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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN POLITICAL SKILL AND CAREER SUCCESS: THE MEDIATING EFFECT OF LEADER-MEMBER EXCHANGE

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ABSTRACT

Political skill which can be described as the ability to understand others in organization by observing them, to influence others effectively, to adjust his/her behaviors to changing situations, to develop networks with people, and to appear to others as being sincere (Blass and Ferris, 2007:9), has drawn considerable attention from scholars in recent years. The purpose of this study is to investigate whether there is a significant effect of the political skill and the quality of leader-member exchange on the career success. The sample of the study is branch banks in Balıkesir and Bursa. The data were collected through questionnaires. In this frame, three hundred twenty five questionnaires were analyzed. The results of the study showed that the political skill has a significantly positive effect on the quality of leader-member exchange ($\beta = 0.392$, $p < 0.01$) and career success ($\beta = 0.412$, $p < 0.01$). On the other hand, the quality of leader-member exchange influences the employees' career successes positively ($\beta = 0.149$, $p < 0.01$). Besides, it was found that the quality of leader-member exchange has a mediating effect on the relationship between political skill and career success. It can be said that, those employees who are politically skilled and have high quality relations with their supervisors, have high career successes.

Keywords: Political Skill, Leader-Member Exchange, Career Success.

JEL: D23

İşgörenlerin Politik Becerileri ve Kariyer Başarısı İlişkisi: Lider Üye Etkileşiminin Aracılık Etkisi

ÖZET

Diğer kişileri gözlemleyerek onlar hakkında bilgi sahibi olma, onları ikna edebilme ve tepkilerine karşı uygun davranışlar gösterebilme, diğerleriyle kolay ilişkiler kurabilme ve bu ilişkilerde samimi görünebilme becerisi, olarak ifade edilebilen politik beceri (Blass and Ferris, 2007:9), konusu son yıllarda bilim insanlarının büyük ilgisini çekmiştir. Bu çalışmanın amacı, politik beceri ve lider-üye etkileşiminin kariyer başarısı üzerinde anlamlı bir etkisinin olup olmadığını belirlemektir. Çalışmanın örnekleme, Balıkesir ve Bursa'daki banka şubelerinden oluşmaktadır. Veriler anket yöntemiyle toplanmıştır. Bu çerçevede, 325 anket analiz edilmiştir. Çalışmanın sonuçlarına göre, politik becerinin lider-üye etkileşimi kalitesi ($\beta = 0.392$, $p < 0.01$) ve kariyer başarısı ($\beta = 0.412$, $p < 0.01$) üzerinde anlamlı pozitif etkisi vardır. Öte yandan, lider-üye etkileşimi kalitesinin işgörenlerin kariyer başarısını pozitif etkilediği sonucuna ulaşılmıştır ($\beta = 0.149$, $p < 0.01$). Ayrıca, lider-üye etkileşiminin, politik beceri ve kariyer başarısı arasındaki ilişkide bir aracılık etkisinin olduğu sonucuna ulaşılmıştır. Politik beceriye ve üstleriyle yüksek kalitede etkileşime sahip olan kişilerin yüksek kariyer başarıları olduğu söylenebilir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Politik Beceri, Lider-Üye Etkileşimi, Kariyer Başarısı.



1. INTRODUCTION

Organizational politics in the organizations has received a great attention in the management and organization literature due to its features such as being widespread issue, being not fully understood and providing potential benefits for those who know how to use it in the struggle over resources, but it has been one of the least discussed and unheeded topic (Drory and Vigoda-Gadot, 2010:194; Vigoda and Cohen, 2002:311; Bolat, 2011a:17). Organizations, no matter what kind are political arenas where power, influence, culture, leadership styles, socio-technical structure, reward and career management systems play an important role in shaping relations and distribution of benefits between employees, managers and other stakeholders (Vigoda-Gadot *et al.*, 2003:764; Bolat, 2011a:18). Therefore, in such that political environment, it is inevitable condition of using political skills by employees to achieve their personal and organizational goals. At this point, it is conceivable that there is an effect of political skill on career success. Also, it may be predictable that employees can use their political skills to establish good relations with their supervisors to increase their career success.

