

Integration Of Leader's Other-Focused Humor Styles: Cultivation of Subordinates' Extra-Role Behavior

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Abstract

This study explored the effective use of both humor styles (negative and positive) to interact by measuring the extra-role behavior of followers. First and foremost, this study focus to improve the understanding of humor as a multifaceted entity with both positive and negative features. Drawing on the theory of leader-member exchange (LMX), this study integrates the leader's humor styles, which focus on others (affiliative and aggressive), and examines the impact on employees' extra-role behavior through the mediation of LMX. Analysis of data from 384 employees of the hotel industry came out with the result that integration of humor styles that focus on others (affiliative and aggressive) had a significant and indirect influence on employees' change-oriented OCB through LMX. PLS-SEM was used for analysis by using Smart PLS Version 3.3.3. This study, therefore, recommends that change-oriented OCB of subordinates is likely to be achieved when there is an effective use of humor by leadership through quality relationships using power distance orientation. The findings are novel to highlight the role of humor in leadership in the hotel industry of Pakistan.

Keywords

Affiliative Humor, Aggressive Humor, LMX, Power Distance Orientation, Change-oriented OCB

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Introduction

Many studies have investigated the advantages of useful humor in many social contexts (Yam et al., 2018), like close partners (Haas & Stafford, 2005) and conflict partners (Dyck, K.T. and Holtzman, 2013), workers and managers (Martin et al., 2004; Masih et al., 2020), students and teacher (Wanzer et al., (2006), doctors and patients (Sliter et al., 2014), mentors and mentees (Robert, C. and Wilbanks, 2012). Effectively used humor plays an important role in the said relationships to produce positive consequences in behavior generation, whereas negative humor generates negative consequences.

Not all humorous communication reflects productive and beneficial uses of humor. It has long been acknowledged that humor may be utilized in harmful ways in interpersonal relationships (Raju, 2021). The Superiority model of humor developed by (Foot, 1986; Morreall, 1987) was founded on the idea that humor may be used to criticize others and feel inferior to make one's self feel superior. Moreover, according to the disposition model of humor, others will only enjoy the humor if they share the target's disposition (Zillman, D., and Cantor, 1996). Recently, Meyer, (2000) proposed a model that incorporates four elements of humor, reflecting humor utilizes that can bind communicators and humor utilizes that can isolate communicators. The model was designed after the differentiation among the positive and negative social elements of humor recommended by Martineau, (1972). Humor may be used to promote social relationships and elicit good responses, or it can be used as a social abrasive, causing friction and disagreement within a social group and eliciting negative emotions from others (Martineau, 1972). Negative applications of humor in communication can help impose standards by ridiculing those who do not comply or serve to distinguish oneself or one's group by criticizing another group with humor (Meyer, 2000). Most of the previous researches has seen humor in leadership as a positive element while studying the behavior of subordinates and ignored the negative form of humor. Although, there are many negative forms of humor, which involve teasing, ridicule, sarcasm, and other forms of disparagement (Yam et al., 2018). Martin et al. (2003) explored the different styles of humor by considering the positive and negative uses, which provides the opportunity for further exploration of positive and negative use of humor to measure the behavior of subordinates through the relationship between leader and subordinates (Raju, 2018).

The scales developed on humor styles by Martin et al, (2003) gives a thorough evaluation of the many types of humor styles. They identified four humor styles. Out of which two are self-directed (self-enhancing and self-defeating humor), and two focus on others (affiliative and aggressive humor). The affiliative humor style, defined by the ability to amuse and assist people via comedy, is the most similar to the earlier measures of sense of humor, which were primarily concerned with the positive applications of humor. The aggressive humor is described to taunt or degrade others, as well as the desire to elevate one's social standing (Raju, 2021). When it comes to interpersonal interactions, having a propensity to employ this kind of humor may be detrimental (Cann et al., 2009). The common thing with affiliative and aggressive humor is that these styles focus on others, although one is positive and the other is negative. Affiliative humor gives positive signals with the focus to amuse others to maintain a good relationship, whereas aggressive humor is negative with a focus to taunt or degrade others. This study integrates the two styles focusing on others, to measure the impact of leaders' humor on subordinates' change-oriented OCB.

