relationship between supervisor support and LMX among Chinese employees. The research indicated that gender moderated the relationship between supervisor support and LMX, with women reporting a stronger positive relationship between supervisor support and LMX than men.

Moreover, a study by Nasra and Heilbrunn (2016) investigated the moderating effect of gender on the relationship between transformational leadership and LMX among Israeli employees. The study found that gender moderated the relationship between

transformational leadership and LMX, with women reporting a stronger positive relationship between transformational leadership and LMX than men. Overall, these studies suggest that gender may consistently moderate the relationship between fairness perception and LMX across different cultural contexts. However, the specific nature of the moderating effect may vary depending on the specific variables being examined and the cultural context in which they are studied. Nonetheless, these findings emphasize the importance of considering gender as a potential moderator when examining the relationship between fairness perception and LMX and highlight the need to promote gender equality in the workplace.

Understanding the dynamics of the relationship between fairness perception, LMX, and job satisfaction is crucial for promoting positive outcomes for employees and organizations. By providing fair and just treatment for employees, organizations can foster a positive LMX and enhance job satisfaction, ultimately leading to increased productivity and retention rates. Furthermore, recognizing the potential moderating effect of factors such as gender on this relationship can help organizations tailor their practices to better suit the needs and preferences of their employees. As the workplace continues to evolve and become more diverse, it is important to continue studying the relationship between fairness perception, LMX, and job satisfaction to better understand the needs and preferences of different groups of employees. Through ongoing research and the development of evidence-based practices, organizations can create more inclusive and equitable workplaces that promote positive outcomes for all employees.

Based on the studies mentioned above, we hence propose the following hypothesis:

**H5a: Gender moderates a positive relationship between procedural justice and job satisfaction.**

**H5b: Gender moderates a positive effect between interactional justice and job satisfaction.**

The quality of leader-member exchange (LMX) has been widely recognized as an important predictor of overall job satisfaction among employees. However, recent research has suggested that gender may moderate the relationship between LMX and overall job satisfaction, with women experiencing a stronger relationship than men.



Several recent studies have investigated the role of gender in moderating the relationship between LMX and overall job satisfaction. For example, a study by Collins (2014) examined the moderating effect of gender on the relationship between LMX and overall job satisfaction among Chinese employees. The study established that gender moderated the relationship, with women experiencing a stronger positive relationship between LMX and overall job satisfaction than men. The authors suggest that women are more likely to value social connections and relationships in the workplace, and therefore may be more sensitive to the quality of their relationship with their supervisor. Similarly, a study by Wang et al. (2017) investigated the moderating effect of gender on the relationship between LMX and overall job satisfaction among employees in the United States. The research demonstrated that gender moderated the relationship, with women reporting a stronger positive relationship between LMX and overall job satisfaction than men. The authors suggest that women tend to place a greater emphasis on work relationships and social support than men.

Furthermore, a study by Stewart and Wiener (2021) explored the moderating effect of gender on the relationship between LMX and overall job satisfaction among employees in Australia. The study found that gender moderated the relationship, with women reporting a stronger positive relationship between LMX and overall job satisfaction than men. The authors suggest that women are more likely to experience gender-related barriers in the workplace, and therefore may be more sensitive to the quality of their relationship with their supervisor as a source of support and validation. These recent studies build on earlier research suggesting that gender may moderate the relationship between LMX and overall job satisfaction.

Besides, a study by Mardanov et al. (2008) examined the moderating effect of gender on the relationship between LMX and overall job satisfaction among American employees. The study found that gender moderated the relationship, with women experiencing a stronger positive relationship between LMX and overall job satisfaction than men. The authors suggest that women are more likely to be in lower-status positions and therefore may be more sensitive to the quality of their relationship with their supervisor as a source of support and validation.

Cheung et al. (2012) observed that the relationship between LMX and job satisfaction was stronger for male employees than for female employees in a sample of Chinese workers.

Similarly, another study by Gubta and Sharma (2018) revealed that the relationship between LMX and job satisfaction was more pronounced for male employees than for female employees in a sample of Indian managers. In contrast, a study by Oren (2012) determined that the relationship between LMX and job satisfaction was more significant for female employees than for male employees in a sample of Israeli workers. The authors suggested that this might be due to the tendency of female employees to place higher value on supportive and respectful relationships with their supervisors, which are key components of LMX.

More recent research has continued to investigate the moderating role of gender in the relationship between LMX and overall job satisfaction. For instance, a study by Park et al. (2020) demonstrated that the positive relationship between LMX and job satisfaction was more pronounced for female employees than for male employees in a sample of Korean workers. Similarly, a study by Esitti and Kasap (2020) indicated that the positive relationship between LMX and job satisfaction was more significant for female employees than for male employees in a sample of Turkish hotel employees. The evidence on the moderating role of gender in the relationship between LMX and overall job satisfaction is mixed.

While some studies have shown that the relationship is stronger for male employees, others have revealed that it is stronger for female employees. The variations in findings may be attributed to cultural or contextual factors, or to differences in the specific measures used to assess LMX and job satisfaction. Nonetheless, gender remains an important factor to consider in understanding the relationship between LMX and overall job satisfaction.

This recent research suggests that gender moderates the relationship between LMX and overall job satisfaction, with women experiencing a stronger positive relationship than men. This could be because women generally prioritize relationships and social support more in their work environment and may be more sensitive to the quality of their relationship with their supervisor as a source of support and validation. As organizations continue to strive for diversity, equity, and inclusion in the workplace, it is important to recognize the potential gender moderation effect on the relationship between LMX.

While high-quality LMX relationships are generally associated with higher levels of job satisfaction, the relationship may be moderated by various factors, including procedural

justice, interactional justice, and gender. Recent research has suggested that gender may play an important moderating role in the relationship between LMX and overall job satisfaction. While some studies have found that the relationship is stronger for male employees, others have found that it is stronger for female employees. More research is needed to better understand the mechanisms underlying these differences and to identify the contextual factors that may impact the relationship between LMX and overall job satisfaction. Nevertheless, LMX is an important factor to consider when seeking to promote employee satisfaction and well-being in the workplace, and that organizations should prioritize efforts to foster high-quality relationships between supervisors and employees.

Based on the studies mentioned above, we hence propose the following hypothesis:

**H6: Gender moderates a positive relationship between LMX and job satisfaction.**

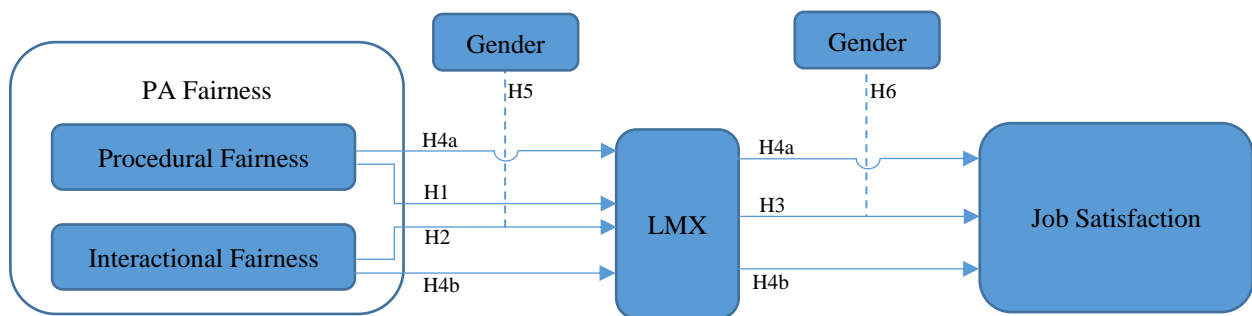
The below table summarize the study hypothesis:

**Table 9: Hypothesis Summary**

<b>Hypothesis</b>	<b>Explanation</b>
H1: There is a positive relationship between LMX and procedural justice.	LMX (leader-member exchange) is the quality of the relationship between a leader and a member of their team. Procedural justice refers to the fairness of the procedures used to make decisions. This hypothesis suggests that the better the LMX, the more likely an employee is to perceive procedural justice.
H2: There is a positive relationship between LMX and interactional justice.	Interactional justice refers to the fairness of interpersonal treatment in the workplace. This hypothesis suggests that the better the LMX, the more likely an employee is to perceive interactional justice.
H3: There is a positive relationship between LMX, intrinsic and extrinsic job satisfaction.	Intrinsic job satisfaction refers to the enjoyment an employee derives from their job, while extrinsic job satisfaction refers to the rewards and benefits associated with the job. This hypothesis suggests that a better LMX will lead to higher levels of both types of job satisfaction.
H4a: LMX mediates the relationships between procedural justice and job satisfaction. H4b: LMX mediates the relationships between interactional justice and job satisfaction.	This hypothesis suggests that LMX acts as a mediator between performance appraisal fairness and job satisfaction. This means that the better the LMX, the stronger the relationship between procedural fairness and job satisfaction.
H5a: Gender moderates a positive relationship between procedural justice and job satisfaction. H5b: Gender moderates a positive effect between interactional justice and job satisfaction.	This hypothesis suggests that the relationship between fairness perception and LMX is different for men and women. In other words, the effect of fairness perception on LMX is stronger for one gender than the other.
H6: Gender moderates a positive relationship between LMX and job satisfaction.	This hypothesis suggests that the relationship between LMX and overall job satisfaction is different for men and women. In other words, the effect of LMX on overall job satisfaction is stronger for one gender than the other.

The below conceptual model is a visualized the representation of the relationships between the hypothesis variables of our study. It provides the roadmap of our research design including LMX quality, job satisfaction, fairness perceptions, and employee performance. The model may also include potential moderators of these relationships, such as gender, organizational culture, and job type.

**Figure 1 – Conceptual Model**



The proposed model structure for examining workplace dynamics consists of several key components that interact to influence job satisfaction. At the core are two fairness or justice variables, Procedural Fairness and Interactive Fairness, which serve as independent variables in the study. These dimensions of fairness are believed to directly impact the quality of the Leader-Member Exchange (LMX), which is posited as a mediating variable. LMX, a measure of the relationship quality between a supervisor and their subordinate, is hypothesized to have a significant influence on an employee's job satisfaction.

Further sophistication is added by the inclusion of Gender as a moderating variable. It is strategically positioned within the model to serve a dual role: firstly, to assess the potential differential impact of the fairness variables on LMX across genders, and secondly, to explore how gender might affect the strength or direction of the relationship between LMX and job satisfaction. This approach allows for a deeper understanding of how gender dynamics can modify the pathways through which fairness perceptions and leader-member relations culminate in job satisfaction. The outcome of this complex interaction of variables is an assessment of Job Satisfaction, the dependent variable, which encapsulates an employee's

overall contentment with their job. In fact, this comprehensive model aims to shed light on the multifaceted nature of job satisfaction determinants within organizational settings.

Additionally, the conceptual model serves as a visual representation of the connections between various variables and hypotheses. LMX (Leader-Member Exchange) holds a central position within the model, as it is the primary variable hypothesized to have relationships with all other variables.

The dashed line originating from the Gender box and intersecting with the solid arrow leading to both procedural and interactional fairness towards LMX suggests that gender is hypothesized to act as a moderating factor in the relationship between fairness perception and LMX. Furthermore, the dashed line from the Gender box, intersecting with the solid arrow from LMX to job satisfaction, implies that gender is also believed to moderate the relationship between LMX and job satisfaction.

The two solid arrows extending from Procedural and Interactional fairness to LMX represent their direct relationships, and the same applies to the solid arrow connecting LMX to job satisfaction. Finally, the two solid arrows originating from procedural and interactional fairness and pointing towards LMX, along with the solid arrow linking LMX to job satisfaction, indicate that LMX is hypothesized to act as a mediator in the relationship between these two variables.

In summary, the conceptual model serves the purpose of providing a concise and comprehensible overview of the research question, guiding the development of hypotheses, and informing the research design.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Data Collection**

Data collection is the process of gathering information or data that is relevant to the research question or hypothesis. The success of a study depends largely on the quality of the data collected. The data collection process is ethical and respects the privacy and confidentiality of the participants. The data collected is accurate, reliable, and valid to enable meaningful analysis and interpretation.

##### **3.1.1 Research Question Approach**

Fundamental research, also known as basic or pure research, is conducted without any specific practical application in mind. It aims to enhance our understanding of a particular phenomenon, theory, or concept, and it often involves exploring new areas of study or testing existing theories. In the case of the topics mentioned above, primary data collection can help researchers explore the relationships between various factors and identify patterns and trends that can inform future research and practice.

Colquitt, Conlon, Wesson, Porter, and Ng (2001) conducted a meta-analysis of studies examining the relationships between organizational justice perceptions (including distributive, procedural, and interactional justice) and various outcomes, including job satisfaction. They used a fundamental research approach to synthesize the results of over 200 studies. Erdogan, Bauer, Truxillo, and Mansfield (2012) used a fundamental research approach to investigate the relationship between LMX and employee well-being. They surveyed employees across multiple organizations to collect primary data on LMX quality and job satisfaction.