There are two important contributions of the study to the literature. Firstly to the best of we know that it has not been encountered a study to explore the relationship between political skill and career success and mediating effect of leader-member exchange at this relationship in the literature. With this aspect, our study is important to fill this gap in the literature. Secondly, our study will contribute to the literature such introduced that organizational concepts and theories developed and investigated by especially the United States and in Western countries, questioning to generalize these concepts and theories in different countries and cultures with an ethical approach.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES

2.1. Political Skill

The concept of political skill was introduced to the literature by Pfeffer (1981). Pfeffer has defined the political skill as behaviors to obtain and develop the necessary power (Ferris *et al.*, 2007:290; Ferris *et al.*, 2012:489). *Political skill* is a concept that reflects the style of interpersonal interaction that integrates social awareness with the ability to communicate well (Ferris *et al.*, 2000:25). According to another definition, political skill can be described as the capability of collecting information about people and affect them by using this information to achieve personal and organizational goals (Ferris *et al.*, 2005:127; Blickle *et al.*, 2011:5). With this aspect, it is possible to say that politically skilled individuals have the high social competence (Ferris *et al.*, 2007:292; Blickle *et al.*, 2008:378) with their skills such as observing and influencing others effectively, adjusting his/her behaviors to changing situations, developing networks with people, and appearing to others as being sincere. There are four dimensions of political skill (Ferris *et al.*, 2005:129; Ferris *et al.*, 2007:292): *Social astuteness* includes skills such as observing others, comprehending social interactions, interpreting behaviors in social settings. People with high social astuteness show creative and intelligent behavior when interacting with others. *Interpersonal influence* expresses ability to behave subtly and convincingly to others, and the power of affect on his/her relationships with people. Individuals with strong interpersonal influence have the power of persuasion and the capability to adjust behaviors due to the others' reactions to different situations. *Networking ability* is related to individuals' human relations skills. People have high networking ability can interact with others effectively and build valuable and necessary networks in their surroundings. They are strong in establishing and developing friendship with people, and have no difficulty in building alliances and coalitions. *Apparent sincerity* is related to skills of appearing honest,



sincere and genuine to others. This dimension of the political skills is very important because of it is related to how the shown behavior will be perceived by others.

2.2. Leader-Member Exchange

Leader-member exchange theory was developed firstly by *Graen and colleagues* (1982) and was originally called as the Vertical Dyad Linkage theory (Graen and Schiemann, 1978:206; Dienesch and Liden, 1986:618). According to the traditional approach, a leader behaves in the same style to all group members and the members' perceptions, interpretations, and reactions to the leader's behavior are homogeneous. As a result, it is possible to say that all members of the group exhibit similar reactions to the behavior that is exhibited by their leader (Dansereau *et al.*, 1973:185). Different from traditional approach, leader-member exchange theory assumes that a leader does not behave all of his/her followers with the same leadership style because of the lack of leader's sufficient resources such as time, organization's resources, authority; instead, develops unique relationships with each follower. According to this theory relationships between a leader and his/her subordinates are divided as high-quality leader-member exchanges (called as in-group) and low-quality leader-member exchanges (called as out-group). The leader develops closer relations with in-group subordinates, whereas the leader develops formal relations with out-group subordinates (Dansereau *et al.*, 1975:47; Dienesch and Liden, 1986:621; Wayne *et al.*, 1994:697; Bowler, 2001:13). Subordinates who are in-group members, are supported and trusted by the leader, and these subordinates contribute more to the organization beyond their formal job descriptions and take on more responsibility (Dienesch and Liden, 1986:621; Arslantaş, 2007:162). Both leader and in-group members obtain reciprocal benefits from high-quality leader-member exchanges, while leader obtain employees who are commitment to their organization and tasks, hardworking and ready to show extra effort; subordinates obtain more support from their leader, such as utilizing more from the organizational opportunities and resources, the opportunities for career development and career promotion (Deluga and Perry, 1991:239-240; Deluga and Perry, 1994:67-68 as cited in Bolat, 2011b:257). Out-group members are in a lower level of trust and support with leaders and fulfill only the employment contract (Liden and Graen, 1980:452; Dienesch and Liden, 1986:621).

