

# How Are They Gaining such Positions? An Examination of Antecedents of Informal Leadership at Organizations

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## Abstract

Drawing upon leadership emergence and conservation of resource theories, we proposed that relationship with formal leaders, voice behaviors of employees, and impression management tactics of employees influence the acquisition of informal leadership position in their social circles at organizations. We also found that education of focal employee also plays vital role in determining emergence of informal leadership in social circles. Research implications and future research directions also discussed.

**Keywords:** LMX, empowering leadership, voice behavior, impression management, political skills

## 1. Introduction

Contemporary organizations are giving more autonomy and decision making responsibilities to their teams (Guzzo & Dickson, 1996) because individuals have proved to be more productive in teams (Jones, 1983; Weber & Hertel, 2007). Sometimes Individuals use this team structure for their own benefits and growth, they make choices in making social ties as right social ties are advantageous for both individuals and teams. Individuals who successfully build numerous social connections are in better position to gain access to valuable information, organizational resources, and assistance than others who fail to build such valuable ties. Due to these different dispositions in teams informal leaders are emerging in contemporary organizations. These emerging leaders have significant impact on team members work relations and efficiency of teams (Luft, 1970; Neubert, 1999). Some individuals gain informal central positions in their work units and these informal positions yields significant benefits. They enjoy benefits like influence in their work units, access to valuable information, beneficial performance ratings, and good financial rewards (e.g., Baldwin, Bedell, & Johnson, 1997; Ibarra & Andrews, 1993). But making choices for social ties and making these social ties beneficial is not always simple and easy because there is always someone else on the other end in every social tie. Then a question arises, how do individuals acquire these desirable informal positions at social networks? Theory and research explaining this phenomenon is very limited. Theorists of Social and advice Networks devoted more attention on consequences of informal advice network positions while ignoring the antecedents (Borgatti & Foster, 2003; Mehra, Kilduff, & Brass, 2001). Some researchers while studying antecedents of leadership emergence in teams found that team member interaction, task related support, and other's well being is strong predictor of leadership emergence in teams (Sorrentino and Field, 1986; Hamblin, 1958; Julian & Hollander, 1966). But none of the studies discussed individual level behavioral choices, political skills, and leader's relation for informal leadership emergence and coworkers' role in accepting or rejecting someone as an emerging informal leader in their team. So in this study we will try to fill this gap while building on previous research on informal leadership emergence, and drawing on theory and research on conservation of resource and informal leadership, we propose here that individual level behavioral choices, political behavior, and quality of relation with immediate supervisor can make focal employee more attractable or avoidable for his coworkers and influence his acquisition of informal central position in networks. Early researchers explained different factors of leadership emergence in teams. The most promising research in this area is three factors of (Mann, 1959); he offered three factors for leadership emergence in teams 1. Satisfying other's need, 2. Performing critical roles for team's successful functioning, and 3. Behavioral show for others which trigger socially defined expectations for leadership. We predict here that behavioral show for others is more important thing to be accepted as informal leader by coworkers as it triggers socially defined expectations for leadership.

## 2. Literature Review and Hypothesis

### 2.1. Manager relations and Informal leadership emergence

Interpersonal relationships are integral part of day to day operations at work, organizations are relying more on these relations for goal achievements and effectiveness (Katz & Kahn, 1978; Ferris et al., 2009). Good interpersonal relationships in teams can enhance inter-employee helping, knowledge sharing, and cooperation in teams. But good Interpersonal relationships with immediate boss can allow individuals to gain advantageous positions in networks which others lack. LMX theory explains this phenomenon as a unique and dyadic level relationship of individual team members with their immediate managers which is very helpful in obtaining desired organizational objectives (Dulebohn, Bommer, Liden, Brouer, & Ferris, 2012; Gerstner & Day, 1997). This unique relationship is developed between manager and individual employee based on trust, respect, and liking. But actually managers make different levels of interpersonal relationships with their subordinates, with