The research model of this study shows the dyadic relationship, which is based on the theory of leader-member exchange (LMX) given by Graen & Uhl-Bien, (1995), explains leader-follower relationships (Raju, 2021). In-group relation is built on mutual trust and respect, while out-group relation is based on contractual responsibilities. Furthermore, In accordance with LMX theory, high-quality relationships are predicted to provide more favorable leader outcomes than low-quality relationships (Nahrgang et al., 2009). Basing on that, we are predicting the leader humor styles to measure the change-oriented OCB of subordinates through LMX. Finally, the theory predicts the role of cultural dimensions between relationships. Catering for the theory recommendation, this study's cultural dimension as a moderator is power distance orientation. The reason to choose power

distance orientation as a moderator is that Pakistani culture demonstrates high power distance orientation (Hofstede, 1983) and affects the connection among leaders and followers. This research study makes a substantial addition to the existing literature by providing a better understanding of the impact of humorous leaders on the extra-role behavior of subordinates, such as change-oriented OCB (Raju, 2021). At the first point, this study advances the literature on leader humor by predicting positive and negative humor styles focusing on others and further investigates the combined effect of affiliative humor and aggressive humor on employee extra-role behavior (change-oriented OCB). Secondly, LMX is used as an intervening variable between the relationship of humor styles and change-oriented OCB. That is, the humor style of the leader triggers the relationship quality and subsequently affects change-oriented OCB. Thirdly, this study investigated the extra-role behaviors (change-oriented OCB), which is an under-researched but significant area, as the consequences of leader humor. Prior researches primarily focused on the impact of leader humor on attitudes or in-role behavior (Pundt and Venz, 2017; Yam et al., 2018) of subordinates and mainly ignored the extra-role behavior (Cooper et al., 2018).

Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

Other-Focused Humor Styles in Leadership

According to Martin et al. (2003), humor is classified by the direction, it moves like self or others and its intention of usage which is positive or negative. A positive style of humor directed toward others is affiliative and self-directed is self-enhanced humor. The negative style of humor with a focus on others is aggressive and self-centered is self-defeating humor. This study investigates the two other-focused humor styles of a leader i-e- affiliative and aggressive humor and integrated both to see the effect of leader humor on LMX. Affiliative humor encompasses traits such as assertiveness, friendliness, self-esteem, and closeness. It considers the user's good intentions and usually generates favorable reactions. Mesmer-Magnus et al. (2018) conducted a study on supervisors' humor to see the effect on employees' attitudes. He found that A neighbor may be told negative humor creates negative effects and positive humor create positive effects. a humorous tale about her dog (e.g. the Chihuahua consumed three large pizzas). Aggressive humor is directed at others and includes caustic remarks and other comments that taunt, ridicule, criticize or put down another person. An example might be a coworker being referred to as "not playing with a full deck" by another coworker.

LMX and Humor in Leadership

Leader-member exchange is the professional connection between a leader and a follower. Strong relationships are characterized by high degrees of mutual trust, respect, and obligation (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). Several prior findings have indicated a positive connection between LMX and positive outcome factors such as organizational commitment, job satisfaction, or OCB (Dulebohn et al., 2012). This study proposes, that the leader's humor helps establish LMX connections and that the leader's humor style matters for many reasons (Raju, 2018). Humor is considered an essential prerequisite to establish and sustain social connections (Heintz and Ruch, 2018). To create good connections such as LMX, Cooper (2008) highlighted the role of leaders' humor in relational processes. And finally, Cooper (2002) has shown significant connections between the recurrence of positive humor of leaders and LMX. Taking these points together, we conceive LMX as a consequence of humor employed by the leader.

Hypothesis 1: Leader's humor (affiliative and aggressive) is positively associated with LMX

Humor in Leadership and Change-Oriented OCB

There's no clear agreement on what humor is. As defined by Romero, and Cruthirds, (2006),

organizational humor is any type of communication that evokes pleasant feelings in a person, group, or organization. Most people agree that humor isn't always utilized correctly (Williams & Emich, 2014) and that people may have different humor styles. Martin et al. (2003) identify four humor styles, two positive and two negatives. Affiliative and self-enhancing humor are examples of positive styles, while aggressive and self-defeating humor is examples of negative types. The affiliative kind promotes teamwork and belonging, while self-enhancing humor lowers stress and promotes optimism (Raju, 2018). These people can easily form connections, make jokes, and entertain others with their remarks and tales. They also have a great capacity to alleviate interpersonal tensions (Liu et al., 2019). This kind of humor never offends and always appears to improve relations. People who completely embrace self-enhancing humor are more likely to enjoy life and laugh at their faults. They have an optimistic outlook on life, which helps them handle stress and conquer personal and professional obstacles. The aggressive style is linked with sarcasm, mockery, and harsh humor. This kind of humor involves using humor to influence people without concern for the consequences (Martin et al., 2003). Self-defeating people are those that continually make others laugh at their expense. Self-deprecating humor is frequently used to gain acceptance or affection from others.