2.3. Career Success

Globalization and information-communication technologies which advancing in recent years caused that a rapid change in the business environment too. The concept of the employment relationship and career change is affected by this changing (Kuen *et al.*, 2013:44). *Career* has been traditionally conceptualized as reached the success of a person or the upper levels by working at the same organization throughout his/her life. But nowadays, individuals can sustain their careers owing to their education and experience with boundaryless career approach and they can work in many different organizations (Eby *et al.*, 2003:689). Individuals can go beyond organizational boundaries to have preventive behavior and to gain experience in different studies in order to achieve their career goals with boundaryless career approach (Kuen *et al.*, 2013:45). In other word individuals have begun to take a more active role in the planning and development process of career with a modern concept of career (Kuijpers *et al.*, 2006:169). Career success which can be described as achieving the desired results through related work experience by a person (Arthur *et al.*, 2005:179). Judge and colleagues (1995) have defined the career success as a person's positive mood owing to the experience gained from the work, a total of reached business outcomes and achievements (Seibert *et al.*, 1999:417; Lau and Shaffer, 1999:225). According to a different perspective, career success has been defined as the sum of the actual or perceived success of the work experience gained by the person (Judge *et al.*, 1999:621; Heslin, 2003:262). In this definition, it is emphasized that the career success is a concept in two components. According to Hughes (1958), an extrinsic success which the first



of components is objective and observable by others. Extrinsic success consists of outcomes such as income, position, and promotion status; a conversely intrinsic success which the second of components is relatively the gains reached by the people's own perceptions such as job and career satisfaction (Judge *et.al.*, 1999:623; Hall *et.al.*, 2012:744). Hughes has emphasized that the concept of success is a subjective phenomenon and changed the content according to each person because in terms people who determined the process of his career, exerted efforts and assessed the results as positive/negative evaluate itself (Mavisu, 2010:74). According to Pellegrin and Coates (1957), the money is not everything; success is perceivable in cases of the inner satisfaction when reaching their goals and appreciating by people who appreciate and trust. The distinction of career success as objective and subjective career success is accepted in literature and it emphasized the importance of subjective career success (Poole *et.al.*, 1993:39). The concept of career success is separated distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic career success. Intrinsic career success can be compared with subjective career success and is based on the person's own appreciation of his or her career actualization. Extrinsic career success relates to external appreciation such as salary and occupational status (Seibert and Kraimer, 2001:2; Kuijpers *et.al.*, 2006:170).

