

HOW EMPLOYEE PERCEPTIONS OF LEADER'S INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION COMPETENCE CORRELATES WITH JOB SATISFACTION AND MOTIVATION

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ABSTRACT

This research explores the connection between employees' perceptions of leadership communication – specifically, their leader's interpersonal communication competence – and employee motivation and job satisfaction. Utilizing the interpersonal leadership model developed by Lamm, Carter and Lamm (2016), the literature review explores supporting research that first develops a connection between leadership and interpersonal communication. Spitzberg's (1983) theory of interpersonal communication demonstrates why perceived communication is important and how it correlates with motivation and job satisfaction. The Perceived Leadership Communication Questionnaire (PLCQ), the Multidimensional Work Motivation Scale (MWMS), and the Job In General (JIG) scale were used to look for correlations between perceived leader communication, job satisfaction and motivation. Elements of the three scales were combined with demographic questions into a questionnaire distributed electronically to non-faculty, university employees. The various types of positions within a university provide the opportunity to relate the results to more organizations. The results indicated that the 223 respondents had high levels of job satisfaction and work motivation. Additionally, they perceived very strong interpersonal communication competence from their leaders. The results offered support for some of the four hypotheses tested. A moderately strong, statistically significant relationship was found between the respondents' general job satisfaction (JIG) and their assessment of a leader's communication (PLCQ). Statistically significant, but weaker, negative correlations were found between the measure of amotivation, (MWMS-AM) and both job satisfaction (JIG) and perception of leader communication (PLCQ). These results suggest that leaders should consider the role that perceived communication has on the employee's job satisfaction and work motivation.

Keywords: PLCQ, MWMS, JIG, Leader Communication, Job Satisfaction, Work Motivation

INTRODUCTION

Employee motivation is a concept that is unknown to many employers. Commonly, an organization uses trial and error and relies on guesswork to develop methods to motivate employees. Frequently, these methods work short-term, but the question remains as to how to truly and effectively motivate an employee. This task is typically delegated to the leader of a department or an organization, depending on the size. However, some question how much effect a leader has on motivating employees.

Zwiize-Koning and De Jong (2007) recognized that communicative power affects employees' levels of communication satisfaction, job satisfaction, and motivation to work for the organization.

This supports a connection between leadership communication, motivation and job satisfaction. Researchers Abdullah and Hui (2014) recognized a link between performance and job satisfaction which led to further studies about the relationship between communication satisfaction and job satisfaction (as cited in Dinger, 2018, p. 61). With job satisfaction having such a proven connection to performance, understanding any effects on employee job satisfaction is invaluable to an organization. Understanding if leaders can have a role in affecting employee motivation and job satisfaction could help organizations focus their training efforts.

Research supports the idea that interpersonal connection increases motivation (Trepanier, et al., 2012). Organizational leaders have the opportunity to develop that connection with their employees through communication in their day-to-day interactions. Dinger (2018) indicates that many scholars suggest prerequisites for effective leadership include both interpersonal skills and the ability to communicate effectively. However, the employee's perceptions of the leader's interpersonal communication competence (Spitzberg, 1983) should be considered when looking for the connection with motivation. The consideration of perspective is important because someone in an organizational leadership position can believe they possess the qualities of interpersonal communication, but they do not necessarily possess interpersonal communication competence as “[c]ompetence is an impression resulting from the behaviors of the relational interactants, the context within which they are enacted and the characteristics of the individuals involved” (Spitzberg, 1983, p. 326).

Because of the nature of competence, the employees' perceptions of the leader's interpersonal communication competence is what ultimately has an effect on motivation and likely even job satisfaction no matter the setting. The literature review in the next section examines the model of interpersonal leadership (Lamm, et al., 2016) to understand how employees' perceptions of interpersonal communication competence (Spitzberg, 1983) is necessary for effective leadership. The model will illustrate the necessity of interpersonal communication in leadership for the leadership to be effective.

The idea of interpersonal connection between employees and leaders having an effect on employee motivation is supported by the self-determination theory (Gagne et al., 2015). A review of the self-determination theory supports the Multidimensional Work Motivation Scale (Gagne et al., 2015) that will later be used to measure motivation of employees. The Perceived Leadership Communication Questionnaire (Schneider, et al., 2015) will also be used to determine the employees' perceptions of organizational leaders' communication. Then job satisfaction will be measured using the highly recognized Job in General scale (Ironson, et al., 1998) to understand how the employees view their personal job satisfaction.

Perceptions that people possess are significant and can affect the way they view every situation making it an intriguing concept in research. In addition to recognizing and understanding perceptions, understanding a connection between communication, employee motivation, and job satisfaction can be a valuable reference when looking to invest in the leaders of an organization. Witherspoon (1996) believes that leadership only exists through communication as the leaders can have a significant impact on culture, decisions, and change (as cited in Dinger, 2018).

The concept of interpersonal leadership communication and perceptions of employees is universal among various types of organizations. A university setting, for example, is comprised of many departments such as facility maintenance, enrollment, human resources, student services, and many more. According to Winefield, et al. (2008), universities have become more like private corporations in terms of operations and producing a profit within the last couple decades. When looking to explore the correlations of leadership communication perceptions and employee motivation and job satisfaction, it would be a logical choice to observe an organization such as a university to collect information from various types of employees and leaders and to allow the results to be applicable for more individual organizations.

Ultimately, the intent of this research is to determine if a connection exists between employees' perceptions of leaders' interpersonal communication competence and the job satisfaction and motivation of the employees. To begin this research, it is important to first review the appropriate literature.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

“Leadership communication is at the heart of daily organizational life” (Schneider, et al., 2015, p. 175). Communication is fundamental to leadership and motivation just as Kaya (1999, p.107) suggests, “Any organizational action or management process cannot be performed without communication because the communication is the lifeblood of human relations and motivation” (as cited in Egriboyen, 2017). This research will investigate if a connection exists between the perceptions employees have of their leader's communication efforts and employee motivation and job satisfaction.