some individuals relationships are very strong and for others the relations cannot go beyond professional employment contract. LMX theory explains how individuals gain from quality LMX by having easy access to organizational resources and in response how their actions based on their relations can help organizations to achieve desired objectives (Bauer & Green, 1996; Masterson, Lewis, Goldman, & Taylor, 2000; Wayne, Shore, & Liden, 1997). People with quality LMX also enjoy benefits of prominence and high standings in social circles (Salk & Brannen, 2000; Sparrowe & Liden, 2005). Their work performance increases due to quick access to information at work (Mehra, Kilduff, & Brass, 2001; Sparrowe, Liden, Wayne, & Kraimer, 2001). This make quality LMX individual more approachable, he start enjoying influence and power on others in his team (Brass, 1984, 1985; Sparrowe & Liden, 2005). Quality LMX is needed for gaining central position, but more important is how that employee is related for achievement of organizational objectives with other teammates (Chiaburu & Harrison, 2008) and how other employee see that employee who successfully developed quality LMX . Some researchers found that quality LMX individual is considered teacher's pet and avoided by coworkers (Sias and Jablin, 1995). While other believes that quality LMX individual is more approachable (Kramer, 1995). Research on standing of individual among coworkers is still inconclusive. In this study we tried to check coworkers' reactions for individual emerging as an informal leader in their team. So we hypothesize here that individual with quality LMX will be more approachable by other coworkers.

**Hypothesis 1: LMX is positively related to Informal leadership emergence.**

Although quality LMX is important for informal leadership emergence, equally important is how much autonomy as an individual you are given by your leader in day to day operations. Importance of Leader behavior has been highlighted by many researchers for team performance (e.g., Druskat & Wheeler, 2003; Judge, Piccolo, & Ilies, 2004). Among these studied behaviors, some behaviors of leaders have been given more attention than others and empowering leadership is one of these behaviors. This is a unique behavior of the leader which provides autonomy to employees (Bennis & Townsend, 1995). Empowering leadership is a behavior of leader to share his powers with subordinates, which ultimately increase potency, confidence, and autonomy in teams. Leaders show their behaviors through their actions of sharing power, by enhancing employee responsibilities, and giving autonomy to employees (Kirkman & Rosen, 1997; Strauss, 1964). Empowerment was initially considered an aspect of relationship and power sharing by leaders as reviewed by scholars (e.g. Burke, 1986; Burpitt & Bigoness, 1997). Roots of the empowering leadership include Initial work on showing concern for needs of subordinates (Fleishman, 1953), supportive and participative leadership (Bowers et al., 1966; Locke & Schweiger, 1979; Vroom & Yetton, 1973), and diversified behaviors of leaders in situational leadership (Hersey & Blanchard, 1969). Empowering leadership increases efficacy, potency, autonomy, ownership, and responsibilities of employees and they may get a fair way to grow in teams. Accordingly we conceptualize here that employee who observes more autonomy from his supervisor may demonstrate confidence in his decisions and day to day operations at work. This makes him more approachable for other coworkers and he may get good changes to emerge an informal leader in a team.

**Hypothesis 2: Empowering Leadership behavior is positively related to informal leadership emergence.**

**2.2. Impression management and Informal leadership emergence**

Basic topic in organizational and psychological studies is motivation as it clarifies the basic driving factor lying behind actions of individuals (Latham & Pinder, 2005). Understanding of motivation is important for prediction of individual and organizational behavior. People may demonstrate different driving forces behind their actions managing good impression may be one of these driving forces. People hold desire to get spot light and be praised in public as it construct their positive image in front of others (Baumeister, 1982). These types of behavioral choices are called impression management behavior of individuals. Managing impression in front of others is not an easy thing because individuals are very smart and can easily judge underlying motives of individuals demonstrating some specific behavior (Ajzen, 1985, 1991). Managing impression is a kind of political behavior of individuals which is used to change perception of others and make them think in a specific way for some individual (Schlenker, 1980). People's self serving motives are initiated by desires of gaining positive states (Leary and Kowalski, 1990). People may have different motives behind their impression management it can be for impressing immediate boss, for getting a closer tie, better evaluation, or desirable position (e.g. Allen and Rush, 1998). It can be to impress coworkers for acceptability, creating positive image, building damaged image, fear, or for image enhancement (e.g.. Judge & Bretz, 1994).