2.4. The Relationship between Political Skill and Leader-Member Exchange

We will use *Social Influence Theory* to explain the relationships between political skill and leader-member exchange and political skill and career success. The theory is about that thoughts, decisions, attitudes, beliefs and behaviors of the people and theory tries to explain how they are affected by others (Wang *et.al.*, 2013:300; Goldsmith, 2015:24). Social influence constitutes the essence of the theory and it expresses that changing in an individual's thoughts, feelings, attitudes, or behaviors that result from interaction with another individual or a group (Rashotte, 2007). In other words, social influences are mediated by communication and include concurrent messages via both verbal and nonverbal channels (Blascovich, 2002:25; White *et.al.*, 2009:135). Social influence can arise through the direct and indirect interpersonal interactions (Choo, 2013:20). Subordinates who want to get involved in the in-group and establish good relationships with their superiors, may affect their superiors with their political skills to get involve in the in-group. Considering Dienesch and Liden's model of leader-member exchange developmental process, subordinates can affect their superiors in the processes of "initial interaction", "role making", "member behavior and attributions", "leader attributions" and "leader response" using their political skills and they can be in in-group (Dienesch and Liden, 1986:627). As it will be remembered from the description of political skill, individuals who are with high political skills have skills of social astuteness, interpersonal influence, networking ability and apparent sincerity. Besides, politically skilled individuals know that superiors's expectations, what do they give more importance, what do they like and dislike, their reactions, how they can interact with their superiors, how they present themselves to superiors, how they can convince superiors and how can behave naturally and sincerely in all this leader-member exchange process. With these aspects, politically skilled individuals able to acquire the opportunity to take part in in-group even if they would have or have not the necessary qualifications at all stages of development of leader-member exchange. The findings of empirical studies such as the study of Breland and colleagues (2007) was conducted in the United States with superiors in the retail business ($r = 0.18, p < 0.01$), the study of Brouer and colleagues (2009) was made in retail businesses in the United States ($\beta = 0.24, p < 0.01$), the study of Harris and colleagues (2009) was administrated in the United States with workers in different occupations (financial analysts, lawyers, accountants, teachers etc.) ($r = 0.37, p < 0.01$) and the study of Kimura (2013) was conducted in different parts (sales, accounting, finance,



etc.) of a Japanese company ($r = 0.33, p < 0.01$) support the relationship between political skill and leader-member exchange. Therefore, the following hypothesis is postulated:

Hypothesis 1: There is a significant and positive relationship between political skill and leader-member exchange.

2.5. The Relationship between the Political Skill and Career Success

It is possible to say that politically skilled individuals' career successes may be high whether or not in-group when compared to individuals who have less political skills. Career success always doesn't arise as a result of having necessary qualifications about work and high performance (Heslin, 2003:263). When two people considered one of them with politically skilled and the other not, it is possible to say that politically skilled person can achieve his/her aims even if they both have the same qualifications and performance, because politically skilled person can influence the decisions of superiors. This situation may be obtained when they haven't necessary qualifications and performance. So it is possible to say that politically skilled person can change the superiors' thoughts, decisions, attitudes, beliefs and behaviors, to achieve personal aims. In empirical studies on this issue support the relationship between political skill and career success. The findings of empirical studies such as the study of Breland and colleagues (2007) was conducted in the United States with superiors in the retail business ($\beta = 0.65, p < 0.01$), Todd and colleagues' (2009) study was administrated in the Midwestern University graduates ($\beta = 0.36, p < 0.01$), the study of Wei and colleagues (2010) was made with managers and employees in businesses operating in China ($\beta = 0.11, p < 0.05$) and Blicke and colleagues' (2010) study was conducted in different industries (electrical, chemical, metal, etc.) in Germany ($\beta = 0.24, p < 0.01$) support the relationship between political skill and career success. Therefore, the following hypothesis is postulated:

Hypothesis 2: There is a significant and positive relationship between political skill and career success.

2.6. The Relationship between Leader-Member Exchange and Career Success

Social Exchange Theory was used to provide explanation between leader-member exchange and career success. Firstly, *Social Exchange Theory* was stated Gouldner's (1960) article named "the norm of reciprocity". According to Gouldner, people feel emotions towards others to increase motivation and own interests and they exhibit maintaining behaviors to help them. In addition to Gouldner's descriptions, Blau (1964) said that these emotion creates the basis of interpersonal relationships (Harris *et.al.*, 2007:136). Emerson (1976:359) has stated the social exchange theory that it will be expressed as a movement of the valuable resources in the direction of social processes. The theory based on the assumption that it would be a valuable acquisition when a resource continued to movement (Köksal, 2012:6). According to Blau (2009:91), social exchange is voluntary behaviours which people hope to achieve the own acquisition. According to social exchange theory, a person exhibits good behaviors to another hoping to achieve acquisitions (Köksal, 2012:5). With these descriptions, social exchange theory can be defined as behaviors which people exhibit without a certain expectation; if the behavior returns, it will be mostly in a long-term. According to leader-member exchange theory, both leader and in-group members obtain *reciprocal* benefits from high-quality leader-member exchanges, while leader obtain employees who are commitment to their organization and tasks, hardworking and ready to show extra effort; subordinates obtain more support from their leader, such as utilizing more from the organizational opportunities and resources, the opportunities for career development and career promotion (Deluga and Perry, 1991:239-240; Deluga and Perry, 1994:67-68 as cited in Bolat, 2011b:257). Out-group members are in a lower level of trust and support with leaders and fulfill only the employment contract (Liden and Graen,