Interpersonal Leadership Model

There are numerous theories offering many different opinions about what constitutes “leadership.” There are arguments for leadership being a result of traits, behaviors, situations and values (Fairholm and Fairholm, 2009). Among these many theories, the idea of transformational leadership is one of the more popular concepts in research for effective leadership. Trepanier, Fernet and Austin (2012) argue that transformational leadership is essential to understand effective workplace management and that it is characterized by four dimensions: charisma, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration (Bass, 1985, 1998 as cited in Trepanier et al., 2012). There are clear connections between effective leadership, communication and motivation in this concept.

“Securing communication is crucial in all leadership relations involving managers who are leaders of other persons” (Nordby, 2014, p. 76). Communication can take many forms, however, many scholars agree that when it is lacking, effective leadership is unlikely. “Effective communication has been shown to impact all aspects of an organization. Effective communication is an established element of successful leadership” (Dinger, 2019, p. 55). Lamm, Carter and Lamm (2016) suggest that without the ability to effectively communicate, leadership will not be possible.

Lamm, et al. (2016) developed a model known as Interpersonal Leadership, which encompasses many of the theories that are currently utilized to understand effective leadership. In their research,

they discovered certain entry conditions, core functions, and sub-themes that work together to determine effective leadership. “The items proposed within each area are a direct result of themes identified within the literature analyzed through an interpersonal lens” (Lamm, et al., 2016, p. 192). This model by Lamm, et al. (2016) is provided in figure 1.

As illustrated, personal attributes and communication competence are considered entry conditions – meaning that in order to do anything else that works towards effective leadership, a leader must first possess certain personal attributes such as authenticity, integrity, self-discipline, and trustworthiness. If those qualities are demonstrated by the leader, then followers show more respect and admiration to that leader. Lamm et al. (2016) also cites Bass and Avolio (1990) in the tie back to transformational leadership in that the idealized influencing factor calls for the need for leaders to act in a way that will make the followers want to imitate. “Employees tend to perceive a better relationship with the organization when they perceive their managers as authentic, ethical, balanced, fair, transparent, and consistent in what they say and do” (Men & Stacks, 2012, p. 161).

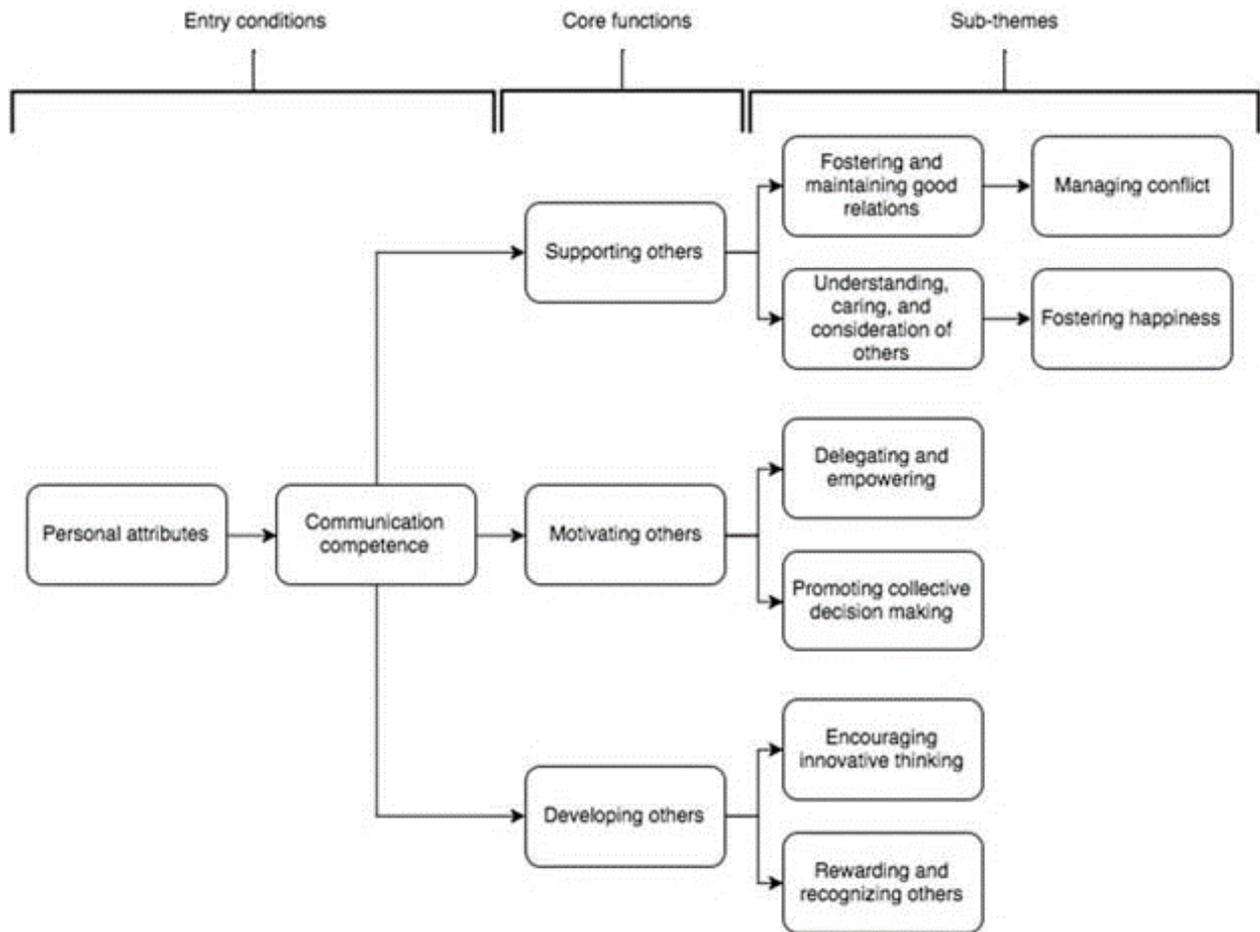


Figure 1. Interpersonal Leadership Model (Lamm, et al., 2016).