Nasra and Heilbrunn (2016) used a fundamental research approach to investigate the effects of LMX on organizational citizenship behavior. They collected primary data through surveys of employees and their supervisors to measure LMX quality and organizational citizenship behavior. Moon (2019) used a fundamental research approach to investigate the

relationship between procedural justice and job satisfaction. They conducted a laboratory experiment in which participants were randomly assigned to either a fair or unfair decision-making condition, and then measured their subsequent job satisfaction levels.

Koburtay et al. (2022) used a fundamental research approach to investigate the role of procedural justice in people's reactions to authority. They conducted a series of laboratory experiments in which participants interacted with a confederate who behaved either fairly or unfairly, and then measured participants' reactions to the authority figure.

For example, a study by Colquitt et al. (2001) on organizational justice conducted primary data collection to investigate the relationships between procedural justice, distributive justice, and interactional justice, and their impact on job satisfaction. By conducting fundamental research, the study was able to provide a deeper understanding of the underlying concepts and their relationships, leading to the development of new theoretical models and frameworks that could be applied in practice.

### **3.1.2 Type of Data Collection**

Primary data collection is important for studying LMX, procedural justice, interactional justice, intrinsic and extrinsic job satisfaction, procedural fairness, and job satisfaction because it allows researchers to directly gather data from the individuals being studied, using methods that are tailored to the specific research questions at hand. This approach can lead to more accurate and detailed data, as well as greater control over the research design and analysis.

For example, Erdogan and Bauer (2010) study on LMX and job satisfaction used primary data collection methods, including a survey administered to employees and their supervisors, to examine the relationships between LMX, job satisfaction, and other variables. A study by Colquitt et al. (2013) on procedural justice, interactional justice, and job satisfaction also used primary data collection methods, including survey and interviews, to investigate the relationships between these constructs.

Another study by Colquitt et al. (2001) on procedural fairness and job satisfaction used primary data collection methods, including survey, to examine the effects of procedural



fairness on job satisfaction among employees. These studies demonstrate the importance of primary data collection methods in studying these constructs, as well as the effectiveness of a survey as a tool for gathering data.

Thus, we will use a self-administered online survey distributed via the database of the [National Commission for Lebanese Women \(NCLW\)](#) along with the [Investment Development Authority of Lebanon \(IDAL\)](#) database during March, April, and May 2023 to collect the primary data for this study.

### **3.1.3 Time Frame of the Study**

In the case of the specific variables, you mentioned (LMX, procedural justice, interactional justice, intrinsic and extrinsic job satisfaction, procedural fairness), the time frame used for data collection would depend on the research design and the specific research question. It may be appropriate to collect data over a period of several months to capture changes in job satisfaction or perceptions of justice, or it may be sufficient to collect data at a single point in time. In the context of our study: LMX, procedural justice, interactional justice, intrinsic and extrinsic job satisfaction, procedural fairness and job satisfaction, we used a single point in time for data collection can provide valuable insights into the relationships between these variables at a particular point in time. However, it may not provide information on how these relationships may change over time, or the causal direction of these relationships.

For example, Gubta and Sharma (2018) conducted a cross-sectional survey to examine the relationships among LMX, procedural justice, interactional justice, and job satisfaction. They collected data from employees at a single point in time to assess their perceptions of these constructs. Ali et al. (2019) used a single point in time approach to investigate the relationship between procedural justice, distributive justice, interactional justice, and job satisfaction. They administered a survey to police officers to collect data on these constructs at a single time point. Another example is the study conducted by Koburtay et al. (2022), who examined the effects of organizational justice on job satisfaction in Jordan. They collected data on procedural justice, distributive justice, interactional justice, and job satisfaction at a single point in time using a survey.

Overall, using a single point in time for data collection has been a common approach among researchers studying the relationship between LMX, procedural justice, interactional justice, intrinsic and extrinsic job satisfaction, procedural fairness, and job satisfaction.

### **3.2 Sampling Method**

In order to test this study hypotheses, a suitable sampling method for Lebanese SMEs would be a random sampling method. This method involves randomly selecting participants from the population of the Lebanese SMEs to ensure that the sample is representative of the entire population. According to a report by the International Finance Corporation (IFC) in 2020, there were approximately 50,000 SMEs in Lebanon, which accounted for around 94% of all companies in the country. It is important to note that the ongoing economic and political crisis in Lebanon has likely impacted the number of SMEs in the country, and it may be difficult to obtain accurate and up-to-date information on the current state of SMEs in Lebanon.

Random sampling method is commonly used in research studies to minimize bias and ensure that the results are generalizable to the entire population. This method involves selecting participants from the population at random, so that each member of the population has an equal chance of being selected. It is a widely accepted method of sampling that ensures that the sample is representative of the entire population.

Several studies have used random sampling method to investigate similar research questions. For instance, in their study of the impact of procedural justice on job satisfaction, Colquitt and colleagues (2001) used a random sampling method to select participants from a variety of organizations in the United States. Another study by Kim and colleagues (2019) also used random sampling method to investigate the relationship between justice perception and job satisfaction among employees in South Korea.

In conclusion, a random sampling method is a suitable method for testing our study hypotheses on Lebanese SMEs. Previous studies, such as those by Colquitt et al. (2001) and Kim et al. (2019), have also used this method to investigate similar research questions.

If the population size is 50,000 SMEs, the sample size with a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error would be:

$$\text{Sample size} = \frac{[(1.96)^2 * (0.5) * (1 - 0.5)]}{[(0.05)^2 * (50,000 - 1) + (1.96)^2 * (0.5) * (1 - 0.5)]}$$

$$\text{Sample size} = 385$$

Therefore, we would need a sample size of 385 to achieve a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error, assuming a population size of 50,000 SMEs and a conservative estimate of 0.5 for the standard deviation. Note that the actual sample size needed may vary depending on the specific context and assumptions used.

The number of invitations needed to reach a sample size of 385 will depend on the response rate of the population being sampled. Assuming a response rate of 50%, which is a conservative estimate in Lebanon, we would need to send out twice as many invitations as the sample size to achieve the desired sample size.

Therefore, to reach a sample size of 385, we will send invitations to almost 8,000 women and men respondents via the database of the [National Commission for Lebanese Women \(NCLW\)](#) along with the [Investment Development Authority of Lebanon \(IDAL\)](#) database during March, April, and May 2023 to collect the primary data for this study. These organizations have allowed us to use their database of contacts for research purposes and dissemination.

As of 2021, there is no official data available on the number of SMEs in Lebanon by sector. However, according to the Small and Medium Enterprises (SME) National Strategy document published by the Ministry of Industry in 2015, there were around 50,000 SMEs in Lebanon at that time. It is also estimated that around 90% of businesses in Lebanon are

SMEs, with the majority operating in the services sector, followed by manufacturing, construction, and agriculture.

**Table 10: Estimated Number of SMEs by Sector in Lebanon**

Sector	Estimated Number of SMEs
Services	45,000
Manufacturing	3,500
Construction	1,000
Agriculture	500
<b>Total</b>	<b>50,000</b>

*Source: National Strategy document published by the Ministry of Industry in 2015*

According to the World Bank data for the year 2020, the total labor force in Lebanon was approximately 1.49 million people.

**Table 11: Estimated Number of Employees by Sector in Lebanon**

Lebanese Sectors	Number of Employees	Source
Agriculture	100,000	<a href="#">Central Administration of Statistics (CAS)</a>
Banking	25,000	<a href="#">Lebanese Association of Banks</a>
Construction	75,000	<a href="#">Lebanese Contractors Syndicate</a>
Education	150,000	<a href="#">Ministry of Education and Higher Education</a>
Healthcare	30,000	<a href="#">Ministry of Public Health</a>
Hospitality and Tourism	100,000	<a href="#">Lebanese Ministry of Tourism</a>
Manufacturing	50,000	<a href="#">Lebanese Industry Association</a>
Retail	200,000	<a href="#">Lebanese Franchise Association</a>
Telecommunications	10,000	<a href="#">Ministry of Telecommunications</a>
Transportation	50,000	<a href="#">Lebanese Public Transport Union</a>

*Source: World Bank, 2020*

It is important to note that this number may have changed due to the economic and political situation in the country since 2019 till now.

**Table 12: SMEs Study Sample by Sector in Lebanon**

<b>Sector</b>	<b>Estimated Number of SMEs</b>	<b>Weight</b>
Services	45,000	90%
Manufacturing	3,500	7%
Construction	1,000	2%
Agriculture	500	1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>50,000</b>	<b>100%</b>

*Source: National Strategy document published by the Ministry of Industry in 2015*

Overall, this table provides information about the estimated number of SMEs in each sector in Lebanon and the weight and sample size of each sector in the survey.

**Table 13: Number of Employees Study Sample by Sector in Lebanon**

<b>Lebanese Sectors</b>	<b>Number of Employees</b>	<b>Weight</b>
Agriculture	100,000	14%
Construction	75,000	10%
Service: Banking	25,000	3%
Service: Education	150,000	21%
Service: Healthcare	30,000	4%
Service: Retail	200,000	27%
Service: Hospitality and Tourism	100,000	14%
Manufacturing	50,000	7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>730,000</b>	<b>100%</b>

*Source: World Bank, 2020*

The final sample of number of employees constitute 0,1% of the total population of respondents. Please note that the above numbers are approximate and may vary depending on the source and the time of data collection. The sources cited are some of the major

organizations and institutions in Lebanon that provide statistical data on employment and sectors. For each SME being considered, we require one respondent's answer to gather comprehensive data for this study. In terms of statistical validity, it depends on the sampling method and the representativeness of the respondents for the population of interest. If the sampling method is appropriate and the respondents are representative of the SME population being studied, then having one respondent answer per SME can be statistically valid.

However, it is important to note that the sample size of 1,127 is relatively small compared to the total population of 1.49 million employees in 50,000 SMEs. Therefore, the survey results will be interpreted with caution and may not accurately represent the entire population of employees in SMEs in Lebanon.

To ensure the reliability and validity of the survey results, we used appropriate statistical techniques, ensure a representative sample, and use reliable and valid survey instruments which will be described in the following section.

### **3.3 Statistical Data Treatments Methods**

In this study, two statistical techniques are applied in a complementary fashion: (i) confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), and (ii) structural equation modeling (SEM). CFA is applied to refine the measurement model to the best possible fit, as well as to examine its validity and reliability. SEM is applied to investigate the research hypotheses. Data processing is performed with IBM SPSS AMOS 23 software.

#### **3.3.1 Confirmatory Factor Analysis**

Confirmatory factor analysis is a statistical technique applied to validate the measurement model, especially when it is designed under a reflective philosophy where the constructs are measured via a set of observed variables (Brown, 2015). Constructs are latent variables or variables that cannot be measured directly. Instead, constructs are reflected by observed variables, which can be measured directly by surveying the elements of a selected sample. CFA is a confirmatory technique, i.e., it is applied to test a pre-existing model. In contrast, exploratory factor analysis (EFA) is an exploratory technique, which is used to discover the underlying structure of a set of variables without any preconceived notions about the model (Fabrigar & Wegener, 2011).

The first step in CFA is specifying the model. This implicates identifying the constructs and the observed variables that are sought for each construct. The relationship between the constructs must be also specify by the researcher. Once the model has been specified, the next step is to gather data and estimate the parameters of the model. The latter are the loadings that relate the observed variables to the constructs. Loadings are weights, which values lie between  $\pm 1$ . Once squared, a loading proxies the variance of the observed variable that is shared with the construct.

After the estimation of the parameters of the model, the researcher can examine the fit of the model to the data. Multiple fit indices were conceived to serve the latter purpose. Some of the most common fit indices include the normed chi-square statistic  $\chi^2$ , the goodness of fit index (GFI), the adjusted goodness of fit index (AGFI), the Tucker-Lewis index (TLI), the comparative fit index (CFI), the root means square error of approximation (RMSEA), and the standardized root mean square residual (SRMR). These fit indices showcase that the

model has reached the best fit when they meet certain cut-off criteria as listed in Table 14. If the model does not fit the data well, the researcher may need to amend the model by either removing problematic observed variables or collecting more data. Problematic observed variables are those who either have weak loadings or cross-load with construct to which they were not initially assigned to.

**Table 14: Cut-off criteria of fit indices in CFA**

<b>Fit index</b>	<b>Cut-off criteria</b>
Normed $\chi^2$	< 3
GFI	> .9
AGFI	> .9
TLI	> .95
CFI	> .95
RMSEA	< .05
SRMR	< .07

CFA is a nifty technique that can be used in different research settings, such as testing the validity and reliability of measurement instruments. CFA has a broad range of applications in various fields, including psychology, sociology, education, marketing, and business. However, CFA also has some shortcomings, such as the difficulty to specifying the model, its sensitivity to the sample size, the difficulty to interpreting the results.