1980:452; Dienesch and Liden, 1986:621). The findings of empirical studies such as the study of Sagas and Cunningham (2004) was conducted in the United States with basketball coaches ($r = 0.40, p < 0.001$), Erdogan and colleagues' (2004) study was administrated with high school teachers in Turkey ($\beta = 0.19, p < 0.01$), Breland and colleagues' (2007) study was conducted in the United States with superiors in the retail busines ($\beta = 0.19, p < 0.01$) and Han's (2010) study was made in the United States with workers who work in the Fortune 500 companies ($\beta = 0.38, p < 0.001$) support the relationship between leader-member exchange and career success. Therefore, the following hypothesis is postulated:

Hypothesis 3: There is a significant and positive relationship between leader-member exchange and career success.

2.7. The Relationships between Political Skills, Leader-Member Exchange and Career Success

In accordance with the above explanation about the relationships between political skills, leader-member exchange and career success, it can be said that leader-member exchange has a mediating effect on the relationship between political skill and career success. According to this explanation, the following hypothesis is postulated:

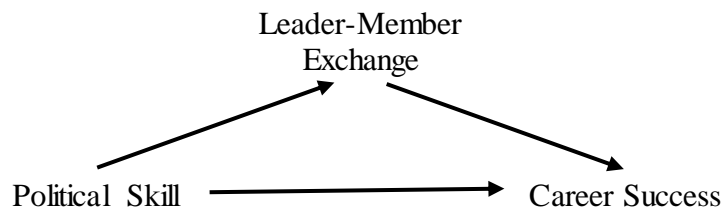
Hypothesis 4: Leader-member exchange has a mediating effect on the relationship between political skill and career successes.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research Model

Research model of this study is as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Research Model



3.2. Participants and Procedures

The data for the study were obtained from bank employees which selected randomly from bank branches at Balikesir and Bursa. The population of the study consists of 400 employees. In this context, the survey was administered to 380 employees. The study was carried out on a voluntary basis. We received 350 questionnaires. Incomplete questionnaires were excluded from the analyses. The final sample consisted of 325 employees. Of the respondents, 50.8% were women, their average age was 32 years, 69.4% were married, and their average tenure at the company was 6.9 years. The rate of high school graduates 3.4%, vocational high school graduates 0.9%, associate degrees to 8.4%, university graduates 81.1% and master/phd graduates 6.2%. The questionnaires's statements were measured the Likerts's measurements which included statements among 1=strongly disagree and 5=strongly agree.



3.3. Measures

Leader-Member Exchange: In this study, Liden and Maslyn's (1998:56) 12-items scale was used to determine the quality of the leader-member exchange. It consists affect, loyalty, contribution and professional respect which are the dimensions of leader-member exchange and each dimension includes three statements. One example expression for affect dimension "I like my supervisor very much as a person", one example expression for loyalty dimension "My supervisor defends my work actions to a superior, even without complete knowledge of the issue", one example expression for contribution dimension "I do work for my supervisor that goes beyond what is specified in my job description" and one example expression for respect dimension "I admire my supervisor's professional skills". The scale's Cronbach-Alfa value is 0.95. To test the hypothesis, one mean is calculated base on the mean of the dimensions because of the relationship between superiors and subordinates general quality is important.