A lot of research has been done to develop our understanding about impression management tactics at work (e.g., Bozeman & Kacmar, 1997; Jones & Pittman, 1982). But most widely accepted frame work of impression management is the work of (Wayne and Ferris, 1990). In this research the authors proposed that impression management tactics at work can be classified into three tactics as self-focused, supervisor-focused, and job-focused. Since prime purpose of this study is to understand the reactions of coworkers behind motives of individual emerging as an informal leader in team so our focus for this study will remain with job-focused and supervisor-focused tactics only. Both of these tactics are used for positive image building (Jones & Pittman,

1982; Rosenfeld, Giacalone, & Riordan, 1995). But each of these two is likely to manipulate other's perception in a different way.

Supervisor-focused impression management is an ingratiation behavior and individual demonstrating this uses flattery praise for getting attention and gaining spot light of observers specifically the immediate manager. This is a very common impression management technique used by employees at workplaces. They use flattery behavior with their supervisors, they complement supervisor's work, decision, and attitude, rendering personal favors to their supervisors, and show positive agreement to their supervisor in every situation. Managers like these types of persons to control their work environment in their way and employee engaging in this type of behavior are appreciated by their managers and they are rewarded by positive performance appraisals.

Job-focused impression management technique is used by employees to exaggerate their efforts and skills and show competency in-front of others at work. Job-focused impression management is also called self-promotion tactics of impression management by some researchers (e.g., Jones & Pittman, 1982; Turnley & Bolino, 2001). Verbal statements given by some individuals and behaviors demonstrated for self praise are job-focused impression management tactics. Talking about self performance and presentation of performance related thing in front of others is normally used at work places to impress others. People involve job-focused impression management advocate and try to take credit of positive events occurred without taking into consideration that others know that they were not responsible alone for that event. And try to advocate and clear their image for negative effects of some event for which they were directly responsible. They only talk about their accomplishment, achievements, and qualifications while ignoring and hiding their failures. Immediate managers see these type of behavior negative and as a reaction rate these employee poorly (Ferris et al., 1994; Wayne and Ferris, 1990), research proved low career growth and success for persons involve in these behaviors (Judge and Bretz, 1994). Accordingly we conceptualize here that coworkers will see both of these behaviors negatively and will not accept that person as an informal leader of their team.

**Hypothesis 3: Supervisor-focused Impression management is negatively related to informal leadership emergence.**

**Hypothesis 4: Job-focused Impression management is negatively related to informal leadership emergence.**

### ***2.3. Voice behavior and Informal leadership emergence***

Intention to express oneself for change in status quo or to improve current situation at work while suggesting ideas and opinions for improvements in current organizational procedures is called employee voice behavior (LePine & Van Dyne, 1998). These expression of behaviors are normally seen positively at work and linked with positive job attitude (Frese, Teng, & Wijnen, 1999; Spencer, 1986; Van Dyne & LePine, 1998) as these are for the benefits of all and improves organizational effectiveness by improving the organizational policies (Katz & Kahn, 1978), increase opportunities (Dutton & Ashford, 1993), and identifies deficiencies in current way of organizational treatment (LePine & Van Dyne, 1998). Not everyone at organization demonstrate voice behavior why not? Research revealed that satisfied employees who receive good treatment in past are likely to demonstrate voice behavior more intensively and more frequently. Voice is not same for all situations and by all employees there can be different voice behaviors at organizations and each voice has different effect on others and their reaction about individual expressing it. A change oriented voice demonstrated by employees is called challenging voice and in a more precise manner is a change oriented voice for destabilizing the current procedures, policies, and practices of treatment by challenging the current status quo at organizations. This behavior is more personal and direct towards some specific individual. Employee demonstrating this behavior shows explicit disagreement with individual creating or managing some specific organizational policies or practices. This behavior is more direct towards specific individual so can enhance dyadic level conflicts between managers and subordinate expressing it (De Dreu & Weingart, 2003).