This research requires that the negative and positive types of a leader's humor, that focus on others, be integrated to evaluate the impact on subordinates' change-oriented OCB. A growing amount of research shows that leaders' attitudes and behaviors influence subordinates' attitudes and actions (Cooper et al., 2018). First, leaders assist subordinates to make meaning of workplace events by interacting with them (Han et al., 2018). Leaders use their actions to create agreement on key objectives and beliefs (Luria, 2008).

Hypothesis 2: Leader's humor (affiliative and aggressive) has a positive impact on subordinates' change-oriented OCB indirectly, through the mediation of LMX

Power Distance Orientation as a Moderator

We often examine leadership behavior and subordinates' extra-role activity in workgroups, we must take cultural variations into account. We believe that power distance orientation can assist to understand the link between leader humor and LMX since it explains the value system of individuals and power in organizations. Based on the leader-member exchange theory, this study proposes PDO as a moderator between the relationship of leader humor and LMX (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). Power distance, as one of Hofstede's (1980) four cultural value dimensions, has piqued the interest of several academics from a wide range of disciplines, advancing our knowledge of how cultural values change between cultures and nations. Kirkman et al. (2006) urged for further research to utilize PDO as a moderator at the individual level, which is defined as the degree to which people differ in their views of uneven power distribution within organizations, as evidenced in their conceptions of authority, leaders, status, and hierarchy. Power distance defined as "the extent to which a society accepts the fact that power in institutions and organizations is distributed unequally" (Hofstede, 1980), is a central social presumption that relates to subordinate associations with power and is part of leadership theory (Connerley & Pedersen, 2005). We argue that the link between leader humor and LMX is influenced by culturally conditioned power distance. Subordinates with low PDO experience better LMX as compared to having high PDO (Bochner and Hesketh, 1994). Thus, we predict:

Hypothesis 3: Power distance orientation moderates the relationship between Leader's humor (affiliative and aggressive) and LMX such that this relationship is stronger if Power Distance Orientation is low

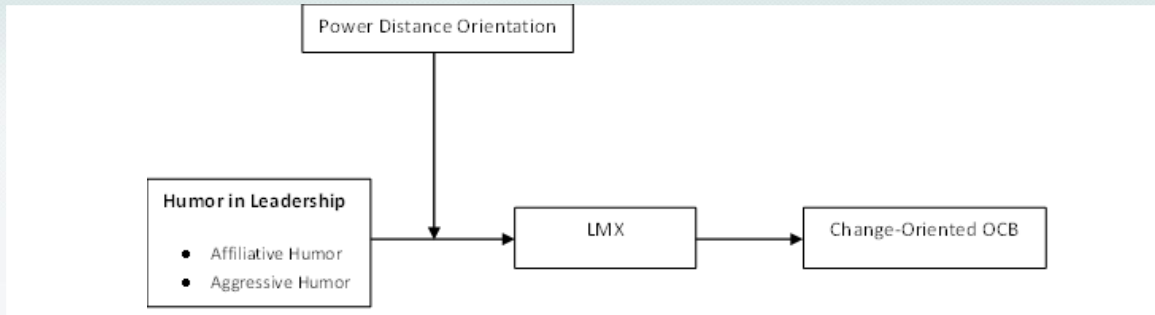


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Methodology

Sample and procedure

The time lag study was conducted with a 2-wave survey design to collect the data, and the gap between the two surveys was six weeks. The data was collected in two phases because such type of design considers testing mediation impacts (Little et al., 2007) and helps to minimize the effect of common method biases (Podsakoff et al., 2003). To gather data from the hotel industry of Pakistan, an online survey was performed. In the first phase (T1), respondents rated the humor in leader and power distance orientation, and in the second phase (T2), they rated the LMX and outcome variable (change-oriented OCB). According to the results of the study conducted by (Liden et al., 1993), LMX may be anticipated to alter within six weeks, therefore a six-week time lag was selected by this study.