Political Skill: The original, political skill scale's fourty items developed by Ferris and colleagues (1999). Ferris and colleagues (2005:149) have formed a shortened 18-item scale in subsequent study. In this study, we have utilized the 18-item short version which tested for reliability and validity due to the high number of variables. Political skills scale consists networking ability, apparent sincerity, social astuteness and interpersonal influence which are the dimensions of political skills. One example expression for networking ability dimension "I spend a lot of time and effort at work networking with others", one example expression for apparent sincerity dimension "I try to show a genuine interest in other people", one example expression for social astuteness dimension "I am particularly good at sensing the motivations and hidden agendas of others" and one example expression for interpersonal influence dimension "I am good at getting people to like me". The scale's Cronbach-Alfa value is 0.94. To test the hypothesis, one mean is calculated base on the mean of the dimensions because of the political skills' general quality is important.

Career Success: In this study, Greenhaus's (1990:86) scale was used to measure the career success. Scale measures career success as one dimension with five items. The example expression is "I am satisfied with the success I have achieved in my career". The Scale's Cronbach-Alfa value is 0.95.

4. RESULTS

Confirmatory factor analysis was conducted to test the measurement model and in this context, the model was compared with three alternative models as shown below. Measurement model consists of nine factors. They are four factors to measure the leader-member exchange (affect, loyalty, contribution and professional respect); four factors to measure the political skills (networking ability, apparent sincerity, social astuteness and interpersonal influence) and one factor to measure the career success. Measurement model has the best fitting value compared to other alternative models: Chi-squared value is 713.15, df 524, X^2/df is 1.36, RMSEA is 0.03, CFI is 0.99 and NFI is 0.97. According to the chi-squared test of association / independence test, measurement model has the best fitting value when compared the model 2 (the structural empty model) which is the relationships between variables is fixed to zero ($\Delta x^2(36) = 2110.93$, $p < 0.01$), Model 3 (one factor model which is that all factors are installed on a single factor) ($\Delta x^2(36) = 10711.39$, $p < 0.01$) and Model 4 (three factors model which is include of one factor of leader-member exchange, one factor of political skill and one factor of career success) ($\Delta x^2(33) = 2691.63$, $p < 0.01$). Also in this study, there is the possibility of common method variance due to using the self-report method, measuring the political skill, leader-member exchange and career success variables with the same scale and time, being assessed by the same sample. The raising the common method variance depending the measurement method rather than trying to



measure the scale of the variance (Podsakoff *et.al.*, 2003:879 as cited in Bolat, 2011b:93). Especially, there is the high possibility of common method variance in the case of the data which are in both the dependent and independent variables are obtained with measures based on same persons' perceptions (Chang *et.al.*, 2010:178 as cited in Bolat, 2011b:93). Thus, common method variance can cause systematic measurement errors that either inflate or deflate (such as halo effect, social desirability or trends to answer all of the questions as "yes" or "no") the observed relationships between constructs, generating both Type I and Type II errors (Podsakoff *et.al.*, 2003:879 and Chang *et.al.*, 2010:178 as cited in Bolat, 2011b:93). Harman's one factor test which shows at model 3 was tested to determine whether there is common method variance in the study or not (Podsakoff *et.al.*, 2003:879 as cited in Bolat, 2011b:93). It seems that one factor model has worse fitting value when compared with the measurement model ($X^2 = 11424.54$, $df = 560$, $p < 0.01$, $RMSEA = 0.25$, $CFI = 0.80$, $NFI = 0.79$). According to these values, it can be said that there isn't possibility of the common method variance.

Table 1. Comparisons of measurement models for variables

Models	X^2	df	X^2/df	RMSEA	CFI	NFI	X^2_{diff}	df_{diff}
Model 1 Nine-factors measurement model	713.15**	524	1.36	0.03	0.99	0.97		
Model 2 Structural empty model	2824.08**	560	5.043	0.11	0.94	0.93	2110.93	36**
Model 3 One-factor model	11424.54**	560	20.40	0.25	0.80	0.79	10711.39	36**
Model 4 Three-factors measurement model	3404.78**	557	6.11	0.13	0.92	0.91	2691.63	33**

$N = 325$, ** $p < 0.01$.