There is also another type of voice at organizations which is opposite to challenging voice. This voice is for strengthening, preserving, stabilizing, and supporting current situation, policies, and practices. This type of voice behavior is called supportive voice behavior and is demonstrated by employees supporting and involving in day to day activities. Employees demonstrate supportive voice behavior by routine involvement in supporting, protecting, or defending managerial decisions. Managers like these employees who support their decisions, practices, and policies as this is not a threat to managerial decision but a support and protection by employees against others. But how other employees see such behavior for a person emerging as an inform leader in their team is inconclusive. Although these two voice behaviors are aimed to benefit organization but can yield different reactions from coworkers. We know challenging voice yields negative reactions from managers (De Dreu & Weingart, 2003) but reactions of coworkers for the person demonstrating challenging voice and emerging as an informal leader in their team is not known. Also we know that supportive voice is taken positively by managers but how coworkers see an employee demonstrating supportive voice and also emerging as an informal leader. We hypothesize here that employees will see supportive voice as supportive behavior for their workgroup however challenging form of voice will be seen destabilizing behavior and will not be accepted

by peers. Formally:

**Hypothesis 5: Challenging voice of a person is negatively related to informal leader emergence.**

**Hypothesis 6: Supportive voice of a person is positively related to informal leader emergence.**

#### **2.4. Political skills and Informal leadership emergence**

Individuals equipped with substantial political skills are proficient to explore and enjoy opportunities available in their surroundings. They exploit situation for opportunities from the diverse pool of people available around them. People demonstrate different type of political skills to exploit the situation by taking advantage from the people around them. Networking ability is one of these styles. People having networking ability possess an insidious style of making strong alliances, friendships, relationships, and beneficial coalitions with others for their own personal needs. They try to make sure that they are well positioned in diverse pool of people so that they may fully exploit the situation and take advantage of available opportunities (Pfeffer, 1992). Their negotiation skills help them to make beneficial deals and manage their conflicts properly. This skill is essential for a person emerging as an informal leader in a team. There is another type of political skill called Interpersonal Influence. People equipped with this skill hold a magical convincing power; their insidious style of convincing others exerts magical influence on their surrounding people. They can easily understand the situation and are good in adapting and calibrating their behavior according to situation. They are more flexible in their behavior than others (Pfeffer, 1992) and change it according to person they are talking with to make long lasting influence. So networking ability and interpersonal influence both are very beneficial for the person possess it and demonstrate it according to situational demand. So accordingly we hypothesize here that coworkers will see these two skills as an essential and these two will make focal employee more attractable and approachable for other coworkers.

**Hypothesis 7: Networking Ability of a person is positively related to informal leader emergence.**

**Hypothesis 8: Interpersonal Influence of a person is positively related to informal leader emergence.**

### **3. Sample and data collection**

We collected data from employees of an insurance company, 278 employees and their respective 33 managers completed survey questionnaire. Three sources subordinates, peers, and supervisors were used in this study to collect data. Subordinates provided their response for quality of relationship with their supervisor, empowering leadership behavior, supervisor focused impression management, job focused impression management, networking abilities, and interpersonal influence. Peers rated informal leadership of their work unit based on their perceived influence of leadership emergence. However, supervisors rated subordinates working under those supervisors for challenging voice and supportive voice behaviors of employees. We received completed response from 247 subordinates and their 33 respective supervisors. After deleting missing values and record which mismatched with supervisors data, our final sample of subordinates yielded a survey of 221 subordinates and all of their supervisors. Dummy codes were assigned to all of the employees before collecting data for further identification and linking response of supervisors with subordinates. Likert type scales were used to measure response from both supervisors and also from the subordinates. In our sample 63.78% were male and 36.22 were females; 62% of the subordinates were bachelor degree holders and 38% were master degree holders; current organizational experience was 9.78 years; total job experience was 15.21 years; experience of working in current team was 4.53 years.