### **3.3.2 Structural Equation Modeling**

Structural equation modeling is a statistical method that is applied to test the research hypotheses suggested by the conceptual model (Mueller & Hancock, 2018). SEM is built on the theory of structuralism, which states that all phenomena can be explained by a combination of constructs and observed variables. In other words, SEM entails a structural model specifying the relationships between the constructs. The structural model is characteristically represented by a series of regression models that specify the relationship between constructs. The construct that is being foretold is called the dependent variable. The construct that is doing the predicting is called the independent variable. SEM models are estimated using various statistical techniques. The most common one is the maximum



likelihood. The latter maximizes the likelihood of the observed data given the model parameters. Once the model has been estimated, it is necessary to interpret the results of the model. The latter involves understanding the relationships between the constructs.

SEM is an effective method for examining the direct and indirect effects of one variable on another, as well as for examining the complex interactions and causal pathways between variables. The structural model applied here is like a series of multiple regression equations with one mediator and one moderator. The latter follows the equations:

$$JS_i = b_0 + b_1PJ_i + b_2IJ_i + b_3LMX_i + b_4Gender_i + e_i$$

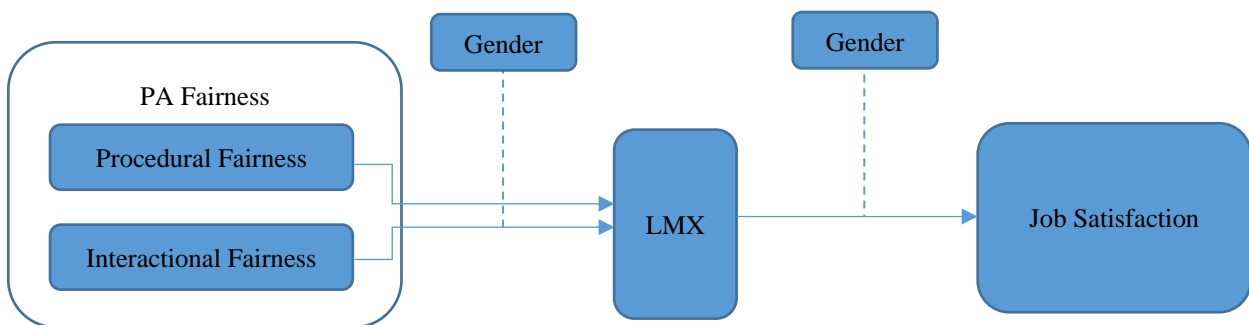
$$LMX_i = a_0 + a_1PJ_i + a_2IJ_i + e_{Ii}$$

In these equations,  $JS_i$  is the dependent variable job satisfaction,  $PJ_i$  and  $IJ_i$  are the independent variables procedural justice and interaction justice,  $LMX_i$  is the mediating variable,  $Gender_i$  is the moderating variable, and  $e_i$ , and  $e_{Ii}$  are the residuals. The coefficients  $a_1 \times b_3$ , and  $a_2 \times b_3$  represent the indirect effects of  $PJ_i$  and  $IJ_i$ , on  $JS_i$  via  $LMX_i$ . The subscript  $i$  refers to participant  $i$ .

### 3.4 Variables Measurement

Depending on the type of variable, different measurement scales may be used, such as nominal, ordinal, interval, or ratio scales. This section will carefully describe the variables measurement of all variables cited in the conceptual model below and the list of hypotheses.

**Figure 2: Conceptual Model Overview for the Variables Measurement**



H1: There is a positive relationship between LMX and procedural justice.

H2: There is a positive relationship between LMX and interactional justice.

H3: There is a positive relationship between LMX, intrinsic and extrinsic job satisfaction.

H4a: LMX mediates the relationships between procedural justice and job satisfaction.

H4b: LMX mediates the relationships between interactional justice and job satisfaction.

H5: moderates the relationship between performance appraisal and LMX.

H5a: Gender moderates a positive relationship between procedural justice and job satisfaction.

H5b: Gender moderates a positive effect between interactional justice and job satisfaction.

H6: Gender moderates a positive relationship between LMX and job satisfaction.

The use of a 7-point Likert scale for LMX7 questions is common in research studies. Erdogan, Liden, and Kraimer (2006), Gerstner and Day (1997) and Erdogan, Bauer, Truxillo, and Mansfield (2012) used in their study a 7-point Likert scale to measure LMX quality, with 1 indicating "Strongly disagree" and 7 indicating "Strongly agree." The use of a Likert scale allows for quantitative data analysis, making it easier to identify patterns and trends in responses.

### **LMX Questions:**

1. Do you know where you stand with your manager?
2. How well does your manager understand your job problems and needs?
3. How well does your manager recognize your potential?
4. What are the chances that your manager would use her power to help you solve problems in your work?
5. What are the chances that your manager would bail (help) you out at her expense when you really need it?
6. My manager has enough confidence in me that she would defend and justify my decisions if I was not present to do so?
7. How would you characterize your working relationship with your manager?

For the questions related to procedural and interactional justice, we used both open-ended questions and Likert scales. This combination allows for both qualitative and quantitative data analysis, providing a more comprehensive understanding of employees' perceptions and experiences in the workplace. This approach is created by Colquitt organizational justice measurement (2001) which is a valuable tool for researchers and practitioners to assess perceptions of justice in the workplace, particularly due to its ability to be tailored to different contexts and sources of justice such as performance appraisal by altering the “outcome” part of the instructions. The language of the items was modified to reflect PA fairness settings. Procedural justice was measured using seven items (e.g., I am able to express my views and feelings during the PA process), interpersonal justice using four items (e.g., during the PA meeting, my supervisor treated me in a polite manner) and informational justice using five items (e.g., my supervisor was candid in his/her communications with me). The responses were measured using a five-point Likert scale that ranged from “strongly disagree – (1)” to “strongly agree – (5).”

### **Procedural Fairness Perception Questions:**

8. I am able to express my views and feelings during the performance appraisal process.
9. I have influence over the outcome arrived at by those performance appraisal process.
10. The performance Appraisal process were applied consistently.
11. The performance appraisal process was transparent and have been free of bias.
12. The performance appraisal process was based on accurate information.

13. was able to appeal the outcome arrived at by those performance appraisal process.
14. The performance appraisal process upheld ethical and moral standards.

**Interpersonal Fairness Perception Questions:**

15. My supervisor treated me in a polite manner, with dignity and respect during performance appraisal review(s).
16. My supervisor refrained herself from using improper remarks and comments during performance appraisal review(s).
17. My supervisor actively listens and takes into consideration my concerns and comments during performance appraisal review(s).
18. My supervisor provides clear and accurate information during performance appraisal review(s).

**Informational Fairness Perception Questions:**

19. My supervisor provides clear and accurate information during performance appraisal review(s).
20. My supervisor explains the procedures thoroughly during performance appraisal review(s).
21. My supervisor was candid (outspoken) in her communication with me during performance appraisal review(s).
22. My supervisor communicated details in a timely manner during performance appraisal review(s).
23. My supervisor provided information and feedback that is relevant and applicable to my needs during performance appraisal review(s).

**Intrinsic and Extrinsic Questions:**

24. How satisfied are you with the level of support you receive from your manager?
25. To what extent do you feel that your manager values and recognizes your contributions to the team?
26. How satisfied are you with the level of communication and feedback you receive from your manager?
27. How satisfied are you with the level of autonomy and decision-making authority you have in your role?
28. How satisfied are you with the opportunity for growth and development in your role?

**Overall Job Satisfaction Questions:**

29. To what extent does your job provide you with a sense of accomplishment and purpose?
30. How satisfied are you with the support and resources provided by your organization to perform your job effectively?
31. How likely are you to recommend your organization as a great place to work to a friend or colleague?
32. How likely are you to recommend your organization as a great place to work to a friend or colleague?

**Overall Fairness Perception Questions:**

1. To what extent do you feel that performance appraisal process is fair and transparent?
2. To what extent do you feel that the comments, feedback and guidance provided by my manager at the review meeting were fair?
3. How satisfied are you with the opportunities for input and participation in the performance appraisal process?
4. How satisfied are you with the level of consistency and objectivity in the performance appraisal process between your team members and other departments?

For the gender question, we used a closed-ended question, specifically a multiple-choice question. The answer scale includes four options: Male, Female, Non-binary, and Prefer not to say. It is important to note that this answer scale may not be comprehensive enough to capture the full range of gender identities and may not be inclusive of all individuals. Therefore, it is recommended to provide an "Other" option with a write-in response to allow for individuals to self-identify in a way that may not be captured by the pre-defined answer options.

**Gender Questions:**

1. What is your gender?

Likert scales are commonly used in survey research because they allow for quantitative data analysis, which can help identify patterns and trends in responses. Additionally, Likert scales

are easy to administer and analyze, and they can provide a standardized way to measure attitudes, perceptions, and opinions. This can be particularly useful when trying to compare responses across different individuals or groups.

## CHAPTER 4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

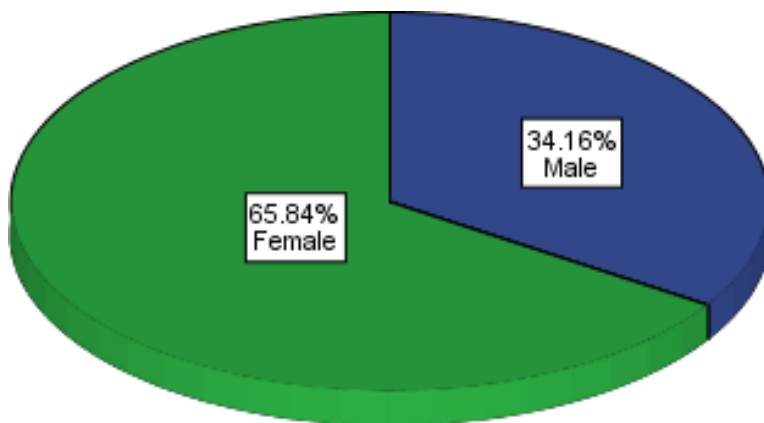
### 4.1 Results and Interpretations

The following section presents the results and interpretations of the study, shedding light on the key findings and their implications.

#### 4.1.1 Description of the Sample

The sample comprises 1,127 participants, where 742 are women while the remaining 385 are men. Those men were randomly selected from the same firms as women to serve as controls for research hypotheses H5 and H6, where the moderating role of gender is assumed. Figure 3 represents the sample distribution by gender, where ca. 66% are women, while ca. 34% are men.

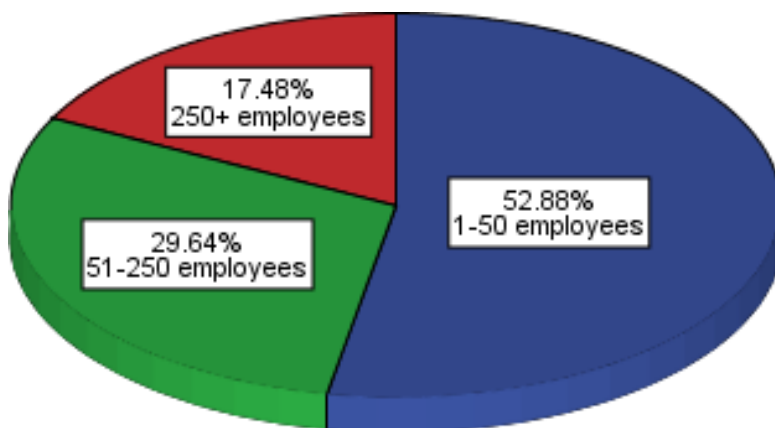
**Figure 3: Sample Distribution by Gender**



These 1,127 participants work at 406 different firms, falling into one of the following three categories: small, medium, or large firms. It is important to note that the category small firms also include micro firms, i.e., firm where an estimate of 1 up to 10 employees is recorded.

Figure 4 depicts the size of the firms, where ca. 53% are small, i.e., having 1 up to 50 employees, ca. 30% are medium, i.e., having 51 up to 250 employees, and ca. 17% are large, i.e., having 250 employees or more.

**Figure 4: Sample Distribution by Firm Size**



The activity sectors of these 406 firms are divided into two distinct categories, namely services and other. The category other represents ca. 12% of the sample and comprises firms that are active in manufacturing (ca. 8% of the sample), agriculture (ca. 2% of the sample), and construction (ca. 1% of the sample). The remaining 88% of the sample are firms that are active in services, i.e., banking, education, healthcare, retail, hospitality, and tourism.