Table 2 shows that relationships among political skill, leader-member exchange and career success and these variables's means, standart deviations, reliability coefficients of scales. According to the results, there is a significant and positive relationship between political skill and leader-member exchange ($r = 0.39$, $p < 0.01$) and political skill and career success ($r = 0.41$, $p < 0.01$). At the same time, there is a significant and positive relationship between leader-member exchange and career success ($r = 0.29$, $p < 0.01$).

Table 2. Means, standard deviations, reliabilities, and correlations of variables

Variables	Mean	SD	1	2	3
			s		
1. Political Skill	4.12	0.52	(0.95)		
2. Leader-Member Exchange	4.01	0.69	0.39**	(0.94)	
3. Career Success	3.75	0.85	0.41**	0.29**	(0.95)

Note: $N = 325$, ** $p < 0.01$, Cronbach's alpha values are given in parentheses.

To test the meadiating effect of the leader-member exchange on the relationship between political skill and career success, it has benefited from the three-stage regression analysis which is proposed by Baron and Kenny (1986:1177). According to the model, a series of regression models should be estimated. Firstly, regressing the mediator (leader-member exchange) on the independent variable (political skill); secondly, regressing the dependent variable (career



success) on the independent variable (political skill); and finally, regressing the dependent variable (career success) on both the independent variable (political skill) and on the mediator (leader-member exchange). As a result of these analyzes, to establish mediating effect, the following conditions must hold: First, the independent variable (political skill) must affect the mediator (leader-member exchange) in the first stage; second, the independent variable (political skill) must be shown to affect the dependent variable (career success) in the second stage; and third, the mediator (leader-member exchange) must affect the dependent variable (career success) in the third equation. To determine the mediating effect we must examine the relationship between independent variable (political skill) and dependent variable (career success) in the third stage. It can be said that there is a partial mediation effect if we see the change on the effect and relationship is continuing the significance; It can be say that there is a full mediation if the effects disappear completely. But, the relationship between career success and leader-member exchange must be significance at this stage (Baron and Kenny, 1986:1177; Bolat, 2011b:262).

Table 3. Hierarchical Regression Analysis to Determine the Mediating Effect of Leader-Member Exchange

Variables	Leader-Member Exchange	Career Success
	β	β
Model 1		
1. Political Skill	0.392**	
<i>F</i>	58.675	
<i>R</i> ²	0.154	
<i>Adjusted R</i> ²	0.151	
Model 2		
1. Political Skill		0.412**
<i>F</i>		66.154
<i>R</i> ²		0.170
<i>Adjusted R</i> ²		0.167
Model 3		
1. Political Skill		0.354**
2. Leader-Member Exchange		0.149**
<i>F</i>		37.480
<i>R</i> ²		0.189
<i>Adjusted R</i> ²		0.184

Note: ** $p < 0.01$, Standard beta values were used, $n = 325$

As shown in Table 3, firstly, a regression analysis was made as political skill is an independent variable and leader-member exchange is a dependent variable (Model 1). As it is seen from Model 1, there is a significant and positive relationship between political skill and leader-member exchange ($\beta = 0.392$, $p < 0.01$). According to this result *Hypothesis 1* was accepted. In the Model 2, a regression analysis was made as political skill is an independent variable and career success is a dependent variable (Model 2). It was determined that there is a significant



and positive relationship between political skill and career success ($\beta = 0.412, p < 0.01$). According to this result *Hypothesis 2* was accepted. In the Model 3, a regression analysis was made as political skill and leader-member exchange are independent variable and career success is a dependent variable (Model 3). In this Model, it was determined that there is a significant and positive relationship between leader-member exchange and career success ($\beta = 0.149, p < 0.01$) and *Hypothesis 3* was accepted. In the same model, It is seen that the effect of political skill on career success was decreased, but it is also seen that the continued significance of the relationship ($\beta = 0.354, p < 0.01$). According to these results, it can be say that leader-member exchange has a mediating effect (partial mediating effect) on the relationship between political skill and career success. In this context, *Hypothesis 4* was accepted.