The participants completed permission formats, which described the aim of the study and ensured total anonymity before participating in the surveys. All the replies were notified to researchers alone, no information at the individual level would be published and aggregate information alone would be shared. These measures enabled us to address the social convenience of responders and made them feel assured. In order to enhance the response rate, late responders and non-respondents were contacted as a follow-up. Participants were not provided any monetary reward or another inducement and participation were voluntary. The convenience sampling approach was employed since no variable required a certain sort of organization and working environment in the framework. In addition, a time lag research needs access at various periods to the responder. Organizations have been chosen to gather data two times based on personal connections. Assurance was made that each respondent must work with a supervisor.

In the first phase (T1), respondents were given 535 questionnaires, out of which 455 were returned. In the second phase (T2), questionnaires were distributed to 440 respondents, who participated in the first survey. We calculated a sample size of 384 finalized surveys based on sample size determination guidelines (Krejcie and Morgan, 1970). We sought a 95 percent confidence level. We distributed the questionnaire with two extent facts with a time lag of six weeks.

Measurement

This study used the scale developed by Martin et al. (2003) to measure aggressive humor and affiliative humor. The reliability and validity of scales have been proved by Vernon et. al (2008) and Martin et al. (2012). A sample item for the affiliative humor subscale is "My leader enjoys making people laugh". A sample item for the aggressive humor subscale is "If my leader does not like someone, he/she often uses humor or teasing to put them down". This study assessed the power distance orientation with eight items taken from Earley & Erez, (1997). The sample items were "In most situations, leaders should make decisions without consulting their subordinates" and "In work-

related matters, leaders have a right to expect obedience from their subordinates". Intervening variable LMX was measured by a seven-item scale developed by Graen and Uhl-Bien, (1995). A sample item was "How well does your leader recognize your potential?" Change-oriented OCB was measured by using the four-item scale developed by (Morrison & Phelps, 1999; Scott and Bruce, 1994). A sample item is "I often suggest work improvement ideas to others". Respondents recorded all their responses on a five-point Likert scale.

Data analysis

Podsakoff et al. (2003) recommended addressing the issue of common method variance when data is collected through the self-reporting method and especially when predictors and outcomes are assessed by the same individual. As recommended, this study implemented several different treatments to address this issue. First and foremost, this research utilized distinct cover tales for each measuring scale to create psychological isolation among participants. Second, respondents were reassured about their confidentiality, encouraging them to be as candid as possible in their responses. To evaluate the descriptive statistics and demographic profile, this study used the SPSS version 21.0, and to evaluate the measurement model, and structural model used the Smart PLS 3.3.3 software, which is included with the program. Both the models (measurement and structural) were evaluated and analyzed using the two-stage analytical methods for SEM that were suggested by the researchers (Hair et al., 2017), and bootstrapping method with a sample of 5000 was used. When it comes to estimating path coefficients in structural models, PLS is a well-established method that has been extensively utilized in several research papers. During the past decade, the PLS method has got immense value in the field of management and marketing, as it works in the situation of non-normality and for small and medium sample (Hair et al., 2017).

This research uses PLS, a component-based SEM technique, for many reasons. First, PLS, like other SEM techniques, can account for latent construct measurement errors while assessing the structural model's relevance. Second, PLS is appropriate for complex models including many constructs and sub-constructs (Hair et al., 2017). Third, PLS is more flexible in modeling second-order and formative components than another commonly used SEM method LISREL (linear independent structural relationships) (Chin et al., 2008). For second-order constructs, PLS allows assigning all indicators of first-order components (Chin & Gopal, 1995). A PLS model has two phases of interpretation. First, the measurement model is validated for dependability. PLS-based CFA examines multi-item concept measurement characteristics such as reliability, and validity. Second, the suggested structural model is tested and justified.

Results and Interpretation

Measurement model

For the assessment of the hierarchal component model, disjoint two stages were employed (Becker et al., 2012). The above Figure 2 illustrates that the affiliative and aggressive humors were exogenous constructs and change-oriented OCB as an endogenous construct. Leader-member exchange as an intervening construct between relationships. Additionally, PDO moderates the relationship between the LMX and Affiliative and aggressive humor.