**Figure 5: Sample Distribution by Activity Sector**

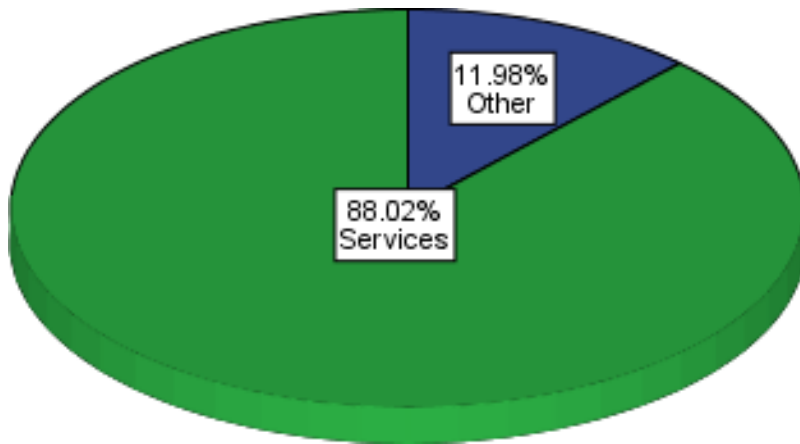
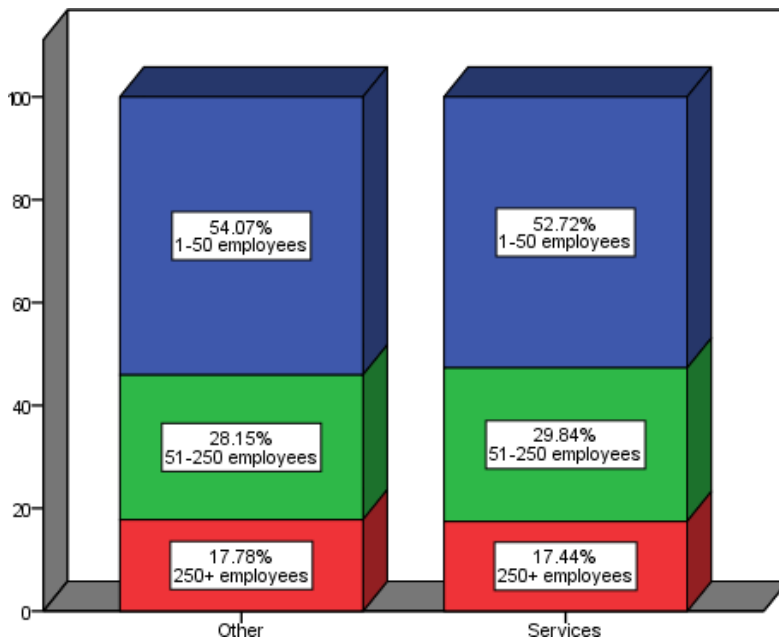


Figure 5 depicts firm size stacked by activity sector. The distribution of firms according to their sizes and activity sectors are almost identical, i.e., small firms are the majority, followed by medium firms, then by large firms. In the services sector, ca. 53% of the firms are small, ca. 30% are medium, and ca. 17% are large. In other sectors, ca. 54% of the firms are small, ca. 28% are medium, and ca. 18% are large.

**Figure 6: Sample Distribution by Firms' Activity Sector and Size**



The 1,127 participants filled inquiries about their current roles and length of service at their firms. Figure 6 represents the sample distribution by participants current roles at their firms. It is evident that ca. 29% are middle managers, ca. 28% are senior managers, ca. 26% are first level managers, and ca. 18% are at entry level.

**Figure 7: Sample Distribution by Participants' Current Roles at their Firms**

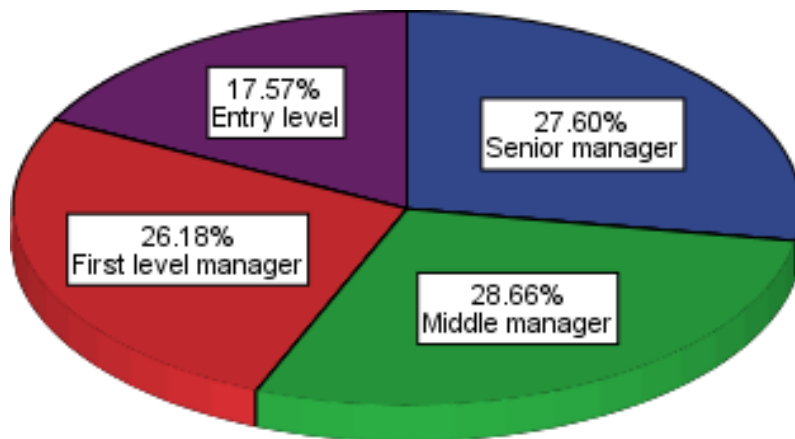


Figure 8 represents the sample distribution by participants' length of service at their firms. About 31% worked from 3 up to 6 years at their current firms, ca. 29% worked from 6 up to 10 years, ca. 22% worked up to 3 years at their current firms, and ca. 19% worked for 10 years or more at their current firms.

**Figure 8: Sample Distribution by Participants' Length of Service at their Firms**

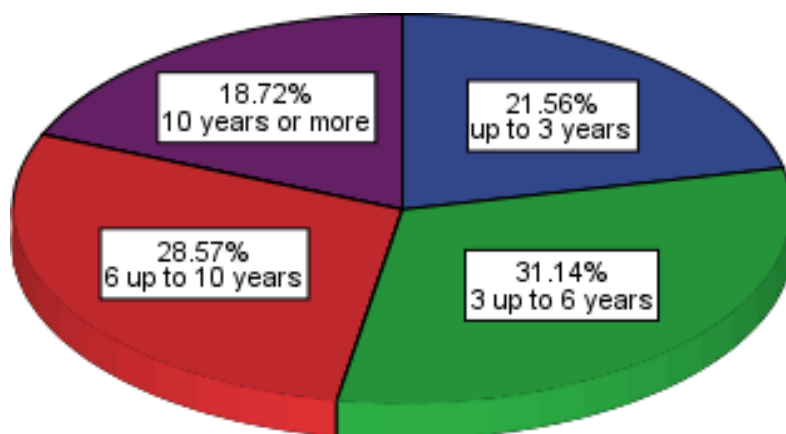


Figure 9 depicts participants' current role at their firms stacked by gender. For women, ca. 30% are middle managers, ca. 27% are senior managers, ca. 26% are first level managers, and ca. 17% are at entry level. For men, ca. 28% are senior managers, ca. 26% are middle managers, ca. 26% are first level managers, and ca. 19% are at entry level. It is noteworthy that the most frequent category for women is middle managers, while it is senior manager for men. The second most frequent category for women is senior manager, while it is middle managers for men. The third and fourth most frequent categories are similar for women and men, i.e., first level managers and participants at entry level, respectively.

**Figure 9: Sample Distribution by Participants' Gender and Current Role at Firm**

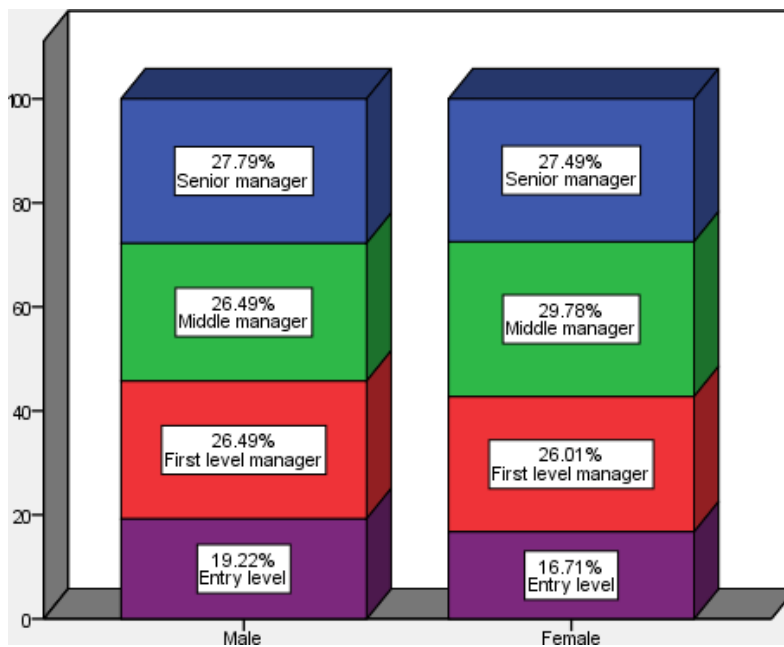
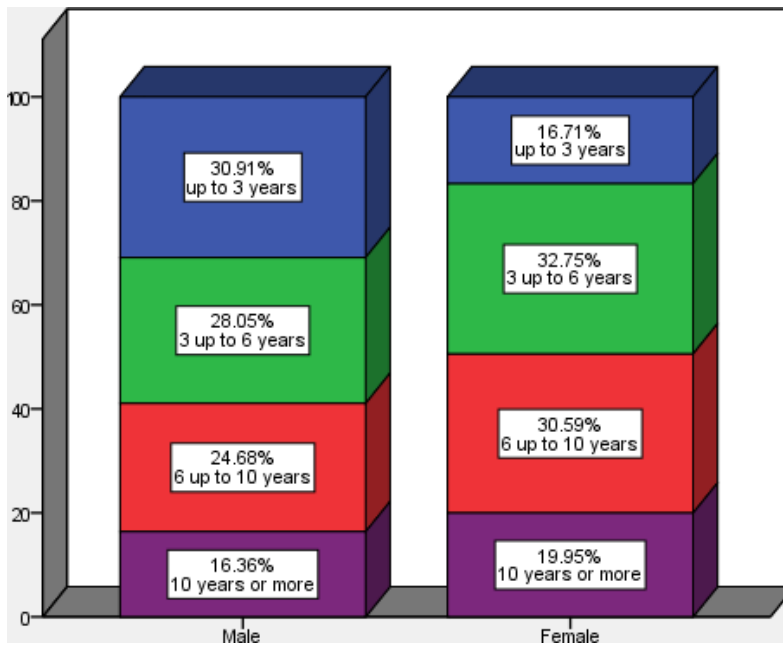


Figure 10 represents participants' length of service at their firms stacked by gender. For women, ca. 33% exhibit a length of service from 3 up to 6 years, ca. 31% exhibit a length of service from 6 up to 10 years, ca. 20% exhibit a length of service of 10 years or more, and ca. 17% exhibit a length of service up to 3 years. For men, ca. 31% exhibit a length of service up to 3 years, ca. 28% exhibit a length of service from 3 up to 6 years, ca. 25% exhibit a length of service 6 up to 10 years, and ca. 16% exhibit a length of service of 10 years or more. It is noteworthy that the most frequent category for women is 3 up to 6 years, while it is up to 3 years for men. The second most frequent category for women is 6 up to 10 years, while it is 3 up to 6 years for men. The third most frequent category for women is 10 years or more, while it is 6 up to 10 years for men. The least frequent category for women is up to 3 years, while it is up to 3 years for men.

**Figure 10: Sample Distribution by Participants' Gender and Current Role at Firm by years of Experience**



#### 4.1.2 Specific Descriptive and Normality Measurements

The measurement model encompasses 20 observed variables measured at the 5-point Likert scale. This is a reflective model where the observed variables reflect four constructs, namely procedural justice (PJ), interactional justice (IJ), leader-member exchange (LMX), and job satisfaction (JS). Table 15 represents specific measurements of descriptive statistics of the 20 observed variables. Firstly, let us analyze the measurements of distribution, namely skewness and excess of kurtosis, which are essential to examine the normality of the distribution of the observed variables. The latter follow a specific rule of thumb, where values between  $\pm 2$  for skewness and excess of kurtosis indicate the normality of the distribution, while values outside that range indicate otherwise (Ryu, 2011). The values listed in Table 15 showcase the normality of the distribution of the 20 observed variables, all having their skewness and excess of kurtosis between  $\pm 2$ . Moreover, skewness ranges from a lowest of  $-0.126$  for PJ4 to a highest of  $0.161$  for JS5. Excess of kurtosis ranges from a lowest of  $-1.054$  for JS1 to a highest of  $0.350$  for LMX2.

Turning to the measurements of central tendency (the mean) and dispersion (the standard deviation), construct PJ has its observed variables' mean scores ranging from 2.60 (reflecting neutrality) for PJ1 to 3.35 (reflecting agreement) for PJ4. The standard deviations range from  $0.632$  for PJ5 to  $0.779$  for PJ1 and PJ3. Three out of its five observed variables reflect neutrality, namely PJ1, PJ2, and PJ3, while the remaining two, i.e., PJ4 and PJ5, reflect agreement.