Once a leader possesses the necessary personal attributes, the next prerequisite required before being able to effectively execute the core functions is the need for communication competence. Lamm et al. (2016) highlight the research which supports that communication is a strong indicator

of interpersonal leadership developing successfully. Based on earlier discussion, it is safe to say that a significant number of scholars agree that effective communication is essential to leadership. “Communication may be the process most central to the success or failure of an organization” (Orpen, 1997, p. 519). It is important to understand effective and appropriate communication to possess communication competence.

The concept of communication competence consists of the ability to complete the communication goal at hand without violating the “rules” of a given situation (Kingsley Westerman, Reno, & Heuett, 2018). The next components of the model elucidate the need for the communication to be interpersonal in nature.

If the two entry conditions – *personal attributes and communication competence* – are satisfied, the secondary level of interpersonal leadership recognized as core functions can be implemented (Lamm et al., 2016). These core functions focus on the other, which in our case would be the employees. These include supporting others, motivating others, and developing others. There is high importance for interpersonal communication when examining these functions. As Nordby (2014) points out, shared understanding, insight and rational agreement which is all done through interpersonal communication, is shown to increase motivation and performance of employees in an organization. Along this same idea, Lamm et al. (2016) find that when the leaders and followers feel fulfilled and connected, there is an association with inspiring and influencing others. Fulfillment can often stem from developing and feeling invested into by one’s leader, and connection can often stem from the relationships that are developed through the support provided by the leader. Also fitting into this connection, Nordby (2014) notes that personal motivation can be affected by lack of intimacy.

It’s clear that the three core functions stem from interpersonal communication and work to develop leadership at a deeper level. To successfully support, motivate, and develop another person, interpersonal communication is necessary because both parties need to contribute to the interaction as it is happening (Nedzinskaitė-Mačiūnienė & Merkytė, 2019). In this, it is crucial for the leader to demonstrate authenticity as described by Avolio and Gardner (2005). “[A]uthentic leadership can make a fundamental difference in organizations by helping people find meaning and connection at work through greater self-awareness; by restoring and building optimism, confidence and hope; by promoting transparent relationships and decision making that builds trust and commitment among followers; and by fostering inclusive structures and positive ethical climates” (Avolio & Gardner, 2005, p. 331).

The style of authentic leadership allows for more transparent communication from both the leader and the follower. The transparency and openness allow for high quality interpersonal communication. Relating to Lamm’s model of interpersonal leadership, authentic leadership involves displaying internalized regulatory processes, balanced processing of information, relational transparency, and authentic behavior which are all necessary for communication competence (Avolio & Gardner, 2005). Looking at the next level of supporting, motivating in the model of interpersonal leadership, the idea of authentic leadership supports those concepts as well. In authentic leadership, followers tend to continuously develop the same characteristics of the authentic leaders (Avolio & Gardner, 2005). In order to achieve continuous growth, interpersonal communication must take place.

In the research done by Lamm et al. (2016), there are also sub-themes that emerge at the end of the Interpersonal Leadership model. Stemming from each core function are specific sub-themes relating to that function. For example, the function of supporting others branches out to themes of fostering and maintaining good relations which lead into managing conflict. The three are all connected. Understanding, caring and having a true consideration of others is another theme emerging from the supporting of others. Through this theme, leaders should be able to effectively nurture happiness within the employees. Developing others is included as another core function in the interpersonal leadership model, and that stems into encouraging innovative thinking as well as regarding and recognizing others (Lamm et al., 2016).

The final, but equally important core function in the Interpersonal Leadership model is recognized as motivating others, which is a primary connection that is observed in this overall research. Two sub-themes that emerge from motivating others are delegating and empowering as well as promoting collective decision making, all leading to connective and effective leadership (Lamm et al., 2016). Nordby (2014) recognizes engagement to be a foundation for individual involvement and motivation for achieving organizational goals. Even at the core function of motivating others, communication competence is required. Without it, the function cannot be effective.

Dursun Eğriboyun (2017) references consistent research confirming a strong relationship between effective communication and motivation. One point to consider, however, is how communication is deemed effective. Spitzberg (1983) suggests that competence is a matter of perception. Therefore, it is likely that the receiver (employee) in an interaction determines effectiveness of the sender's (leader) communication in the same way that the receiver determines the sender's competence. To better understand this concept, it is necessary to consider Spitzberg's (1983) theory of interpersonal communication competence theory.

Interpersonal Communication Competence Theory

“The better we understand the functions served by communication, and the motivations associated with these functions, the better we will be able to instruct people in recognizing such behavior and adapting accordingly” (Spitzberg, 1983, p. 327). It has been established that interpersonal communication is essential to effective leadership. Nedzinskaitė-Mačiūnienė and Merkyte (2019) suggest that communication competence is a key factor for effective output and well-being of employees. It is important to understand Spitzberg's (1983) theory of interpersonal communication competence on a deeper level to truly understand how it's connected to leadership, motivation, and job satisfaction.