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In literature, although there were researches related political skill, leader-member exchange and career success have been done with different variables, but the number of studies to explain the relationship between these three variables together was quite insufficient. In the literature, it was observed that there was one study investigated these variables together. Breland and colleagues' (2007) study was conducted in the United States with executives in the retail business. Although three variables have examined together in that study, leader-member exchange was not investigated as a mediating variable; it was investigated as a moderator variable on the relationship between political skill and career success. The difference of our study from that study, we investigated the mediating effect of leader-member exchange.

The findings of our study show that political skill has a significant effect on the relationship between leader-member exchange and career success; also political skill has affected the career success directly. On the other hand, we conducted a hierarchical regression analysis to determine the moderating effect of political skill. According to analysis to determine the moderator effect of leader-member exchange, we could not find a significant moderator effect of the leader-member exchange (political skill x leader-member exchange, $B = 0.02, p > 0.05$). In this aspect, we reached a different result from Breland and colleagues' (2007) findings. When considered in more detail, in our study, a significant relationship was determined between political skill and career success. According to this result, politically skilled employees' career success is higher than others. These findings are similar to other studies researched by Breland *et.al.* (2007:7), Todd *et.al.* (2009:194), Blickle *et.al.* (2010:388) and Wei *et.al.* (2010:448). Another result of this study, a significant relationship was determined between political skill and leader-member exchange. According to this result, politically skilled employees' relations with the superiors is more quality than others (in-group). These findings are similar to other studies researched by Breland *et.al.* (2007:7), Brouer *et.al.* (2009:66), Harris *et.al.* (2009:2384) and Kimura (2013:593). Another finding of our study, a significant relationship was determined between leader-member exchange and career success. According to this result, quality of leader-member exchange affect the career success in a positive way. This result is similar to other studies researched by Sagas and Cunningham (2004:82), Erdoğan *et.al.* (2004:319), Breland *et.al.* (2007:7) and Han (2010:448).

According to the study findings, political skill effects the career success both mediating effect of leader-member exchange and directly. This situation creates an advantage for the employees who have the power to create social influence on the superiors. Politically skilled employees can be easily realized themselves by their superiors. This situation can not be created a big problem for the organization if so employees have appropriate qualifications and performance. On the other hand, politically skilled employees who haven't necessary qualifications and performance can achieve their career success effecting their superiors with social influence; in reaching the point, they can maintain their current position by using this skill and they can



continue to step up their career. At this point, employees who haven't the qualifications required for the position and can not show sufficient performance and employees who have obtained a position and keeping this position, they can create problems for the interests of the organization.

In future studies, it will be beneficial to research the effect of political skill on individuals who have the necessary qualifications and performance. In other words, it will provide significant contribute to literature that determining whether to show a significant difference of leader-member exchange quality and level of career success among individuals who have same qualifications and performance depending on whether political skill high or low. On the other hand, It should be investigated that effects of using the political skill as a social influence factor on organization and employees. Overall, it can be considered that politically skilled people are happier because of high career success. Also, it must be examined whether it is really or not. Especially to understand the political skill as a social influence factor it should be investigated that physical and psychological situation of politically skilled people who haven't necessary qualifications and performance but tries to recover this deficit with political skills.

As with every study, there are also potential limitations in this study too. Firstly, this study's results should not be generalized for whole banking sector, as the study was conducted only in bank branches at Balikesir and Bursa centers. Future studies can cover different regions and cities of Turkey. Another limitation in our study was related to data collection method. The datas were collected with method (self-assessment). As stated previously, the common method variance could arise in this case. This situation was analyzed with Harman's one factor analysis and this problem has not been found in our study. But, in subsequent studies, the data can be collected from coworkers, their subordinates or their superiors. In addition, career success was evaluated in a subjective way. Using of the objective method will be useful.

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