**Table 15: Specific Measurements of Descriptive Statistics of the Observed Variables**

	<i>Minimum</i>	<i>Maximum</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Standard deviation</i>	<i>Skewness</i>	<i>Excess of Kurtosis</i>
PJ1	1	5	2.60	.779	.064	-.116
PJ2	1	5	2.70	.736	.011	.024
PJ3	1	5	2.94	.779	-.027	.043
PJ4	1	5	3.35	.666	-.126	.078
PJ5	1	5	3.31	.632	-.078	.060
IJ1	1	5	2.74	.844	.093	-.060
IJ2	1	5	3.12	.714	.072	-.002
IJ3	1	5	2.86	.789	.067	.035
IJ4	1	5	2.66	.830	.029	-.210
IJ5	1	5	2.58	.853	.081	-.309
LMX1	2	5	3.27	.604	.059	-.178
LMX2	1	5	3.07	.653	-.087	.350
LMX3	1	5	2.76	.733	-.045	.106
LMX4	1	5	2.70	.750	.086	.000
LMX5	1	5	2.75	.791	.118	.092
JS1	2	5	3.55	.537	-.049	-1.054
JS2	2	5	3.41	.592	-.040	-.445
JS3	2	5	3.46	.609	.048	-.329
JS4	1	5	2.96	.698	.033	.090
JS5	1	5	2.87	.732	.161	-.060

Construct IJ has its observed variables' mean scores ranging from 2.58 (reflecting neutrality) for IJ5 to 3.12 (reflecting agreement) for IJ2. The standard deviations range from .714 for IJ2 to .853 for IJ5. Four out of its five observed variables reflect neutrality, except IJ2 which reflects agreement.

Construct LMX has its observed variables' mean scores ranging from 2.70 (reflecting neutrality) for LMX4 to 3.27 (reflecting agreement) for LMX1. The standard deviations range from .604 for LMX1 to .791 for LMX5. Three out of its five observed variables reflect

neutrality, namely LMX3, LMX4, and LMX5, while the remaining two, namely LMX1 and LMX2, reflect agreement.

Construct JS has its observed variables' mean scores ranging from 2.87 (reflecting neutrality) for JS5 to 3.55 (reflecting agreement) for JS1. The standard deviations range from .537 for JS1 to .732 for JS5. Three out of its five observed variables reflect agreement, namely JS1, JS2, and JS3, while the remaining two, i.e., JS4 and JS5, reflect neutrality.

#### **4.1.3 Appropriateness of the Measurement Model**

This section reports the goodness of fit of the measurement model, i.e., the degree to which the suggested model sufficiently fits the observed data. To achieve the latter, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) is applied. In the framework of CFA, the measurement model is refined several times until reaching the best fit, i.e., the model where all fit indices meet their cut-off criteria (Padgett & Morgan, 2021). Table 16 lists the steps of refining the measurement model.

It required 6 runs to reach the best fit model. In each run, the model was enhanced by deleting the problematic indicator, i.e., the one showing the weakest loading.

Model 1 characterizes the full measurement model, i.e., the model with 20 observed variables. After the first run, four out of seven fit indices met their cut-off criteria, namely GFI, AGFI, RMSEA, and SRMR. The remaining three, namely normed  $\chi^2$ , TLI, and CFI did not converge. To remedy the latter, observed variable JS2 is removed because it showed the weakest loading, i.e.,  $\lambda = .641$ .

After the second run, model 2 is obtained. Four out of seven fit indices met their cut-off criteria, the same as model 1, namely GFI, AGFI, RMSEA, and SRMR. The remaining three, namely normed  $\chi^2$ , TLI, and CFI did not converge, yet their values approached further toward their cut-off criteria. Moreover, the  $\chi^2$  difference represents an resourceful method to test whether model 2 is an upgrading of model 1, i.e., if its  $p$ -value is less than any of the following levels of significance, .05, .01, or .001, then the new model is an upgrading of the old one (Pavlov, Shi, & Maydeu-Olivares, 2020). In contrast, if its  $p$ -value is greater than any level of significance, then the only difference between the two models would be the

improvement in one or various fit indices. Table 16 shows that model 2 is an improvement of model 1,  $\Delta\chi^2(18) = 90.151$  and  $p < .001$ . Since all fit indices did not meet their required cut-off criteria, the model is improved by removing observed variable LMX2 because it showed the weakest loading, i.e.,  $\lambda = .643$ .

**Table 16: CFA Steps to Refine the Measurement Model (fit indices meeting their cut-off are highlighted in grey)**

Model	Normed $\chi^2$	GFI	AGFI	TLI	CFI	RMSEA	SRMR
Model 1 (20 observables)	3.720	.951	.937	.935	.944	.049	.0335
Model 2 (JS2 deleted for weak loading .641)	3.561	.955	.942	.941	.949	.048	.0331
Model 3 (LMX2 deleted for weak loading .643)	3.481	.959	.945	.945	.954	.047	.0326
Model 4 (JS1 deleted for weak loading .644)	3.414	.962	.949	.949	.957	.046	.0321
Model 5 (PJ1 deleted for weak loading .657)	3.016	.969	.956	.959	.966	.042	.0305
Model 6 (PJ4 deleted for weak loading .664)	2.827	.973	.961	.964	.971	.040	.0283

After the third run, model 3 is obtained. Five out of seven fit indices met their cut-off criteria, namely GFI, AGFI, CFI, RMSEA, and SRMR. The remaining two, namely normed  $\chi^2$  and TLI, did not converge, yet their values approached further toward their cut-off criteria. Table 17 shows that model 3 is an improvement of model 2,  $\Delta\chi^2(17) = 70.884$  and  $p < .001$ . Since all fit indices did not meet their required cut-off criteria, the model is improved by removing observed variable JS1 because it showed the weakest loading, i.e.,  $\lambda = .644$ .

After the fourth run, model 4 is obtained. Five out of seven fit indices met their cut-off criteria, namely GFI, AGFI, CFI, RMSEA, and SRMR. The remaining two, namely normed  $\chi^2$  and TLI, did not converge, yet their values approached further toward their cut-off criteria. Table 17 shows that model 4 is an improvement of model 3,  $\Delta\chi^2(16) = 63.229$  and  $p < .001$ .



Since all fit indices did not meet their required cut-off criteria, the model is improved by removing observed variable PJ1 because it showed the weakest loading, i.e.,  $\lambda = .657$ .

After the fifth run, model 5 is obtained. All fit indices met their cut-off criteria except normed  $\chi^2$ , yet its values approached further toward its cut-off criteria. Table 17 shows that model 5 is an improvement of model 4,  $\Delta\chi^2(15) = 90.188$  and  $p < .001$ . Since all fit indices did not meet their required cut-off criteria, the model is improved by removing observed variable PJ4 because it showed the weakest loading, i.e.,  $\lambda = .664$ .

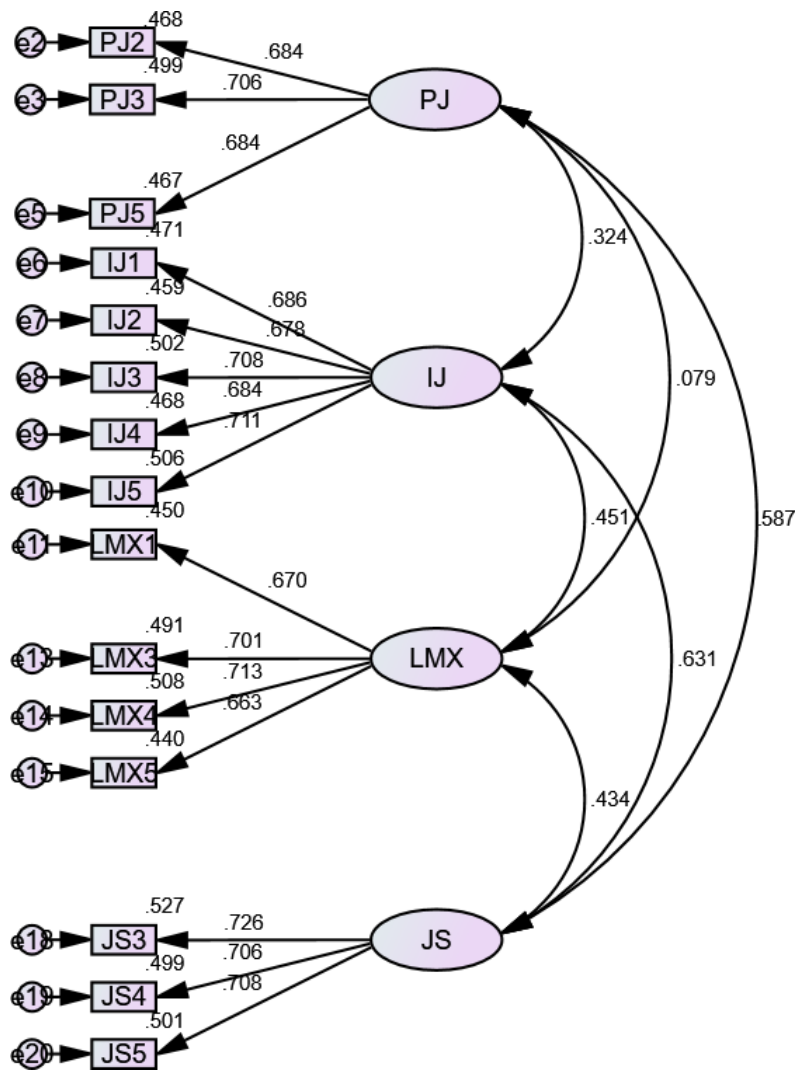
After the sixth run, model 6 is obtained. All fit indices met their cut-off criteria. Table 17 shows that model 6 is an improvement of model 5,  $\Delta\chi^2(14) = 58.119$  and  $p < .001$ . The refinement of the measurement model is stopped, since no more problematic indicators are encountered. Model 6 comprises 15 observed variables out of 20 observed variables sought in the initial measurement model.

**Table 17: Comparison of the Measurement Models**

<b>Model Comparison</b>	<b><math>\Delta\chi^2</math></b>	<b><i>Df</i></b>	<b><i>p</i>-value</b>
Model 1 <i>versus</i> Model 2	90.151	18	< .001
Model 2 <i>versus</i> Model 3	70.884	17	< .001
Model 3 <i>versus</i> Model 4	63.229	16	< .001
Model 4 <i>versus</i> Model 5	90.188	15	< .001
Model 5 <i>versus</i> Model 6	58.119	14	< .001

Figure 11 depicts the best fit model or model 6. The constructs are connected by arrows to their observed variables. Above these arrows, loadings are represented to reflect the correlation between the constructs and their observed variables. The constructs are connected to each other by double arrows that represent the covariances between them. The residuals are drawn as represented by circles connected to the observed variables. These residuals represent the difference between the estimates and the observed data. All constructs lost one or more of their observed variables during the refinement process, except IJ, which retained all its observed variables. Construct PJ retained three of its initial five observed variables. Construct LMX retained four of its initial five observed variables. Construct JS retained three of its initial five observed variables

**Figure 11: The Refined Measurement Model (Model 6) obtained by CFA**



#### 4.1.4 Validity and Reliability of the Measurements

Model 6 or the best fit model is then examined for validity and reliability. Validity is two-fold into convergent and discriminant validity. First, convergent validity is assessed, i.e., the amount to which the observed variables are correlated to each other such as they measure the same construct. Convergent validity is supported for a construct when the average variance extracted (AVE) of its observed variables is greater than .500. Table 18 lists the exercise of convergent validity. The estimates of AVE range from .508 for PJ to .521 for IJ. The latter indicates that all four constructs represent an AVE greater than .500. Therefore, convergent validity is confirmed for the measurement model, i.e., the retained observed variables for each construct are strongly correlated to showcase that they measure the construct.

**Table 18: Validity and Reliability of the Refined Measurement Model obtained by CFA**

<b>Latent variable</b>	<b>Convergent validity (AVE &gt; .500)</b>	<b>Discriminant validity (<math>r^2_{\max} &lt; \text{AVE}</math>)</b>	<b>Reliability (CR &gt; .700)</b>
PJ	.508	.345	.733
IJ	.521	.398	.822
LMX	.512	.203	.781
JS	.509	.398	.757

Afterward, discriminant validity is examined, i.e., the amount to which the observed variables reflecting the same construct can be distinguished from those reflecting another construct. Discriminant validity is supported for a construct when its maximum shared variance is less than its AVE. The maximum shared variance of a construct is the square of its maximum correlation with the other latent variables, i.e.,  $r^2_{\max}$ . These correlations are reported in Table 19.

Construct PJ is significantly positively correlated with all the other constructs, i.e., when PJ tends to increase, the remaining constructs also tend to increase. The maximum correlation is found between PJ and JS,  $r(1127) = .587, p < .001$ . Squaring the latter yields  $r^2_{\max} = .345$ ,

which in turn is less than AVE = .508. Then, discriminant validity is supported for construct PJ.

Construct IJ is significantly positively correlated with all the other constructs, i.e., when IJ tends to increase, the remaining constructs also tend to increase. The maximum correlation is found between IJ and JS,  $r(1127) = .631, p < .001$ . Squaring the latter yields  $r^2_{\max} = .398$ , which in turn is less than AVE = .521. Then, discriminant validity is supported for construct IJ.