A key term included in this theory is competence. As stated before, Spitzberg (1983) suggests that interpersonal communication competence is all a matter of perception. He explains that competence is not an inherent characteristic that is possessed by someone for another to observe, but rather, it is an impression resulting from the behaviors of the people involved in the interaction, the context of the situation and the characteristics of those involved (Spitzberg, 1983). Verderber and Verderber (2016) concur with Spitzberg and explain that no matter the setting or the communication event occurring, it is of high importance to be perceived as competent by others. Men and Stacks (2012) explain that several authors suggest that a leader's communication

competence, along with communication styles and channels, can influence employees' attitudinal and behavioral outcomes.

The interpersonal communication competence theory that Spitzberg (1983) formulates suggests that the concepts of motivation, knowledge and skill are all related and essential to one another under the frame of communication competence. "How well we communicate depends, first, on how knowledgeable we are about what behaviors are appropriate in similar conversational situations; second, on how skilled we are at actually using these appropriate behaviors during the conversation; and third, on how motivated we are to ensure the conversation is a successful one" (Verderber and Verderber, 2016, para. 3). Nedzinskaitė-Mačiūnienė and Merkyte (2019) offer additional support as they highlight other research that describes interpersonal communication as knowledge about what is effective and appropriate communication, the skills to demonstrate it, and motivation to engage in the interaction.

Interpersonal communication has shown to be connected to motivation in simpler ways as well. For example, Orpen (1997) suggests that communication can affect employee motivation positively or negatively depending on how it is received. Zwijze-Koning and De Jong (2007) found that when decisions are made solely by management, there were strong communicative powers that affected motivation levels. It was suggested that because of the way decisions were made, the employees felt like they were not valued and felt unimportant. This type of method of decision-making blocks a strong, personal relationship from being formed between leaders and their employees.

Interpersonal communication leads to more personal relationships which, in turn, supports motivation which inspires job satisfaction. Trepanier, et al. (2012) highlight the research that suggests high quality relationships are connected to trust and motivation. For a relationship to develop, interpersonal communication must occur. Nordby (2014) explains that proper dialogue needs to occur in a way that encourages a common understanding and allows both parties to understand each other in a holistic, comprehensive way. Listening is also key in interpersonal communication for leaders to effectively seek and process information (Lamm, et al., 2016). Ultimately, a need for personal relationships within an organization is necessary as they are the umbrellas that cover qualities such as trust, respect, and mutual support necessary for effective leadership (Trepanier et al., 2012).

Interpersonal communication has been established as an important component in effective leadership with the provided research. When looking for a connection to motivation and job satisfaction, it's also important to understand the association of the two dependent variables. How are job satisfaction and motivation related? Can they be affected by the employee's perceptions of the leader's communication competence? The research below provides an explanation for a supported connection.

Motivation and Job Satisfaction

In much of the research cited so far, a strong connection to motivation is described within interpersonal communication efforts. A supporting theory of motivation that connects it to interpersonal leadership is the Self-Determination Theory (SDT). "According to SDT, individuals

are more likely to experience a wide range of positive psychological outcomes when they are autonomously motivated and feel competent” (Trepanier, et al., 2012, p. 272). Autonomous motivation suggests that the motivation comes from within one’s self and their own values. Transformational leadership shares many components with autonomy motivation (Wang & Gagné, 2013 as cited in Gagne, et al., 2015). Interpersonal leadership connects to autonomous motivation through Lamm, Carter and Lamm’s (2016) core functions by developing interpersonal relationships with employees.

Research also supports a connection between job satisfaction and leadership communication. Madlock (2008) found that a positive predictor of an employee’s job satisfaction is their leader’s communication competence (as cited in Men & Stacks, 2012). Erben, Schneider, and Maier (2019) also conducted research that supported a positive association between job satisfaction and organizational commitment, organizational citizenship, and loyalty while finding a negative association with absenteeism, tardiness, and employee turnover (p. 508). Job satisfaction has been widely studied by researchers throughout the years, and while it is important on its own, much of the research suggests it goes hand in hand with motivation.

Understanding the connection between job satisfaction and employee motivation inspired the idea to explore how both areas may be connected similarly or dissimilarly to perceptions of leadership communication.

The research is clear that a connection exists between interpersonal communication, motivation, and job satisfaction. An understanding of the role perception has in competence provides a key connection. The perception of interpersonal communication competence can affect the way an interaction occurs and how relationships are developed. The research suggests that motivation is connected to the type of relationship that is developed which in turn can likely effect job satisfaction. The instruments used to measure this connection also provide support within the theories that inspired them.

Measures

The research presented earlier supports the idea that there is a connection that exists between leadership, communication, (more specifically, interpersonal leadership and interpersonal communication competence) motivation, and job satisfaction. To examine if this connection relates to employee motivation and job satisfaction being affected by their perceptions of their leader’s interpersonal communication competence, it’s necessary to select appropriate measures. To do this, there needed to be a perception component, a strong perceived communication component, an appropriate motivation measure as well as a reputable job satisfaction measure. With these criteria, there were three scales that were found to be most applicable – the Perceived Leadership Communication Questionnaire (PLCQ), the Multidimensional Work Motivation Scale (MWMS), and the Job In General (JIG) scale.

Perceived Leadership Communication Questionnaire. The Perceived Leadership Communication Questionnaire (PLCQ) is actually a two-part scale that is designed to compare the responses of leaders and followers (employees) using a twelve-question survey (Schneider, et al.,

2015). The two-part scale measures a “self-rating” (PLCQ-SR) as well as an “other-rating” (PLCQ-OR).

For the purposes of this research which has a focus only on one-way perception of the leader by the employee, it is only necessary to utilize the “other-rating” part of the survey.