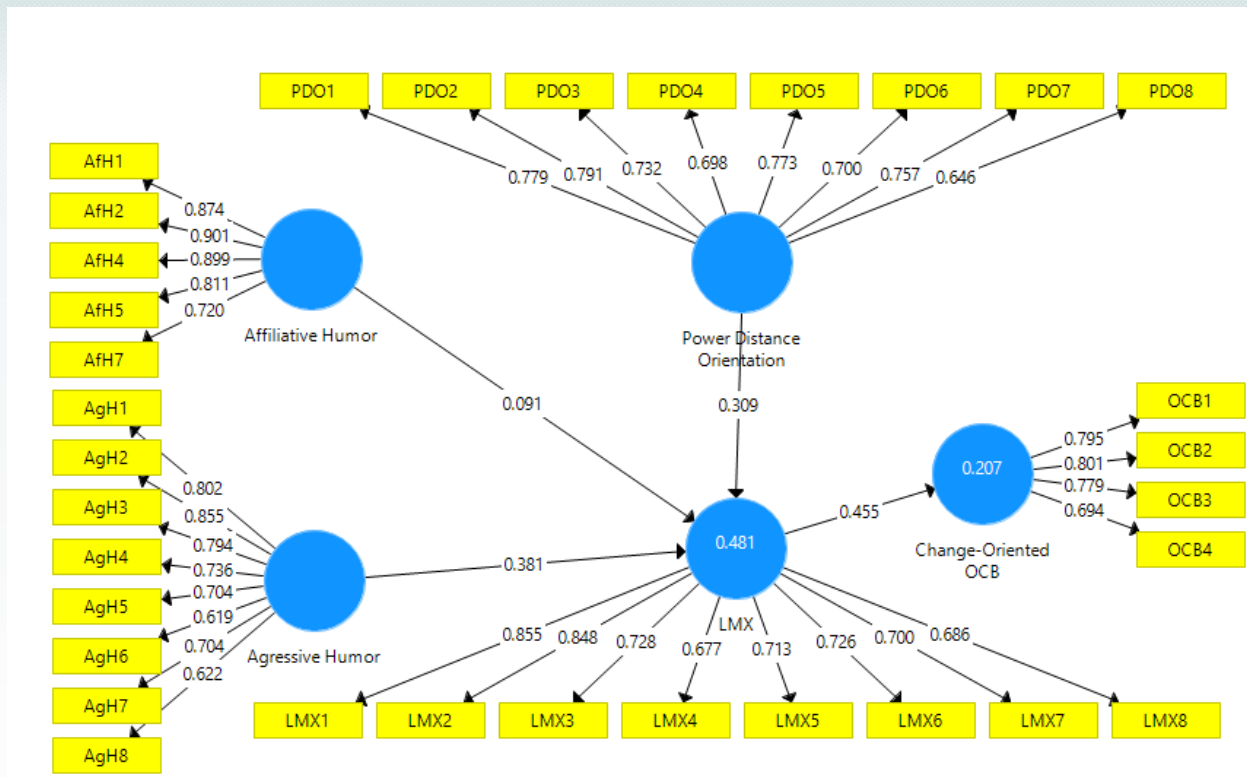


Figure 2: Measurement Model Assessment

In order to determine convergent validity, the measurement model was first evaluated. This was assessed through Cronbach's alpha, Composite Reliability (CR), and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) and rho values. Table 1 shows that Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability, and rho values. All values of Affiliative, aggressive humor, change-oriented OCB, LMX, and power distance orientation achieve the reliability and validity issue. The Cronbach's alpha, rho, and composite reliability exceeded the recommended threshold value of >0.70 (Hair et al., 2017). Moreover, the average variance extracted was also above the threshold of >0.50. Thus, we concluded that there were no reliability and convergent validity issue between the constructs.

Table 1: Reliability and Validity

	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	CR	AVE
Affiliative Humor	0.898	0.918	0.925	0.712
Aggressive Humor	0.875	0.888	0.902	0.538
Change-Oriented OCB	0.767	0.772	0.852	0.590
LMX	0.886	0.915	0.908	0.554
Power Distance Orientation	0.879	0.885	0.904	0.542

Note: CR=Composite Reliability, AVE=Average Variance Extracted

The next stage was to determine the discriminant validity of the measures, which refers to the degree to which they are not a reflection of other variables; this is shown by low correlations between the measure of interest and other concept measures. Table 2 shows the Fornell and Larcker criteria for

the assessment of discriminant validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). The diagonal bold values of Table 2 illustrate the square root of AVE. The diagonal values should be greater than the remaining horizontal and vertical available values. The remaining values were the correlation values between the constructs (Hair et al., 2012).