#### **3.1. Measures**

**Leader-member exchange (LMX) quality:** Seven-item, seven point likert type scale is used to measure LMX quality (Liden & Graen, 1980). A sample item is "My supervisor understands my problems and needs". ( $\alpha = 0.76$ )

**Empowering Leadership:** empowering leadership behavior was measure using Fourteen-item, seven point likert type scale (Kirkman & Rosen, 1999). Sample item is "My immediate supervisor gives me many responsibilities". ( $\alpha = 0.93$ )

**Impression Management:** Impression management tactics were measured using eight-item, seven point likert type scale (Bolino et al., 2006). Each impression management dimension was measured using four items for each item. Sample item for supervisor focused impression management is "That subordinate do personal favors to me" and sample item for job focused impression management is "That subordinate try to make a positive event that he is responsible for appear better than it actually is". ( $\alpha = 0.78$ )

**Political Skills:** political skills were measured using ten-item seven point likert type scale (Ferris et al., 2005). Networking abilities and interpersonal influence were measured as dimensions of political skills. Networking abilities were measured using six items and interpersonal influence was measured using four items. Sample item for networking ability was "I spend a lot of time and effort at work networking with others" and sample item for interpersonal influence was "I spend a lot of time and effort at work networking with others". ( $\alpha = 0.93$ )

**Voice Behavior:** Six-item, seven-point likert-type scale was used to measure voice behavior of subordinates (Van Dyne & LePine, 1998). Each dimension of voice behavior (challenging voice and supportive) was measured using three items. Sample item for challenging voice behavior was “That subordinate give suggestions to me about how to make this organization better, even if others disagree” and sample item for supportive voice behavior was “That subordinate speak up and encourage others to get involved in issues that affect this organization”. ( $\alpha = 0.86$ )

**Informal leadership emergence:** Peers’ perceived influence was used to measure informal leadership emergence at work units. Peers responded to only one question to show influence of each and every member of their team excluding themselves and their formal managers (Carson et al., 2007). After we received response, we averaged scores for each group member to calculate informal leadership emergence in each and every team (Carson et al., 2007).

**Control Variables:** Personal sources of power can predict informal leadership emergence at organizations (Ibarra, 1993). So, following previous research (Klein et al., 2004), we controlled for demographic variables, we controlled for gender, education, current organization’s experience, total job experience, and experience of working in current teams.

#### 4. Results

Table 1 shows mean, standard deviation, and correlation among all study variables. As shown in the table that informal leadership emergence is positively related with education ( $r=0.031$ ,  $p<.05$ ), current organizational experience ( $r=0.017$ ,  $p<.05$ ), LMX ( $r=0.198$ ,  $p<.05$ ), empowering leadership ( $r=0.092$ ,  $p<.05$ ), networking ability ( $r=0.053$ ,  $p<.01$ ), and negatively related with challenging voice ( $r=-0.098$ ,  $p<.05$ ), and supervisor focused impression management ( $r=-0.057$ ,  $p<.05$ ). We collected data from the teams due to informal leadership emergence and LMX, however, our analyses and results were purely on individual levels. We collected data from the work units which were further nested into groups, so, in order to ensure any chances of standard error underestimation, we did not use OLS regression; we performed nested group analyses using random coefficients analyses with Mplus7.0.

Random coefficient regression results are presented in table 2. We grand mean centre all study variables before entering them into analysis. There are five models in this table. We first entered all control variables with manager relations (LMX and empowering leadership behavior). Both LMX and empowering leadership behavior showed significance results along with three of the control variables education, current organization’s experience, and current team experience. The results in model 1 provided partial support to first two hypothesis of our study. In model 2, we entered two impression management tactics with all of the control variables. We found that both job focused impression management and supervisor focused impression management tactics were negatively significant with informal leadership emergence. The results of model 2 provided partial support to hypothesis 3 and hypothesis 4 of our study. In model 3, we entered all control variables along with two dimensions of voice behavior. Both of voice dimensions were significant with informal leadership emergence, challenging voice behavior was negatively, while, supportive voice behavior was positively significant with informal leadership emergence. The results of this model provided partial support to hypothesis 5 and hypothesis 6 of this study. In model 4, we entered all control variables along with political skills of subordinates. Both dimensions of political skills (networking ability and interpersonal influence) showed non-significant coefficient with informal leadership emergence. Results in model 4 rejected hypothesis 7 and hypothesis 8 of our study. And finally, we tested full model to test effect of variables in presence of others. We entered all control variables along with all study variables of this study. In complete model we further found support for managerial relations, impression management, and voice behavior. However non-significance of political skills provided no support for networking abilities and interpersonal influence. In complete model we found support for hypothesis 1 to hypothesis 6 however rejecting hypothesis 7 and hypothesis 8 of our study.