The PLCQ-OR (specifically the “other-rating” portion) has shown evidence of internal consistency, construct validity, and criterion validity through results of initial studies (Schneider, et al., 2015). The six comprehensive questions address sensitivity to needs, devotion of time, communication with supervisor, understanding goal achievement, open communication, and problem solving. Each item is rated on a five-point response scale ranging from 0 (completely disagree) to 4 (completely agree) (Schneider, et al., 2015). This instrument focusses on the communication aspects of leadership behavior which inherently supports the connection between leadership and communication that has been suggested thus far.

Up to now, the PLCQ has typically been used only in measuring correlations with job satisfaction (Erben, Schneider, & Maier, 2019). It is not yet a commonly used measure as it is still relatively new, but in the research utilizing it so far, it has been found to be reliable and valid. It relates considerably to the research in this study making it an appropriate measure to employ. It will also provide an opportunity to explore the instrument with employee motivation rather than solely job satisfaction.

Multidimensional Work Motivation scale. The Multidimensional Work Motivation Scale (MWMS) is another measure that is relatively new to the research world. However, it has already shown evidence of validity in nine countries and in seven different languages using data from 3,435 workers (Gagne, et al., 2015). Factorial analyses indicated that the 19-item scale has the same factor structure across the seven languages (Gagne, et al., 2015). There are many scales available to measure motivation, however, many of them are controversial in their validity. The MWMS seemed to be most supported measure as well as the most appropriate measure for the context of this research.

MWMS developed from the previously reviewed self-determination theory (SDT). SDT offers a cross-culturally valid framework that illustrates employees who feel autonomous, competent, and related to others will likely have authentic engagement (Meyer & Gagné, 2008 as cited in Gagne, et al., 2015). Central concepts to the SDT include autonomous motivation and perceived competence (Trepanier, et al., 2012). Perceived competence aligns along the theory of interpersonal communication competence supporting the appropriateness of this measure. Also, as was discussed in the earlier communication and leadership research, interpersonal communication can have substantial impacts on how people feel about themselves.

Most SDT-based measures of motivation, including MWMS, ask the respondents why they do an activity by asking them to rate statements that reflect various types of behavioral principles (Gagne, et al., 2015). They continued to focus the instrument by narrowing the scope to provide the most effective measure of work motivation. The development of the scale is best explained in this passage from the original study:

SDT proposes a multidimensional view on motivation and specifies how these different types of motivation can be promoted or discouraged. Three major categories of motivation are discerned. First, amotivation is defined as the absence of motivation towards an activity. Second, intrinsic motivation is defined as doing an activity for its own sake, that is, because it is interesting and enjoyable in itself. Third, extrinsic motivation refers to engaging in the activity for instrumental reasons, such as receiving rewards and approval, avoiding punishments or criticism, boosting one's self-esteem, or reaching a personally valued goal. Given this diversity of instrumental reasons, SDT specifies different subtypes of extrinsic motivation, which vary in their internalization. (Gagne et al., 2015)

“SDT offers a multidimensional conceptualization of motivation, allowing for the assessment of both the level and quality of motivation” (Gagne, et al., 2015, p. 179). For the purpose of this study, it is appropriate to focus on the extrinsic, social motivations as well as amotivation. In this case, it would be more appropriate to consider external, social motivations. Gagne, et al. (2015) highlights that research on positive feedback has found that it relates positively to intrinsic motivation (p. 181). Positive feedback is more apparent in social interactions between an employee and supervisor. If this has been discovered by an employee, they may seek that social motivation to feel motivated in other ways.

Amotivation is another measure to focus in on as it is possible people are simply not motivated at all. According to Gagne, et al. (2015), transformational leadership would be expected to be negatively related to amotivation. That information means that high levels of motivation are positively related to transformational leadership. This information naturally leads to the expectation that amotivation will negatively correlate with employees' perceptions of their leaders' communication competencies. It was important to include amotivation in the study for clarification.

Job In General scale. After establishing job satisfaction to be an important element to measure within this research, the next essential step was to pick the most appropriate tool to measure it. Because job satisfaction has been widely studied, there are many different measures available. The goal in this specific research is to obtain a general impression of the employees' overall job satisfaction. With this in mind, a measure that had been tested for reliability and validity was preferred as well as a measure that is still being utilized in recent research.

One measure frequently used is the Job Descriptive Index (Smith, et al., 1969). Recently, the JDI has not been receiving as strong reviews as opposed to some other measurements. However, one section of the JDI, the Job In General (JIG) scale (Ironson, et al., 1988), has been used and validated in more recent research. In a study done by Van Saane, et al., (2003) exploring 29 various job satisfaction measurement instruments, they found that the Job In General scale was one of seven that met the quality criteria for reliability and validity. “Surprisingly, the JDI (Smith in [13]) did not meet the quality criteria, although it is the most frequently used job satisfaction instrument in organizational science [13,52]” (Van Saane, et al., 2003, p. 195). Ironson, et al. (1988) strongly supported the notion of the JIG having the capabilities of predicting variables such as intent to leave, life satisfaction, trust in management and identification with the work organization even more so than the JDI.

JDI and JIG have been known to be used internationally in various settings and to be applicable to all types of jobs within an organization in addition to being translated into multiple languages (Suzan, 2016). The JIG has been used more frequently in recent years, especially to measure general job satisfaction. Ironson, et al. (1988) explained that general scales are designed to estimate the respondent's general, overall feelings regarding their job which can then be used to predict important factors such as employee turnover, absenteeism, and organizational effectiveness. For this research, we only wanted to observe the general job satisfaction of employees to explore a connection to perceived leadership communication rather than diagnosing a specific issue within an organization making the JIG scale a great match.