Construct LMX is significantly positively correlated with all the other constructs, i.e., when LMX tends to increase, the remaining constructs also tend to increase. The maximum correlation is found between LMX and IJ,  $r(1127) = .451, p < .001$ . Squaring the latter yields  $r^2_{\max} = .203$ , which in turn is less than AVE = .512. Then, discriminant validity is supported for construct LMX.

Construct JS is significantly positively correlated with all the other constructs, i.e., when JS tends to increase, the remaining constructs also tend to increase. The maximum correlation is found between JS and IJ,  $r(1127) = .631, p < .001$ . Squaring the latter yields  $r^2_{\max} = .398$ , which in turn is less than AVE = .509. Then, discriminant validity is supported for construct JS.

In summary, the assumption of discriminant validity is supported for all four constructs, i.e., the observed variables assigned to each measure exclusively the construct they are assigned to.

**Table 19: Correlations between the Latent Variables**

	<b>PJ</b>	<b>IJ</b>	<b>LMX</b>	<b>JS</b>
<b>PJ</b>	1			
<b>IJ</b>	.324***	1		
<b>LMX</b>	.079*	.451***	1	
<b>JS</b>	.587***	.631***	.434***	1

Significant at the level \*.05, \*\*.01, and \*\*\*.001

On another note, reliability is examined using the composite reliability coefficient (CR). Reliability is a measure of internal consistency, i.e., the amount to which the observed variables reflecting the same construct are consistently loading on it. Reliability is supported for a construct when its CR is greater than .700. The CR values for all the constructs range from .733 for PJ to .822 for IJ. Then reliability is confirmed, and all constructs show a strong reliability due to their CR being all greater than .700.

#### **4.1.5 Verification of the Research Hypotheses**

The best fit measurement model is now converted to a structural model, i.e., a model that statistically mirrors the conceptual model. The obtained structural model is depicted in Figure 12 after and is computed in the framework of structural equation modelling (SEM) to test the research hypotheses. The constructs are connected to each other with arrows indicating the direction of causality. Residuals are connected to constructs assumed to be dependent variables. Standardized regression weights are shown above the arrows connecting the construct. A research hypothesis is supported depending on the sign and statistical significance of these weights. Furthermore, since research hypothesis H4 assumes a mediating role for LMX in the relationship between PJ and IJ on the one hand, and JS on the other, direct, and indirect effects are computed using a bootstrapping scheme over 5,000 samples. This enables to report a bias corrected 95% confidence interval (CI) for each effect. If the value 0, which indicates the existence of a null effect, does not fall within the 95% CI, then the hypothesized effect, whether direct or indirect, exists. Otherwise, if 0 falls within the 95% CI, then the hypothesized effect does not exist. It is noteworthy that the indirect effect is the effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable through the mediator.

According to Baron and Kenny, if both direct and indirect effects are significant, then there is a partial mediation. If only the indirect effect is significant, then there is a full mediation. If only the direct effect is significant, then there is no mediation. If both direct and indirect effects are not significant then there is no effect and no mediation (Pardo & Roman, 2013). Figure 12 reports only the direct effects of the independent variables on the dependent variables. The indirect effects due to mediation are not depicted but are listed in Table 6.

**Figure12: Structural Model obtained by SEM**

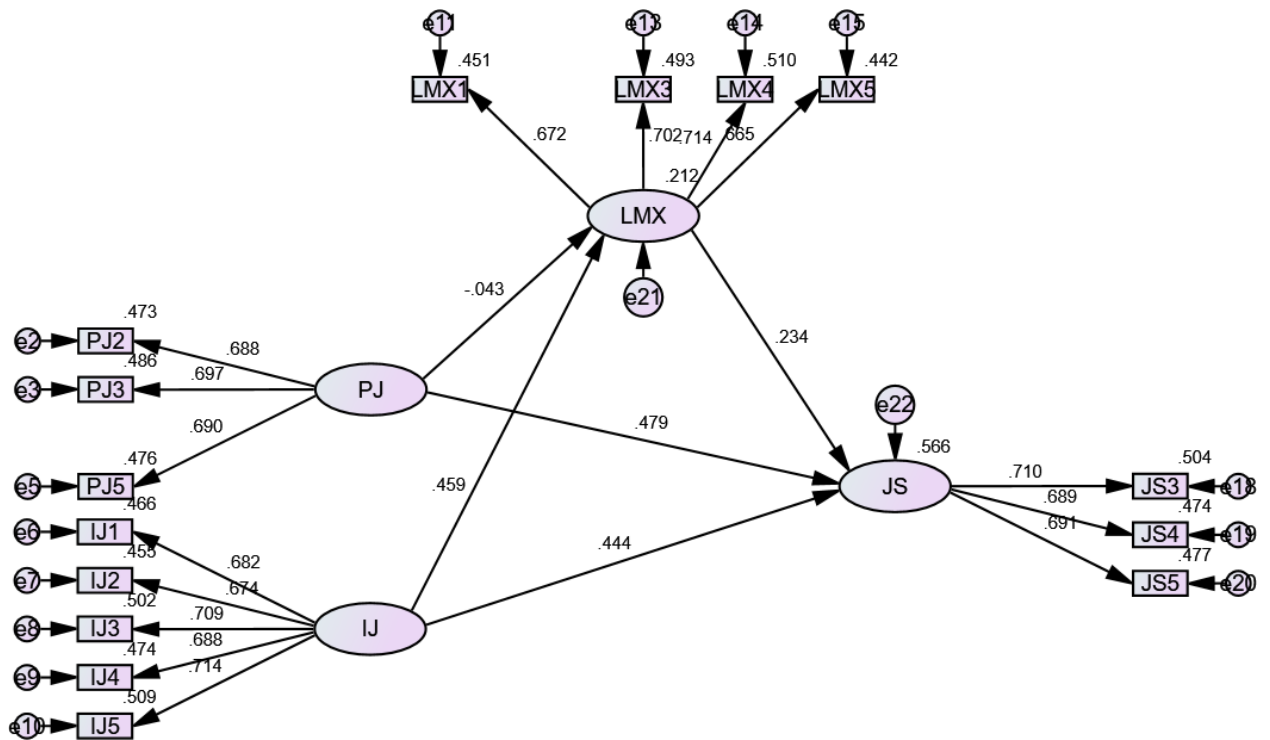


Table 20 showcases the results of hypothesis testing obtained by SEM. PJ has no statistically significant impact on LMX,  $\beta = -.043$ ,  $p = .291$ . Then, research hypothesis H1 is not supported, and procedural justice has no positive effect on leader-member exchange.

IJ has a positive impact on LMX,  $\beta = .459$ ,  $p < .001$ . Then, research hypothesis H2 is supported, and interactional justice has a positive effect on leader-member exchange.

LMX has a positive impact on JS,  $\beta = .234$ ,  $p < .001$ . Then, research hypothesis H3 is supported, and leader-member exchange has a positive effect on job satisfaction.

PJ has a positive direct effect on JS,  $\beta = .479$ ,  $p < .001$ . Nevertheless, the indirect effect of PJ on JS via LMX as mediator is not statistically significant,  $\beta = -.010$ ,  $p = .263$ . Then, research hypothesis H4a is not supported, and leader-member exchange does not mediate the positive influence of procedural justice on job satisfaction.

IJ has a positive direct effect on JS,  $\beta = .444, p < .001$ . The indirect effect of IJ on JS via LMX as mediator is positive and statistically significant,  $\beta = .107, p < .001$ . Then, research hypothesis H4b is supported, and leader-member exchange partially mediates the positive influence of interactional justice on job satisfaction.

**Table 20: Validation of the Research Hypotheses by SEM**

Hypothesis	Direct effect	Indirect Effect	Comment
H1: PJ → LMX	-.043 [-.120; .034]	NA	Not supported
H2: IJ → LMX	.459*** [.391; .522]	NA	Supported
H3: LMX → JS	.234*** [.154; .312]	NA	Supported
H4a: PJ → LMX → JS	.479*** [.408; .549]	-.010 [-.031; .007]	Not supported
H4b: IJ → LMX → JS	.444*** [.368; .514]	.107*** [.071; .147]	Supported
Significant at the level *.05, **.01, and ***.001			

#### 4.1.6 The Moderating Role of Gender

As specified in description of the sample, it comprises 1,127 participants, where 742 are women while the remaining 385 are men. The male participants were randomly selected from the same firms as women to serve as controls for research hypotheses H5a, H5b, and H6, where the moderating role of gender is assumed. A fully constrained and fully unconstrained models are first estimated. The fully constrained model forces all standardized regression weights to be invariant across gender. The  $\chi^2$  statistic of the fully unconstrained model is found to be 122.892 with a degree of freedom of 2 and a  $p$ -value less than .001. The  $\chi^2$  statistic of the fully constrained model is found to be 127.612 with a degree of freedom of 7 and a  $p$ -value less than .001. The  $\chi^2$  statistic is not significantly higher for the fully constrained model, which indicates that it does not fit the data worse than the fully unconstrained model,  $\Delta\chi^2(5) = 4.72$  and  $p = 0.451$ . In other words, gender does not moderate research hypotheses H5a, H5b, and H6 (Yuan & Chan, 2016).

Research hypothesis H5a assumes that gender moderates the relationship between procedural justice and job satisfaction. The previous analysis shows that H5a is not supported by statistical evidence and the positive influence of procedural justice on job satisfaction is gender invariant.

Research hypothesis H5b assumes that gender moderates the relationship between interactional justice and job satisfaction. The previous analysis shows that H5b is not supported by statistical evidence and the positive influence of interactional justice on job satisfaction is gender invariant.

Research hypothesis H6 assumes that gender moderates the relationship between leader-member exchange and job satisfaction. The previous analysis shows that H6 is not supported by statistical evidence and the positive influence of leader-member exchange on job satisfaction is gender invariant.



## 4.2 Discussion

The present study explored the relationships between procedural justice, interactional justice, leader-member exchange, and job satisfaction, as well as the moderating role of gender in these relationships, specifically within the context of Lebanese SMEs. This discussion elucidates the key findings and their implications, draws connections to existing literature, and identifies avenues for future research.

The first hypothesis posited a positive effect of procedural justice on leader-member exchange, but the results did not support this hypothesis. Contrary to expectations, procedural justice did not demonstrate a positive impact on leader-member exchange, evidenced by the negative coefficient and non-significance at conventional levels. This finding contrasts with the work of authors like Blau (1964), who argued that fair procedures might foster trust and cooperation between leaders and subordinates. In Lebanese SMEs, a possible explanation could be that familial or community bonds and informal procedures might have more influence than formal procedural justice in shaping perceptions of leader-member exchange (Mejri & Very, 2022). Besides, in Lebanon and similar contexts, relational factors such as trust, and cooperation may be driven more by interpersonal relationships and less by formal procedural fairness. This insight challenges conventional Western perspectives that emphasize formal structures and processes in organizational interactions. In the context of performance appraisal, this means that employees may place greater emphasis on their existing relationships with supervisors, often rooted in familial or community connections, rather than the strict adherence to procedural fairness. Such pre-existing bonds might influence how employees perceive the appraisal process and the extent to which they value or rely on formal procedures.

Interactional justice was found to have a positive effect on leader-member exchange. This is consistent with previous studies, such as Scandura and Graen (1984), that highlight the importance of interpersonal treatment in shaping positive leader-member relationships. In the Lebanese context, the fair and respectful treatment encapsulated in interactional justice seems to resonate strongly, fostering ties between leaders and members and contributing to a positive leader-member exchange. Indeed, when leaders exhibit interactional justice behaviors such as respectful communication, active listening, and empathy, it resonates profoundly with employees. For example, when supervisors exhibit interactional justice

behaviors during performance appraisals, such as providing respectful feedback, actively listening to employees' perspectives, and displaying empathy, it resonates deeply with employees. This resonance contributes to the development of a positive employee-supervisor relationship in the performance appraisal context. Moreover, the congruence between this finding and existing research suggests that the influence of interactional justice on the performance appraisal process extends beyond cultural boundaries. It implies that regardless of cultural context, employees universally appreciate respectful and fair treatment during performance feedback discussions.

A positive impact of leader-member exchange on job satisfaction was observed, aligning with previous literature like Graen and Uhl-Bien (1995). Within Lebanese SMEs, this finding reaffirms the role of effective leadership in promoting employee satisfaction, given the value placed on personal relationships and trust within the workplace in Lebanese culture. The positive influence of LMX on job satisfaction in Lebanese SMEs underscores the critical role of leaders as not just managers but also as mentors and role models. Leaders who invest in building strong relationships with their team members not only enhance job satisfaction but also inspire loyalty and commitment. Employees are more likely to be engaged and motivated when they have a positive LMX with their leaders.

The hypothesis that leader-member exchange would mediate the positive influence of procedural justice on job satisfaction was not supported. This result, aligned with the work of Greenberg and Cropanzano (1993), may indicate specific nuances within Lebanese SMEs where procedural justice directly influences job satisfaction, but the mediation through leader-member exchange is not significant. In Lebanese SMEs, procedural justice may serve as a strong determinant of job satisfaction independently of the quality of leader-member relationships. While high-quality LMX relationships are generally associated with enhanced job satisfaction, in this context, other factors, such as the transparency and fairness of organizational processes, might play a more dominant role in shaping job satisfaction.