#### 5. Discussion

Informal leaders emerge at workplaces and are beneficial for effectiveness of work units (Erdogan et al., 2007). Leadership role provide by multiple employees at work places are beneficial for team effectiveness. So, based on these lines researcher investigated array of variables this can be linked with performance consequences of informal leadership emergence at workplaces (Borgatti & Foster, 2003). In contrast, antecedents of informal leadership emergence based on relationships with formal leaders and personal characteristics received less attention from the researchers (e.g., Burt, Jannotta, & Mahoney, 1998; Mehra et al., 2001).

We found that managerial relations, voice behavior, and impression management tactics plays vital role in leadership emergence of individuals at organizations. Quality relationships with formal leaders were positively related with informal leadership emergence also the empowering leadership behavior was also positively related with informal leadership emergence at organizations. We also found that voice behavior demonstrate by employees at organizations also influence informal leadership emergence at organizations.

Impression management tactics are also predictors of informal leadership emergence at organizations. However, networking abilities are not predictors of informal leadership emergence at organizations.

Table 1.  
 Means, Standard Deviation, and Correlation among study variables

| Variable                          | Mean  | SD   | 1      | 2       | 3       | 4       | 5       | 6       | 7       | 8       | 9      | 10      | 11     | 12      | 13    |
|-----------------------------------|-------|------|--------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|--------|---------|--------|---------|-------|
| 1. Gender                         | 0.61  | 0.41 |        |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |        |         |        |         |       |
| 2. Education                      | 2.01  | 0.42 | 0.023  |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |        |         |        |         |       |
| 3. Current Org. Experience        | 9.78  | 2.21 | 0.332* | -0.042  |         |         |         |         |         |         |        |         |        |         |       |
| 4. Total Job Experience           | 15.21 | 4.23 | 0.098* | -0.041  | 0.431** |         |         |         |         |         |        |         |        |         |       |
| 5. Member's Team Tenure           | 4.53  | 0.22 | 0.097  | -0.071  | 0.211** | 0.013*  |         |         |         |         |        |         |        |         |       |
| 6. Leader Member Exchange (LMX)   | 4.52  | 0.45 | 0.021  | 0.181*  | 0.051** | -0.043  | -0.121* |         |         |         |        |         |        |         |       |
| 7. Empowering Leadership          | 3.43  | 1.11 | 0.045  | 0.024** | 0.060** | 0.012*  | -0.321* | 0.041** |         |         |        |         |        |         |       |
| 8. Challenging Voice              | 4.23  | 1.51 | 0.065  | 0.036** | 0.019*  | 0.111   | -0.112  | 0.021** | 0.181** |         |        |         |        |         |       |
| 9. Supportive Voice               | 4.11  | 1.09 | 0.023  | 0.029*  | 0.230*  | 0.098*  | -0.121  | 0.011** | 0.202*  | 0.040*  |        |         |        |         |       |
| 10. Supervisor Focused-IM         | 4.32  | 1.97 | 0.019  | 0.119*  | 0.092   | 0.112** | 0.052*  | 0.098** | 0.290   | 0.340*  | 0.011  |         |        |         |       |
| 11. Job Focused-IM                | 2.48  | 1.11 | 0.081  | 0.103*  | 0.032   | 0.012** | -0.035  | 0.128** | 0.212** | 0.220   | 0.321  | 0.023*  |        |         |       |
| 12. Networking Ability            | 2.61  | 1.01 | 0.091  | 0.098*  | 0.019   | 0.109*  | 0.039*  | 0.121** | 0.218** | 0.010** | 0.079  | 0.021   | 0.121* |         |       |
| 13. Interpersonal Influence       | 3.69  | 1.23 | 0.039  | 0.056*  | 0.024   | 0.187   | 0.067   | 0.198** | 0.092   | 0.091*  | 0.021* | -0.022* | -0.062 | 0.223   |       |
| 14. Informal Leadership Emergence | 1.32  | 0.12 | 0.021  | 0.031*  | 0.017*  | 0.045   | -0.098  | 0.198*  | 0.092*  | -0.098* | 0.142  | -0.057* | 0.086  | 0.053** | 0.064 |