The JIG was developed to include characteristics such as multiple items to provide an estimate of internal consistency, ease of reading and response, minimal overlap of content with measures of different variables, and demonstrate convergent validity (Ironson, et al., 1988). Because of the ease of reading and response, it does not take long for working professionals to complete the survey, providing users of the scale with a generally higher response rate. This was also another reason this scale was selected. To develop this simple, yet informative scale, they first assembled a collection of 42 global and evaluative adjectives and short phrases with a long-term frame of reference relating to general feelings about a person's job (Ironson, et al., 1988). These various adjectives and phrases were based off of the extensive review of literature done by Ironson and his team (1988), and the list was eventually narrowed down to 18 appropriate expressions with "yes," "no," or "?" for response choices.

RESEARCH QUESTION

Flauto (1999, as cited in Dinger, 2018) suggests that the ability to communicate effectively is a prerequisite for effective leadership. We would argue that effective leadership is directly connected to the employees having positive levels of motivation as well as positive levels of job satisfaction. It is likely that the employee's perception of their leader's ability to communicate well and interact with them at an interpersonal level is directly connected to the employee's motivation and job satisfaction.

Based on the review of literature presented, the following research question and hypotheses are proposed.

- RQ. How does perceived leadership communication correlate with employee job satisfaction and motivation?
- H1. When perceived leadership communication is viewed as favorable by employees, the employees have higher job satisfaction.
- H2. When perceived leadership communication is viewed as favorable by employees, the employees have higher levels of motivation.
- H3. Higher levels of job satisfaction correlate with higher levels of employee motivation.

- H4. Employee amotivation measures will be negatively correlated with extrinsic, social motivation measures.

METHOD

To answer the research question and test the hypotheses, it's necessary to gather the appropriate information. The information being sought involves employee perception of their leader's communication efforts as well as the employee's motivation and job satisfaction. With this information, we would look to see if the perceptions the employees have of their leader's communication efforts correlates with their motivation to work as well as their job satisfaction.

A survey questionnaire combining the questions from the Perceived Leadership Communication Questionnaire (PLCQ-OR), the Multidimensional Work Motivation Scale (MWMS), and the Job In General (JIG) scale were used to collect responses. Only the "other response" questions of the PLCQ were used due to the nature of the questions rather than adding the "self-response" questions for the employees to answer. Also, only the amotivation and external, social motivation questions will be used from the MWMS because of their applicability to the research questions posed earlier. Besides the two exceptions, the survey questions were used in the original format. The final questionnaire contained 38 questions which included a demographics section. To respect the time of the participants, the survey was intentionally kept short and easy to complete with the goal of a higher response rate.

To gather a large number of responses, the best option locally was to survey employees from University X. It was decided that staff would be the focus rather than faculty since the results would be more applicable to general organizations outside of higher-education organizations. A local option was best due to resources available as well as the name recognition that the researchers already had to staff on campus.

Keeping the survey responses anonymous was an important consideration to allow the respondents to feel more secure, thus providing honest answers. To ensure anonymity, names would not be included on or with the electronic survey. Identifying questions such as income, specific age, specific years of service, and the unique department were intentionally left out of the demographics section to also support anonymity.

It was originally intended for surveys to be distributed in person at large staff meetings and electronically to provide opportunities for various types of employees to respond. Since many positions do not involve daily, long-term computer work, the electronic version may not have been as convenient. However, the effects of COVID-19 eliminated the in-person survey option. The software program, Qualtrics was used to create and distribute the electronic survey.

To collect the appropriate email addresses to distribute the survey, we contacted vice presidents of the departments on campus for their listservs. After working with Human Resources and the IT department, we were able to receive a full list of the university's staff email address. These email addresses were added to a group in Qualtrics to distribute, and settings were made to ensure anonymity and decrease the risk of multiple responses. The responses were limited to only those who received the email through Qualtrics as it was done through invitation only. If a responder

tried to take the survey more than once, the survey would end immediately and display a default message.

Participants were also given the opportunity to enter a drawing for a \$25 Amazon.com gift card after submitting the survey. There were four names drawn to receive a gift card. To keep survey responses anonymous, email addresses were collected separately using another Qualtrics survey. A link was provided to access that survey with the message of thanks after the survey was submitted.

RESULTS

After the responses were collected, they were coded and entered into SPSS to determine any correlations and relationships to test the hypotheses presented above. The researchers used the coding methods in the original instruments being used for the survey. Pearson correlation tests were run to test for correlations among MWMS, PLCQ, and JIG results.

Respondent profile

There were 223 responses received through the Qualtrics survey from staff employees of the University, after allowing about one month for the participants to submit their self-reported answers to the online survey. Two reminders were sent out in that time encouraging respondents to participate in the study. The survey was sent to 874 staff employees via their work email accounts meaning that the response rate was 26%.

Responses came from a variety of ages ranging from 18 to over 65 years. Of these respondents, 150 (67.26%) most closely identified with the female gender while 69 (30.94%) indicated their gender as male. The remaining responses were either nonbinary (0.45%) or chose not to answer (1.35%). The respondents were also asked to disclose their highest level of education. Many had some level of college education. Only 12 (5.38%) respondents indicated their highest level of education to be a high school diploma or GED. Twenty (8.97%) indicated they completed some college, and 19 (8.52%) said they had earned an Associate's Degree. Seventy-Seven (34.53%) participants indicated a Bachelor's Degree was their highest level of education, and the remaining 95 (42.6%) respondents said they had earned a Master's Degree or above.

The variety of responses continued with years of service to the university. Among the 223 responses, 46 (20.72%) participants had less than 3 years of experience at the institution. Another 62 (27.92%) had worked for the university 3-5 years, 42 (18.92%) answered 6-10 years, 45 (20.27%) said 11-19 years, and 16 (7.21%) participants answered with 20-29 years. Only nine (4.05%) responses indicated 30-39 years of service while the remaining two (0.90%) participants served the institution 40 years or more. The overwhelming majority of respondents indicated they were full-time employees of the institution with only seven (3.14%) indicating they were part-time employees. A strong majority of participants (185, 84.09%) indicated that they worked in primarily an office position while the rest indicated they worked in either a primarily manual labor position (6.82) or a mix of the two (9.09%). The survey respondents represented a good variety of staff employees. Ideally, there would have been more representation of the manual labor positions, but

only collecting responses online presented a disadvantage in that area. However, the variety of ages and years of service was a good mix of representation.