Both the direct effect of interactional justice on job satisfaction and the positive and significant indirect effect via leader-member exchange were found, supporting the hypothesis and reflecting the arguments of scholars like Colquitt (2001). These findings are particularly relevant for Lebanese SMEs, where the interpersonal dynamics and justice perceptions might play a crucial role in shaping job satisfaction. In Lebanon, where

interpersonal relationships often extend beyond the workplace into familial and community contexts, the quality of interactions between leaders and employees assumes even greater significance. The emphasis on interpersonal relationships, as well as the perception of justice, is deeply ingrained in the Lebanese culture and, as such, significantly influences job satisfaction.

The gender moderation analysis indicated that gender does not moderate the research hypotheses (Yuan and Chan, 2016). The gender-invariant relationships between procedural justice, interactional justice, leader-member exchange, and job satisfaction present an essential contribution, especially considering gender differences often observed in organizational settings (Eagly and Johnson, 1990). In the context of Lebanese SMEs, these results may reflect a contemporary shift in gender dynamics or suggest that the constructs investigated are universally relevant, underscoring the importance of these factors across diverse cultural and organizational landscapes. Moreover, the gender-invariant relationships discovered in this analysis might indicate that the roles and expectations of men and women in the workplace are evolving. It may suggest that, within Lebanese SMEs, both genders are experiencing similar justice perceptions and leader-member exchanges, which, in turn, contribute to comparable levels of job satisfaction. This finding reflects a more equitable and inclusive work environment and highlights the evolving nature of gender dynamics within Lebanese organizations.

The adapted discussion provides insights that are particularly relevant to Lebanese SMEs, considering specific cultural and organizational factors that may influence these relationships. The connection to existing literature, including international studies and local insights, offers a comprehensive understanding of how justice perceptions and leader-member exchanges function within this vital sector of the Lebanese economy.

In conclusion, this study offers valuable insights into the intricate dynamics of justice perceptions, leader-member exchange, and job satisfaction within Lebanese SMEs, considering the unique cultural dimension of the Middle East. While the findings provide context-specific knowledge, it is essential to acknowledge the broader implications. Lebanese SMEs operate within a cultural context deeply rooted in familial and community ties, where interpersonal relationships hold significant importance. The gender-invariant relationships uncovered in this study suggest that organizational culture and leadership

practices in Lebanese SMEs may be evolving towards greater inclusivity and equity, even within the framework of traditional cultural values. This not only has implications for Lebanon but also contributes to the ongoing discourse on gender equality and cultural sensitivity in the workplace globally. The significance of interpersonal relationships, justice perceptions, and leadership effectiveness highlighted in this research transcends cultural boundaries, reinforcing their universal relevance while acknowledging the specific cultural nuances that shape their expression. As the Lebanese SME sector continues to grow and adapt within the rich tapestry of Middle Eastern culture, these findings serve as a foundation for future studies and organizational practices that promote fairness, respect, and job satisfaction, bridging the gap between cultural traditions and modern workplace dynamics.

### **4.3 Limitation**

While the present study provides valuable insights into the intricate relationships between procedural justice, interactional justice, leader-member exchange, and job satisfaction within Lebanese Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), it is crucial to acknowledge and address several notable limitations.

First, the focus on Lebanese SMEs restricts the generalizability of the findings to larger enterprises or those in different cultural and economic contexts, potentially missing broader insights. Second, potential methodological constraints, such as biases from self-report questionnaires or the lack of longitudinal analysis, may hinder the accuracy of the findings and limit the ability to draw causal relationships. Indeed, longitudinal analyses can help capture the dynamic nature of organizational dynamics and establish stronger causal relationships between variables over time. Moreover, instead of solely relying on self-report questionnaires, researchers could incorporate mixed-method approaches, including qualitative interviews or observational studies, to provide a more comprehensive view of the phenomena under investigation. Third, the exclusive concentration on gender as a moderating variable may overlook other vital aspects of diversity, such as age, education, or ethnicity, possibly leaving unexplored nuances in perceptions of justice and satisfaction. Lastly, the specific economic and political context of Lebanon, with its unique challenges, may influence the study's results in ways that were not controlled for, adding another layer of complexity that might affect the interpretation of the findings. It is imperative for

researchers to undertake a thorough contextual analysis that goes beyond the immediate variables under study and encompasses a broader examination of macro-level factors, including economic instability and the ever-evolving political climate.

These limitations underscore the need for careful consideration in applying the study's conclusions and suggest avenues for further research to deepen the understanding of these important organizational dynamics.

#### **4.4 Further Research**

The present study's exploration of relationships between procedural justice, interactional justice, leader-member exchange, and job satisfaction in the context of Lebanese SMEs provides a vital starting point, yet also reveals four critical areas for further research. First, the study invites an examination of Lebanon's unique contextual factors. Considering the distinctive socio-economic challenges, such as political instability, economic pressures, and cultural norms in Lebanon, future investigations could explore how these variables might influence organizational dynamics, offering tailored insights for Lebanese SMEs. Second, a comparative analysis across different enterprise sizes and sectors within Lebanon could enhance the generalizability of the findings. By extending the research to include larger corporations or various sectors, scholars could discern whether the observed patterns are specific to SMEs or applicable more broadly across different organizational structures, enhancing our understanding of these complex dynamics. Third, the current study's emphasis on gender as a moderating factor suggests that other demographic and psychological variables, such as age, education, leadership styles, or personality traits, might also play significant roles. Future research should delve into these additional moderating and mediating factors, providing a more nuanced view of how these dynamics unfold within Lebanese SMEs. The inclusion of related constructs, such as organizational commitment or ethical leadership, could further enrich the theoretical framework. Finally, with the growing importance of technology and remote working, especially in a digitally transforming economy like Lebanon's, understanding how technology-mediated communication and collaboration tools affect leader-member exchange and job satisfaction would be a timely and pertinent avenue for investigation. The trend towards remote working might have

distinctive impacts on Lebanese SMEs and exploring this realm could provide vital insights into modern organizational practices. These four avenues for future research could not only deepen our understanding of the constructs and their interrelationships within Lebanese SMEs but also contribute valuable lessons that resonate in broader organizational studies. By focusing on these key areas, subsequent studies can build on the current findings, offering contextually specific insights that have the potential to inform both theory and practice in the complex and evolving landscape of Lebanese business environments.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **CONCLUSION**

#### **5.1 Contributions**

This study at hand has navigated complex territory by examining the role and impact of gender on leader-member exchange (LMX) quality approach in the specific context of Lebanese Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) during a time of profound crisis. The research question posed was intricate, aiming to understand how gender, particularly female leadership, influences perceived performance appraisal fairness and employee job satisfaction in a country facing one of the world's most severe crises.

Through meticulous examination and analysis, the study found that the influence of gender on leadership attitudes was a multifaceted and profound construct. Despite the existing literature suggesting differences in leadership capabilities based on gender, the study revealed that the relationships between procedural justice, interactional justice, leader-member exchange, and job satisfaction were gender-invariant in the Lebanese context. This result does not diminish the complexity and uniqueness of female leadership within Lebanese SMEs, particularly during the crisis. By focusing on leadership practices and challenges faced among female Lebanese leaders reaching leadership positions, the study did bring new ideas and different perspectives into the Leadership literature. It recognized that leadership behaviors, fairness perceptions, and job satisfaction might be influenced by other contextual and cultural variables within the Lebanese setting.

The gender perspective in this research has added depth to understanding leadership, not by uncovering differences based on gender but by exploring the shared human experience within the Lebanese crisis context. The non-differentiation in the gender analysis suggests that, perhaps, the common challenges and experiences of the crisis might have fostered a more unified approach to leadership and organizational behavior, irrespective of gender.

This conclusion is a significant contribution itself, extending our understanding of gender and leadership in crisis situations. It challenges assumptions about gender roles and offers a nuanced view that considers the specific socio-economic and cultural environment in Lebanon. It also calls for further research to explore the complexities of female leadership

practices and how they may uniquely shape perceptions of fairness and job satisfaction, particularly in contexts marked by significant challenges and change.

The study's contributions lie not only in its empirical findings but also in the methodological approach and the rich contextual understanding it provides. By investigating the moderate relationship between female leadership practices and fairness perceptions on one side and employee job satisfaction on the other, it has opened new avenues for exploration and discussion within the field of leadership, especially within the context of Lebanese women in leadership positions during times of crisis.

## **5.2 Major Findings**

The major findings of this study provide a multifaceted view of leadership and organizational behavior within Lebanese SMEs, especially during a time of profound crisis. Contrary to expectations, the research did not find a significant positive effect of procedural justice on leader-member exchange (LMX), diverging from existing literature that often associates fair procedures with enhanced trust between leaders and subordinates. Instead, the study highlighted the robust influence of interactional justice on LMX, affirming that respectful and fair treatment fosters stronger leader-member ties. This connection further manifested in a positive relationship between LMX and job satisfaction, emphasizing the role of quality leadership in employee contentment. Interestingly, while procedural justice directly impacted job satisfaction, the mediation through LMX was not significant, hinting at a more complex interplay that may need further examination. Support was found for the direct and indirect influence of interactional justice on job satisfaction through LMX, echoing scholarly opinions on the importance of fair interpersonal conduct. Perhaps most intriguingly, the research found no moderating role of gender across these relationships, revealing them as gender-invariant. This aspect may reflect cultural and contextual dynamics within Lebanese SMEs, and it presents a unique contribution to the field. Moreover, the study's focus on female leadership practices and the challenges faced by women in leadership positions during the crisis added depth to the investigation, although specific gendered outcomes were nuanced. Overall, the findings offer a rich and complex understanding of leadership, fairness, and satisfaction within a specific and challenging



context, paving the way for further exploration and analysis in the field of organizational behavior and leadership.

### **5.3 Theoretical Implications**

The theoretical implications of your study are highly relevant to the field and provide new insights using Social Exchange Theory (SET) to support your hypotheses, offering a detailed and context-specific examination of procedural justice, interactional justice, leader-member exchange (LMX), and job satisfaction, with gender's non-moderating role within Lebanese SMEs. In contrast to the work of Blau (1964), this study has shown that procedural justice alone may not necessarily lead to enhanced trust and cooperation between leaders and subordinates. This highlights a more intricate picture of reciprocity within social exchange relationships, particularly in the leader-member context. The lack of a positive impact of procedural justice on LMX suggests that reciprocity within social exchanges may be more nuanced and complex than previously theorized. This study reinforces the importance of interactional justice in shaping LMX, as highlighted by previous authors like Scandura & Graen (1984). The theoretical implication here is that not only procedural adherence but also the quality of interpersonal treatment is pivotal in the leader-member relationship. This could guide a deeper exploration within SET of the specific mechanisms through which fair and respectful interaction contributes to more robust social exchange relationships.

The study's findings concerning the direct influence of procedural justice on job satisfaction and the non-significant indirect effect through LMX add complexity to the understanding of social exchanges within the workplace. This is in line with previous research (Greenberg, 1993) but also extends SET by emphasizing that the dynamics between procedural justice, interactional justice, LMX, and job satisfaction can operate both directly and indirectly. This study provides an essential contribution as well by demonstrating that the relationships between procedural justice, interactional justice, LMX, and job satisfaction are gender-invariant. Contrary to some observations of gender differences in organizational settings (Eagly & Johnson, 1990), these findings may contribute to a shift in how gender dynamics are understood within the framework of SET, reflecting universal relevance.

The unique and severe crisis context in Lebanon, characterized as one of the worst crises the world has ever seen, adds layers of complexity to social exchange relationships. The findings in this study, under the umbrella of SET, may lead to an enriched understanding of how external pressures and crisis dynamics influence social exchanges within organizations.

Building upon scholars like Graen and Uhl-Bien (1995), the study's focus on LMX in the context of SET offers a unified theoretical perspective on how leader-member relationships are shaped by justice perceptions. This integration could stimulate further theoretical development at the intersection of these two prominent organizational theories. In addition, this study's focus on female leadership practices and gender's impact on perceived performance appraisal fairness and job satisfaction opens new dimensions in the gender literature within SET. These insights can inform a more comprehensive understanding of how gender capabilities of interactions and motivation differ in times of crisis.

This study contributes also to the nuanced understanding of gender in leadership, particularly underlining the effectiveness of women's leadership. While the gender analysis showed uniformity across leader-member exchanges, it should not eclipse the unique approaches women leaders bring, especially in crisis management within SMEs. The distinct communication and decision-making styles of female leaders may significantly shape organizational dynamics and merit further examination within Social Exchange Theory."