Note. N=221. Gender was coded as 0 = Female, 1 = Male. Education was coded as 1 = College Graduate, 2 = Bachelor Degree, 3=Master Degree. Current Organization's Experience, Current Team Experience, and Total Banking Experience were measured in years.  
 \*p < .05. \*\*p < .01

Table 2.  
 Random Coefficient Regression Results for the Moderator Analysis with Leader-Member-Exchange as the outcome variable

| Predictor                    | Model 1           |       | Model 2               |       | Model 3        |       | Model 4          |       | Model 5     |             |
|------------------------------|-------------------|-------|-----------------------|-------|----------------|-------|------------------|-------|-------------|-------------|
|                              | Manager Relations |       | Impression Management |       | Voice Behavior |       | Political Skills |       | Full Model  |             |
|                              | Estimate          | S.E.  | Estimate              | S.E.  | Estimate       | S.E.  | Estimate         | S.E.  | Estimate    | S.E.        |
| Gender                       | 0.051             | 0.122 | 0.053                 | 0.112 | 0.321          | 0.098 | 0.098            | 0.122 | 0.063       | 0.202       |
| Education                    | 0.011**           | 0.021 | 0.213*                | 0.011 | 0.132*         | 0.076 | 0.109*           | 0.651 | 0.093*      | 0.041       |
| Current Org. Experience      | 0.761*            | 0.101 | 0.342*                | 0.092 | 0.098*         | 0.003 | 0.213*           | 0.982 | 0.122       | 0.122       |
| Total Job Experience         | -1.211            | 0.223 | -0.981                | 0.093 | -0.121         | 0.139 | -0.081           | 0.330 | -0.189      | 0.033       |
| Member's Team Tenure         | 0.123*            | 0.121 | 0.091*                | 0.117 | 0.211*         | 0.092 | 0.105*           | 0.198 | 0.069       | 0.151       |
| Leader Member Exchange (LMX) | 0.132*            | 0.908 |                       |       |                |       |                  |       | 0.112*      | 0.543       |
| Empowering Leadership        | 0.876**           | 0.102 |                       |       |                |       |                  |       | 0.776**     | 0.192       |
| Supervisor Focused-IM        |                   |       | -0.908*               | 0.003 |                |       |                  |       | -0.676*     | 0.186       |
| Job Focused-IM               |                   |       | -0.117*               | 0.197 |                |       |                  |       | -0.211*     | 0.109       |
| Challenging Voice            |                   |       |                       |       | -0.081*        | 0.931 |                  |       | -0.192*     | 0.988       |
| Supportive Voice             |                   |       |                       |       | 0.170*         | 0.721 |                  |       | 1.853**     | 0.091       |
| Networking Ability           |                   |       |                       |       |                |       | 1.718            | 0.318 | 2.122       | 0.203       |
| Interpersonal Influence      |                   |       |                       |       |                |       | 0.728            | 0.910 | 0.767       | 0.332       |
| $\Delta \chi^2 (\Delta df)$  |                   |       | 121.79(4)**           |       | 598.41(3)**    |       | 514.85(6)**      |       | 476.29(4)** | 653.37(3)** |
| R <sup>2</sup>               |                   |       | 0.22                  |       | 0.51           |       | 0.72             |       | 0.67        | 0.59        |