Results for leader communication, work motivation and job satisfaction scales

The remainder of the results section will focus on the results of the three measures previously discussed: The Perceived Leadership Communication Questionnaire (PLCQ), The Multidimensional Work Motivation Scale (MWMS), and the Job In General (JIG) scale.

Perceived Leadership Communication Questionnaire (PLCQ). The PLCQ asked participants to rate their leader’s/supervisor’s communication efforts within the workplace by indicating their level of agreement with the six statements presented on table 1. Overall, it appeared that the majority of respondents have positive perceptions of their leader’s communication efforts. The average overall score of the questions was a 4.03 out of 5. A score of 5 indicated that the responder completely agreed with the positive statement of their leader’s/supervisor’s communication efforts. The lowest mean score (3.71) was in response to the statement “My supervisor seems to like devoting his/her time to me” while the highest average score (4.22) was with the statement “My supervisor and I can speak openly with each other.”

Table 1. Mean scores for PLCQ items

PLCQ Items	Mean	St. Dev	N
My supervisor seems to like devoting his/her time to me.	3.71	1.200	223
I am content with the way my communication with my supervisor is going.	3.94	1.275	223
My supervisor and I share an understanding of how we would like to achieve our goals.	4.04	1.157	221
Especially when problems arise, my supervisor and I talk to each other even more intensively in order to solve the problems.	4.10	1.230	221
My supervisor is sensitive to the needs of others.	4.17	1.174	223
My supervisor and I can speak openly with each other.	4.22	1.168	222

Multidimensional Work Motivation scale (MWMS). The MWMS provided a closer look at the motivation of the employees. Participants were asked why they do or would put efforts into their current job by indicating their level of agreement to six different questions. The responses would tell us in what way the respondent is most motivated as discussed previously with a focus on amotivation and social external regulation. Two MWMS subscales (AM-Amotivation and ExtSoc-Extrinsic, Social) collected responses related to work motivation in the current investigation. For both MWMS subscales, the stem in the questionnaire was “Why do you or would you put efforts into your current job?” and used the following response scale: 1 = not at all, 2 = very little, 3 = a little, 4 = moderately, 5 = strongly, 6 = very strongly, and 7 = completely.

Table 2 presents the mean scores for the three measures of amotivation. The extremely low mean scores fall very near the minimum score of 1 on the 1-7 scale. Thus, the mean scores indicate an extremely low level of amotivation in the survey respondents.

Table 2. Mean scores for MWMS-Amotivation items

MWMS-AM Items	Mean	St. Dev	N
I don't, because I really feel that I'm wasting my time at work.	1.48	.986	217
I do little because I don't think this work is worth putting efforts into.	1.30	.821	216
I don't know why I'm doing this job, it's pointless work.	1.21	.676	216

Table 3 presents the mean scores for the three items related to extrinsic or social regulation. While the mean scores for these three items are slightly higher than the amotivation items, the mean scores of 2.81, 2.85 and 3.44 are all below the scale's median of 4. The responses indicate that the respondents believed that these extrinsic variables were slightly related to their work motivation, but they still do not represent a substantial motivator.

Table 3. Mean scores for MWMS-Extrinsic Regulation-Social items

MWMS-ExtSoc Items	Mean	St. Dev	N
To get others' approval	2.81	1.719	215
Because others will respect me more	3.44	1.847	216
To avoid being criticized by others	2.85	1.760	216

Job in General scale (JIG). Finally, the participants were asked about how they viewed their job in general by being presented with a descriptive word while being asked to think of their job in general. They were instructed to select “yes,” “no,” or “?” to determine their agreement that word described the way they viewed their job in general. Overall, the responses were strongly in agreement with the positive words and not in agreement with the negative words, as shown in table 4.

Table 4. Response Frequencies for Job in General (JIG) Satisfaction Scale Items

Positive JIG Items	Yes	No	?	Negative JIG Items	Yes	No	?
Acceptable	199	8	7	Rotten	5	207	1
Good	195	13	6	Waste of Time	2	200	12
Pleasant	190	17	8	Bad	9	195	11
Worthwhile	185	8	21	Worse than Most	9	195	9
Enjoyable	175	19	19	Poor	12	193	7
Better than Most	163	32	18	Undesirable	13	192	9
Makes Me Content	156	33	25	Inadequate	16	187	10
Great	136	46	33	Disagreeable	10	183	19
Excellent	125	56	32				
Superior	95	79	39				

The results on table 4 illustrate that the vast majority of participants viewed their job as generally positive. The top descriptive word agreed to by participants was “acceptable” with 93% agreeing that the term described their job in general. The next two terms with the highest level of agreement were “Good” and “Pleasant.” “Rotten” was the term most commonly determined to **not** be a word the participants would use to describe their job in general with 97.18% of responses indicating that the term was not descriptive of their job.

Hypotheses Tested

The research question investigated in this research addressed how perceived leadership communication might correlate with employee job satisfaction and motivation. Earlier, four hypotheses were proposed for this question. The results for all four hypotheses are presented in Table 5 and are discussed below.