In fine, the theoretical implications of your study based on Social Exchange Theory are extensive and multifaceted. They not only align with previous research but also extend, challenge, and deepen our understanding of reciprocity, interactional dynamics, gender roles, crisis impacts, and fairness perceptions. The integration with leader-member exchange theory and the specific contextual insights from Lebanese SMEs add significant depth to the theoretical landscape. This study, therefore, stands as a substantial contribution to both SET and organizational behavior literature, fostering a more sophisticated and nuanced understanding of social exchanges within contemporary workplaces.

## 5.4 Managerial Implications

The managerial implications of this study conducted in the context of Lebanese SMEs offer profound insights into the complex interactions between procedural justice, interactional justice, leader-member exchange, and job satisfaction. Firstly, the study's findings provide an emphasis on interactional justice, which underscores the need for managers to engage in open, fair communication, fostering trust and positive relationships within their teams. This approach must be nuanced, reflecting individual preferences, organizational culture, and specific contextual factors, going beyond mere adherence to formal rules and procedures. Secondly, the unexpected lack of a direct positive impact of procedural justice on leader-member exchange encourages a more personalized leadership style that recognizes the complexity of trust-building within organizational settings. Thirdly, the gender-invariant findings call for a universal, gender-neutral approach in management, treating all employees equally and fairly, thereby promoting an inclusive and diverse organizational culture. In the context of a severe crisis in Lebanon, the study also offers insights into crisis management, emphasizing the importance of implementing robust strategies that focus on procedural and interactional justice to maintain morale and resilience. Moreover, the positive impact of leader-member exchange on job satisfaction highlights the necessity for managers to invest in strong, reciprocal relationships with team members, potentially through training, feedback, and recognition. The specific focus on the gender perspective and female leadership practices in the study provides a direction for integrating women into leadership roles through mentorship, development opportunities, and targeted support, recognizing their unique contributions to organizational success. Finally, the tailored approach to the unique context of Lebanese SMEs requires managers to align strategies with local cultural, economic, and political realities, adopting flexible and responsive approaches. Finally, the findings necessitate a strategic focus on enhancing women's leadership capabilities. Organizations should foster environments that recognize and support the unique attributes female leaders contribute, especially in challenging times. Developing women's leadership skills and creating platforms for them to exercise their strengths can lead to more robust and equitable practices in procedural and interactional justice, thereby enriching job satisfaction and overall organizational resilience. Overall, these managerial implications provide a roadmap for enhancing leadership effectiveness, fostering fairness, navigating crises, promoting gender inclusivity, and boosting employee satisfaction. By translating these

insights into actionable strategies, managers can cultivate more responsive, resilient, and successful organizations that reflect the multifaceted nature of contemporary workplace dynamics.

In response to Lebanon's crisis, empowering women leaders in SMEs becomes even more critical. Tailored leadership programs should address crisis management and resilience, providing women with tools to navigate economic challenges. Networking events could focus on crisis innovation, sharing strategies that have proven successful in Lebanon's volatile environment. Flexible work policies, now a necessity, should be refined to ensure business continuity. Recognizing women who lead effectively through crisis can serve as powerful motivation. Gender equity policies and cultural sensitivity training must adapt to address the heightened challenges women face, promoting an inclusive, supportive work culture resilient to crisis conditions.

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## APPENDIX

### Survey

#### Beyond Stereotypes

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##### Start of Block: Company Details

##### Q1 Company Sector

- Agriculture (1)
  - Construction (2)
  - Manufacturing (3)
  - Service: Banking (4)
  - Service: Education (5)
  - Service: Healthcare (6)
  - Service: Retail (7)
  - Service: Hospitality and Tourism (8)
- 

##### Q2 Estimation of the Company Number of Employees

- 0-50 (1)
- 51-100 (2)
- 101-150 (3)
- 150 and more (4)

##### End of Block: Company Details

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##### Start of Block: Demographic

Q3 What is your gender?

- Male (1)
  - Female (2)
  - Non-binary (3)
  - Prefer not to say (4)
  - Other: (5) \_\_\_\_\_
- 

Q4 Service Length

- Less than 3 years (1)
  - 3 to 6 years (2)
  - 6 to 10 years (3)
  - More than 10 years (4)
- 

Q5 Position in Organization

- Senior Manager (1)
- Middle Manager (2)
- First Level Manager (3)
- Entry Level (4)

End of Block: Demographic

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Start of Block: LMX

Q6 LMX

	Rarely (1)	Occasionally (2)	Sometimes (3)	Fairly Often (4)	Very Often (5)
Do you know where you stand with your manager? (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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Q7 LMX

	Not a bit (1)	A little (2)	A fair amount (6)	Quite a bit (7)	A great deal (3)
How well does your manager understand your job problems and needs? (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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Q8 LMX

	Not at all (6)	A little (11)	Moderately (12)	Mostly (13)	Fully (14)
How well does your manager recognize your potential? (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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Q9 LMX

	None (1)	Small (6)	Moderate (7)	High (8)	Very High (9)
What are the chances that your manager would use her power to help you solve problems in your work? (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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Q10 LMX

	None (1)	Small (2)	Moderate (3)	High (4)	Very High (5)
What are the chances that your manager would bail (help) you out at her expense when you really need it? (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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Q11 LMX



	Strongly disagree (7)	Somewhat disagree (8)	Neither agree nor disagree (9)	Somewhat agree (10)	Strongly agree (11)
My manager has enough confidence in me that she would defend and justify my decisions if I was not present to do so (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q12 LMX

	Extremely Ineffective (1)	Worse than Average (2)	Average (3)	Better than Average (4)	Extremely Effective (5)
How would you characterize your working relationship with your manager? (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

End of Block: LMX

Start of Block: Procedural Justice

Q13 Procedural Fairness

	Strongly disagree (11)	Somewhat disagree (12)	Neither agree nor disagree (13)	Somewhat agree (14)	Strongly agree (15)
I am able to express my views and feelings during the performance appraisal process (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q14 Procedural Fairness

	Strongly disagree (11)	Somewhat disagree (12)	Neither agree nor disagree (13)	Somewhat agree (14)	Strongly agree (15)
I have influence over the outcome arrived at by those performance appraisal process (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q15 Procedural Fairness

	Strongly disagree (12)	Somewhat disagree (13)	Neither agree nor disagree (14)	Somewhat agree (15)	Strongly agree (16)
The performance appraisal process was applied consistently (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q16 Procedural Fairness

	Strongly disagree (34)	Somewhat disagree (35)	Neither agree nor disagree (36)	Somewhat agree (37)	Strongly agree (38)
The performance appraisal process were transparent and have been free of bias (9)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q17 Procedural Fairness

	Strongly disagree (16)	Somewhat disagree (17)	Neither agree nor disagree (18)	Somewhat agree (19)	Strongly agree (20)
The performance appraisal process was based on accurate information (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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Q18 Procedural Fairness

	Strongly disagree (16)	Somewhat disagree (17)	Neither agree nor disagree (18)	Somewhat agree (19)	Strongly agree (20)
I was able to appeal the outcome arrived at by those performance appraisal process (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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Q19 Procedural Fairness

	Strongly disagree (21)	Somewhat disagree (22)	Neither agree nor disagree (23)	Somewhat agree (24)	Strongly agree (25)
The performance appraisal process upheld ethical and moral standards (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

End of Block: Procedural Justice

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Start of Block: Interactional and Informational Justice

Q20 Interactional Fairness

	Strongly disagree (16)	Somewhat disagree (17)	Neither agree nor disagree (18)	Somewhat agree (19)	Strongly agree (20)
My supervisor treated me in a polite manner, with dignity and respect during performance appraisal review(s) (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Page Break

Q21 Interactional Fairness

	Strongly disagree (16)	Somewhat disagree (17)	Neither agree nor disagree (18)	Somewhat agree (19)	Strongly agree (20)
My supervisor refrained herself from using improper remarks and comments during performance appraisal review(s) (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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Q22 Interactional Fairness

	Strongly disagree (16)	Somewhat disagree (17)	Neither agree nor disagree (18)	Somewhat agree (19)	Strongly agree (20)
My supervisor actively listens and takes into consideration my concerns and comments during performance appraisal review(s) (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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Q23 Informational Fairness

	Strongly disagree (16)	Somewhat disagree (17)	Neither agree nor disagree (18)	Somewhat agree (19)	Strongly agree (20)
My supervisor provides clear and accurate information during performance appraisal review(s) (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q24 Informational Fairness

	Strongly disagree (16)	Somewhat disagree (17)	Neither agree nor disagree (18)	Somewhat agree (19)	Strongly agree (20)
My supervisor explains the procedures thoroughly during performance appraisal review(s) (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q25 Informational Fairness

	Strongly disagree (16)	Somewhat disagree (17)	Neither agree nor disagree (18)	Somewhat agree (19)	Strongly agree (20)
My supervisor was candid (outspoken) in her communication with me during performance appraisal review(s) (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q26 Informational Fairness

	Strongly disagree (16)	Somewhat disagree (17)	Neither agree nor disagree (18)	Somewhat agree (19)	Strongly agree (20)
My supervisor communicated details in a timely manner during performance appraisal review(s) (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q27 Informational Fairness



	Strongly disagree (16)	Somewhat disagree (17)	Neither agree nor disagree (18)	Somewhat agree (19)	Strongly agree (20)
My supervisor provided information and feedback that is relevant and applicable to my needs during performance appraisal review(s) (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

End of Block: Interactional and Informational Justice

Start of Block: Intrinsic and Extrinsic Job Satisfaction

Q28 Intrinsic and Extrinsic Job Satisfaction

	Extremely dissatisfied (16)	Somewhat dissatisfied (17)	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied (18)	Somewhat satisfied (19)	Extremely satisfied (20)
How satisfied are you with the level of support you receive from your manager? (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q29 Intrinsic and Extrinsic Job Satisfaction

	Strongly disagree (21)	Somewhat disagree (22)	Neither agree nor disagree (23)	Somewhat agree (24)	Strongly agree (25)
To what extent do you feel that your manager values and recognizes your contributions to the team? (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q30 Intrinsic and Extrinsic Job Satisfaction

	Extremely dissatisfied (16)	Somewhat dissatisfied (17)	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied (18)	Somewhat satisfied (19)	Extremely satisfied (20)
How satisfied are you with the level of communication and feedback you receive from your manager? (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q31 Intrinsic and Extrinsic Job Satisfaction

	Extremely dissatisfied (16)	Somewhat dissatisfied (17)	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied (18)	Somewhat satisfied (19)	Extremely satisfied (20)
How satisfied are you with the level of autonomy and decision- making authority you have in your role? (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q32 Intrinsic and Extrinsic Job Satisfaction

	Extremely dissatisfied (16)	Somewhat dissatisfied (17)	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied (18)	Somewhat satisfied (19)	Extremely satisfied (20)
How satisfied are you with the opportunity for growth and development in your role? (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

End of Block: Intrinsic and Extrinsic Job Satisfaction

Start of Block: Job Satisfaction

Q33 Job Satisfaction

	Far too little (1)	Slightly too little (2)	Neither too much nor too little (3)	Slightly too much (4)	Far too much (5)
Overall, how satisfied are you with your current job? (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q34 Job Satisfaction

	Never (1)	Sometimes (2)	About half the time (3)	Most of the time (4)	Always (5)
To what extent does your job provide you with a sense of accomplishment and purpose? (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q35 Job Satisfaction

	Never (1)	Sometimes (2)	About half the time (3)	Most of the time (4)	Always (5)
How satisfied are you with the support and resources provided by your organization to perform your job effectively? (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q36 Job Satisfaction

	Extremely unlikely (1)	Somewhat unlikely (2)	Neither likely nor unlikely (3)	Somewhat likely (4)	Extremely likely (5)
How likely are you to recommend your organization as a great place to work to a friend or colleague? (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

End of Block: Job Satisfaction

Start of Block: Fairness Perception

Q37 Fairness Perception

	Strongly disagree (16)	Somewhat disagree (17)	Neither agree nor disagree (18)	Somewhat agree (19)	Strongly agree (20)
To what extent do you feel that performance appraisal process is fair and transparent? (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q38 Fairness Perception

	Strongly disagree (21)	Somewhat disagree (22)	Neither agree nor disagree (23)	Somewhat agree (24)	Strongly agree (25)
To what extent do you feel that the comments, feedback and guidance provided by my manager at the review meeting were fair? (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q39 Fairness Perception

	Extremely dissatisfied (16)	Somewhat dissatisfied (17)	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied (18)	Somewhat satisfied (19)	Extremely satisfied (20)
How satisfied are you with the opportunities for input and participation in the performance appraisal process? (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q40 Fairness Perception

	Extremely dissatisfied (16)	Somewhat dissatisfied (17)	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied (18)	Somewhat satisfied (19)	Extremely satisfied (20)
How satisfied are you with the level of consistency and objectivity in the performance appraisal process between your team members and other departments? (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

End of Block: Fairness Perception

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