Table 2:
Discriminant Validity (Fornell and Larcker)

	Affiliative Humor	Aggressive Humor	Change-Oriented OCB	LMX	Power Distance Orientation
Affiliative Humor	0.844				
Aggressive Humor	0.682	0.734			
Change-Oriented OCB	0.433	0.518	0.768		
LMX	0.563	0.635	0.455	0.745	
Power Distance Orientation	0.684	0.617	0.662	0.607	0.736

Researchers found the sensitivity issue in Fornell and Larcker criteria. So, a new method was introduced which has no limitation and considers the latest method for the assessment of discriminant validity. Table 3 shows the Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio for the assessment of discriminant validity (Henseler et al., 2015). All values of HTMT should be <0.85 (Henseler et al., 2015). Based on the Fornell and Larcker and HTMT we stated that there was no discriminant validity issue between the constructs.

Table 3:
Discriminant Validity (Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio)

	Affiliative Humor	Aggressive Humor	Change-Oriented OCB	LMX	Power Distance Orientation
Affiliative Humor					
Aggressive Humor	0.751				
Change-Oriented OCB	0.508	0.628			
LMX	0.580	0.682	0.515		
Power Distance Orientation	0.760	0.687	0.795	0.633	

Table 4 shows that the multicollinearity between the exogenous and endogenous construct. For the assessment of multicollinearity, the variance inflation factor was used as suggested by Hair et al. (2017). There were two thresholds for the assessment of VIF <3 and <5. This study used a conservative approach <3 and found there were no multicollinearity issues between the constructs.

Table 4:
Variance Inflation Factor

	Affiliative Humor	Aggressive Humor	Change-Oriented OCB	LMX	Power Orientation	Distance
Affiliative Humor					2.366	
Aggressive Humor					2.030	
Change-Oriented OCB						
LMX			1.000			
Power Distance Orientation					2.042	

Structural Model

The second stage of the disjoint two-stage approach is to use the latent variable score as input for the second-order constructs (Becker et al., 2012). Figure 3 shows that humor in leadership has two determinants affiliative and aggressive humor. Moderating construct also generates by multiplying the moderator and independent construct.