Table 5. Correlation results for perceived leader communication, motivation and satisfaction

		MWMS_AM	MWMS_ExtSoc	JIG
PLCQ	Pearson r	-.243**	.033	.581**
	Sig (2-tail)	.000	.635	.000
	N	214	213	206
MWMS_AM	Pearson r		.176**	-.340**
	Sig (2-tail)		.010	.000
	N		214	207
MWMS_ExtSoc	Pearson r			-.015
	Sig (2-tail)			.829
	N			206

*** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).*

H1. When perceived leadership communication is viewed as favorable by employees, the employees have higher job satisfaction.

A Pearson correlation was used to test for a correlation between the Job in General (JIG) satisfaction measure composite results and the Perceived Leader Communication Questionnaire (PLCQ) composite results. As noted on table 5, the findings significantly correlated at the 0.01 level. The correlation coefficient of .581 indicates a positive, moderately strong relationship (Salkind, 2017), demonstrating that higher levels of perceived leader communication correlated with higher levels of general job satisfaction.

H2. When perceived leadership communication is viewed as favorable by employees, the employees have higher levels of motivation.

To find the potential correlations between motivation and how employees view their leader’s communication efforts, it was decided that amotivation and external, social motivation needed to be tested separately. A Pearson correlation test was used to look for a correlation between the Perceived Leader Communication Questionnaire (PLCQ) composite results and two measures of employee motivation that are subscales of the Multidimensional Work Motivation Scale (MWMS) – Amotivation and Extrinsic, social regulators. As noted on table 5, the findings for motivation scales were mixed. The Pearson coefficient of -.243 for the amotivation subscale was statistically significant, but represents only a weak, negative correlation. The direction of the correlation (negative) is consistent with the measures, since higher perceived leader communication would be hypothesized to correlate with lower levels of amotivation. While statistically significant, the

results explain only about 6% of the variance. However, the results do offer limited support for hypothesis 2.

The correlation coefficient for the extrinsic, social regulators subscale of the MWMS with the PLCQ was .033, demonstrating no relationship, and it is not statistically significant. These results indicate that external motivation factors had no relationship with how the employees' perceived their leaders' communication efforts, thus offering no support for hypothesis 2.

H3. Higher levels of job satisfaction correlate with higher levels of employee motivation.

Additional Pearson correlation tests were used to ascertain if there is a relationship between the two MWMS subscale results and the composite JIG results. In the correlations of satisfaction (JIG) with amotivation, a moderate, negative correlation of $-.340$ was found, and it was significant at the 0.01 level. This means that high motivation correlated with positive job satisfaction because, as noted earlier, amotivation is essentially the absence of motivation. These results do offer support for hypothesis 3.

When testing a correlation between the second MWMS subscale (extrinsic, social regulators) and job satisfaction, the results showed no correlation and no significance, offering no support for hypothesis 3. Thus, the extrinsic, social subscale was not significant or correlated with the measures for job satisfaction (JIG) or perceived leader communication (PLCQ).

H4. Employee amotivation measures will be negatively correlated with extrinsic, social motivation measures.

Because amotivation is essentially lacking motivation, it was hypothesized that there would be a negative correlation between the two measures of work motivation, so that higher levels in one measure would be related to lower levels in the other. As noted on table 5, the Pearson r value of $.176$ was achieved in this correlation test. The result does not support the hypothesis. Not only is the correlation coefficient evidence of, at best, a weak relationship, the relationship is positive. These results may indicate internal validity issues between the two MWMS subscales. Additionally, since the responses to the PLCQ were so strongly positive, there may not have been a sufficient range in the responses to demonstrate a stronger correlation.

DISCUSSION

The measures of perceptions of leader communication, job satisfaction and motivation resulted in surprisingly consistent and positive results from the respondents in the current investigation. The overall mean score on the six measures of perceived leader communication (PLCQ) found on table 1 was a 4.03 on a 5-point scale, so the perceptions of leader communication were positive. Additionally, the mean scores for the three measures of amotivation were very low, nearly at the minimum possible value (1) on the 7-point scale. Finally, the response frequencies provided on table 4 showed that the respondents strongly identified the positive adjectives as being descriptive of their job and the negative adjectives as not being descriptive.

One interesting trend among the correlation results presented in table 5 was the difference in significant correlations between the two subscales of the MWMS – amotivation and extrinsic/social regulators. As noted in table 5, the amotivation scale had statistically significant correlation coefficients with both the measure of general job satisfaction (JIG) and the measure of perceived leader communication (PLCQ). Both of these correlations were negative, so stronger perceptions of leader communication and job satisfaction were found in those with low levels of amotivation. Gagne, et al. (2015) found that amotivation is negatively related to transformational leadership, thus it is not surprising that amotivation is negatively associated with perceptions of leader communication and job satisfaction.

Contrary to the results for the amotivation subscale, the extrinsic/social regulator subscale did not have statistically significant results for either job satisfaction or perceived leader communication. The explanation for the lack of significant correlations with the external regulators may be rooted in the Self Determination Theory discussed earlier. Trepanier et al. (2012) argued that when people are autonomously motivated, where the motivation comes from within an individual and their value set, that they are likely to experience many “positive psychological outcomes” (272). Indeed it appears that the external, social regulators are not correlated with satisfaction or perceptions of a leader’s communication.

The results of the current investigation demonstrate significant correlations between the perception of leader communications with job satisfaction and motivation. These results, and the lack of a correlations of external regulators for motivation on job satisfaction or leader communication, should give pause to organizational leaders and encourage them to promote leader communication, while not relying on extrinsic regulators (e.g., sales contests, sales goals, etc.) to motivate employees.

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QUARTERLY REVIEW OF BUSINESS DISCIPLINES

February 2021

Volume 7
Number 4



A JOURNAL OF INTERNATIONAL ACADEMY OF BUSINESS DISCIPLINES
SPONSORED BY UNIVERSITY OF NORTH FLORIDA
ISSN 2334-0169 (print)
ISSN 2329-5163 (online)