Note. N=221.  $\Delta \chi^2$  refers to Satorra-Bentler scaled chi-square difference test Muthén and Muthén (1998-2010).  $\Delta df$  is change in degree of freedom. R<sup>2</sup> is degree of reduction in error variance.  
 \*p < .05. \*\*p < .01

### 5.1. Predictors of Informal leadership emergence

Two variables representing quality relationship with supervisors and formal leadership empowering behaviors for the subordinates predict informal leadership emergence in teams. These two variables emerge as strong predictors of informal leadership emergence at organizations. The individuals who maintain quality relationships with their formal leaders and receive empowerment from their supervisors emerge as informal leaders at organizations. Other predictors like variables representing subordinates' tactics and behaviors also predict emergence for some of employees as informal leaders at their workplaces.

We found that voice behaviors of employees are also strong predictors of informal leadership emergence at organizations (Burt, Jannotta, & Mahoney, 1998; Mehra et al., 2001). Although challenging voice and supportive voice behaviors both are considered positive voice behaviors of employees and represent employees' concern for the organizations. But these two voice behaviors manifest different reactions from peers and also from the formal leaders of their organizations. We found that challenging voice behavior of employees is negatively related with informal leadership emergence, however, supportive voice behavior of employees is positively related with informal leadership emergence (Burt, Jannotta, & Mahoney, 1998; Mehra et al., 2001). In our study we measured informal leadership emergence as perceived by peers at work. So, other explanation of our results can be, like formal leaders, employees who show more concern for the teams stability are seen as informal leaders of the teams and employees who speak for destabilizing the current situation are not seen by peer as informal leaders of their teams.

We also found that tactics to create positive image are not seen predictors of informal leadership emergence at organizations. Supervisor focused impression management and job focused impression management are specifically used by subordinates to create positive image (Liden & Graen, 1980). But inconsistent with these findings, we found that peers who perceive informal leadership emergence at

organizations for their workgroups; they see these tactics as negative for informal leadership emergence. Both of these impression management tactics are negatively related with informal leadership emergence at organizations. However, we did not find any support for political skills as predictors of informal leadership emergence at organizations.

### **5.2. Limitations and future research directions**

In this study we examined antecedents of informal leadership emergence at organizations. Collecting data from three different sources, real life teams of an organization, and large group of team based structure. Our study shed light on neglected area of informal leadership emergence at organizations. Although, our research design was cross sectional but with random coefficient analysis and multisource data collection we tried to eliminate chances of biasness and standard error under estimation (Borgatti & Foster, 2003). These two steps enhanced our confidence in our results and also on contributions of our study. But like all research, this investigation is also not free from limitations. Although we have strong theoretical reasons to expect that all our predictors would precede informal leadership emergence at organizations. But cross sectional design of our study limits us to check reverse causation of our results. Due to cross sectional design of our study we cannot firmly say that reverse causation is not possible and we cannot directly rule out the possibility of reverse causation. So, for firm results we suggest a longitudinal study, we suggest temporally separating data collection for different variables and collecting at different points in time. Also, we collected data form employees of an insurance company, investing sector other than financial will bring forth more dynamic picture of antecedents of informal leadership emergence at organizations (Borgatti & Foster, 2003). We also encourage different hierarchical level employees to be investigated in future studies for informal leadership emergence. Because findings of investigations which do not include managerial level employees cannot be generalized to managerial level teams and employees. Therefore, investigation of managerial level employees will help generalizing our results to different hierarchical levels.

### **6. Conclusion**

Our prime goal in this research was to shed light on the neglected area of informal leadership emergence. Our results revealed that both formal leadership and personal characteristics of subordinates both can serve as antecedents of informal leadership emergence at organizations. Both of these sources play a significant role in predicting informal leadership emergence at organizations. We examined role of formal leaders and behavior and tactics of subordinates as antecedents of informal leadership at organizations. Role of peer as antecedents of informal leadership would also be a fruitful area of future research.

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