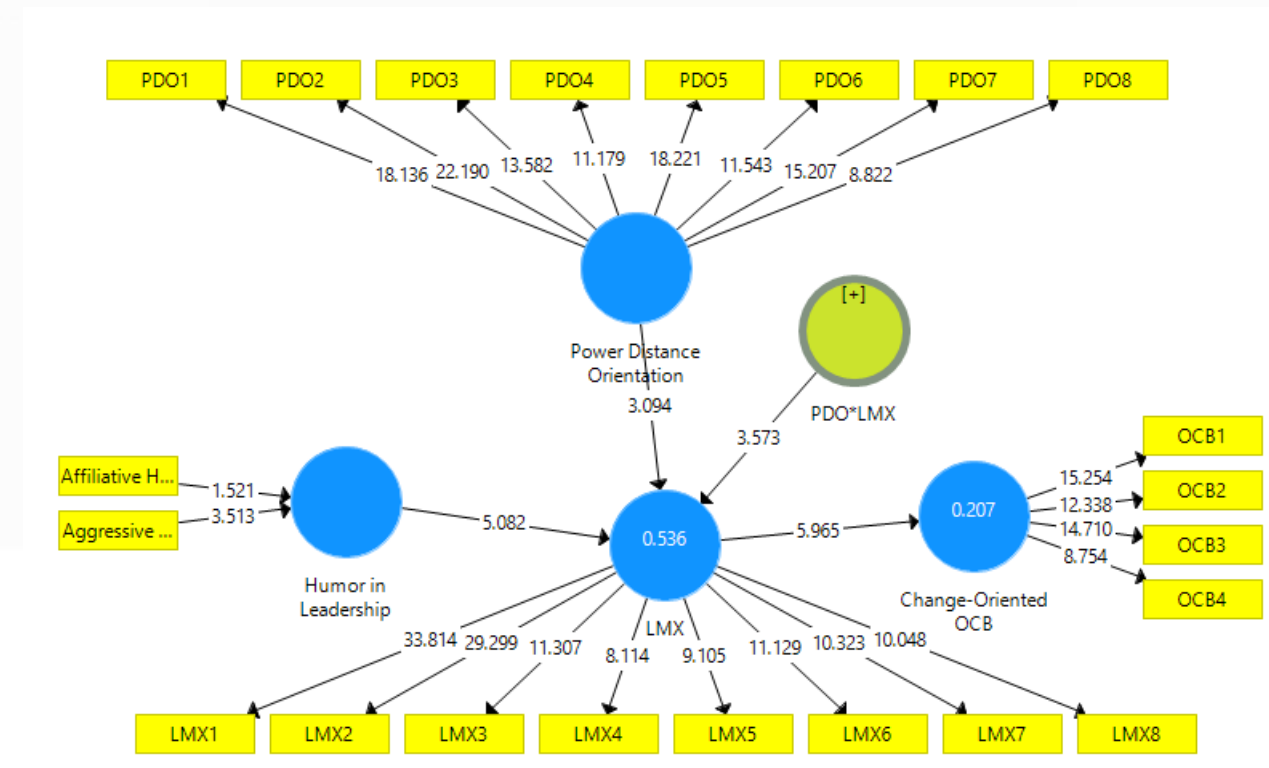


Figure 3: Structural Model Assessment

Table 5 shows that the hypothesis testing. The study found that humor in leadership has a positive and significant effect on the LMX. Further, LMX also influenced change orient OCB. Power distance orientation plays moderating role significantly on LMX. Moreover, power distance orientation plays a significant effect in the LMX.

Table 5:
Hypothesis Testing

	Path	Std. Dev.	t-value	p-values
Humor in Leadership -> LMX	0.496	0.098	5.082	0.000
LMX -> Change-Oriented OCB	0.455	0.076	5.965	0.000
PDO*LMX -> LMX	0.246	0.069	3.573	0.000
Power Distance Orientation -> LMX	0.319	0.103	3.094	0.002

Table 6 shows that the specific indirect effect. Results show that humor in leadership has a significant effect on the change-orientated OCB in the presence of LMX. Further study shows the moderating variable and power distance also found a significant effect on the change-oriented OCB via LMX.

Table 6:
Specific indirect effect

	Path	Std. Dev.	t-value	p-values
Power Distance Orientation -> LMX -> Change-Oriented OCB	0.145	0.063	2.301	0.021
PDO*LMX -> LMX -> Change-Oriented OCB	0.112	0.034	3.306	0.001
Humor in Leadership -> LMX -> Change-Oriented OCB	0.226	0.055	4.084	0.000

Discussion & Conclusion

The present research examined how employees feel about their work when their boss utilizes humor to communicate. The results show that supervisor humor has a substantial impact on subordinates' behaviors through mutual relationships. By integrating the two other-focused humor styles of leadership (affiliative and aggressive), this study found that humor in leadership positively impacts the change-oriented OCB of subordinates through LMX. Subordinates having a high quality of relationship with their leader, like their humor, and if the power distance orientation is low, then the quality of the relationship will be better. The findings of this study are consistent and agree with the previous studies, where researchers highlighted the benefits of humor in leadership (Martin et al., 2003) and reduction of negative effects (Chen & Martin, 2007). This study makes a significant contribution to leadership humor literature and LMX by investigating the effect of leader humor in subordinates' behavior through LMX.

Limitations and Future Directions

Although the current results improve our understanding of humor styles, it is apparent that further study is needed. This research collected data only from subordinates to measure the humor in leadership, future research may interview both subordinates and supervisors to see how frequently they use humor. The data was collected from the hotel industry only, so the generalizability of the findings is limited. As one example, future studies must extend beyond hotel industry samples to incorporate more varied populations, such as community samples to increase the generalizability. Further, this study integrated the other-focused humor styles (affiliative and aggressive), one is positive and the other is negative. Future studies may integrate some other styles like self-directed humor styles (i-e self-enhancing and self-defeating humor) or may integrate the positive humor styles or negative only. This study used the quantitative approach, future research should use the qualitative approach to understand the mechanism of humor more closely.

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