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Relationship among superior-subordinate communication, job satisfaction, and internal customer satisfaction in higher education

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RELATIONSHIP AMONG SUPERIOR-SUBORDINATE COMMUNICATION,

JOB SATISFACTION, AND INTERNAL CUSTOMER

SATISFACTION IN HIGHER EDUCATION

A Thesis

by

TANZEER AHMED

Submitted to the Graduate School of
The University of Texas-Pan American
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Major Subject: Communication

RELATIONSHIP AMONG SUPERIOR-SUBORDINATE COMMUNICATION,

JOB SATISFACTION, AND INTERNAL CUSTOMER

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ABSTRACT

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pp., references, 185 titles.

The purpose of this study is to evaluate the relationship among supervisor-subordinate

communication, job satisfaction, and internal customer satisfaction in higher education. The

participants in this survey included 171 university staff serving not in a supervisory role.

Relationships between internal customer satisfaction and supervisor-subordinate communication,

employee job satisfaction and supervisor-subordinate communication, and internal customer

satisfaction and employee job satisfaction were examined. The three hypotheses predicted in this

study were supported. Results of the study are discussed. Conclusions, limitations and topics for

further research are addressed.

DEDICATION

The completion of my thesis studies would not have been possible without the support of my loving family. I dedicate this thesis to my father, Dr. M. Rafiqul Islam, who sadly passed away in November 2007. He was Professor of geology and always dreamed of my educational success. He will always be deeply missed.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Hacker and Dreifus (2010) report on the problematic state of higher education in the early 21st century. Specifically, their book addresses the $250000 tuition cost for students to attend a top-tier university. The business of shaping undergraduate minds charges a lot of money and serves too few (Hacker & Dreifus, 2010). Hacker and Dreifus (2010) argue that many undergraduate degrees are too vocational. A lot of money is being spent on exclusive dining/dorm facilities and sports centers. In addition, the number of administrative staff has risen and $1 million annual salaries for college presidents have become common (Hacker & Dreifus, 2010). Although administrative staff has increased, the effectiveness of these staff members is being questioned (Hacker & Dreifus, 2010).

In higher education, members of the academic support staff monitor class-attendance patterns, drop/add information, grades, and preregistration information to identify and intervene with students who are experiencing academic difficulties (Kuh, 2007). These group members also assist clients, such as students, faculty members, other staff members and/or community. A report prepared by one university staff senate states (Staff Senate Report, 2005):

Staff employees in higher education are often the face of the institution though their importance is not recognized by some. That failure is a costly mistake because before a student is able to take advantage of any instruction at a university, he or she has to

successfully enroll in and attend a faculty member's class. It is very important to keep the staff members well trained, as they are the face of every university. (p. 2)

The lack of staff development training in higher education is creating a supervisor-subordinate communication problem that is ultimately impacting internal customer satisfaction in colleges and universities across the country (Maguad, 2007). Maguad (2007) claims that an institution committed to customer satisfaction and continuous improvement will need to work with students, faculty, staff, and other customers to understand their current expectations and also to anticipate their requirements in the future. It is paramount for an institution of higher education to create trust within the whole organization where free and open discussions are allowed, opinions are respected, and participants are authorized to take corrective action on poor practices (Maguad, 2007). In addition, staff used be able to express their exact feelings about the tasks, processes, and systems that are out of control and require urgent attention and solutions (Maguad, 2007).

Developing and maintaining a customer focus in higher education requires effective leadership. Leadership has been defined as "the use of non-coercive influence to shape the group or organization's goals, motivate behavior toward the achievement of those goals, and help define group or organization culture" (Griffin, 2003, p. 304). Leaders are a significant component and influenced by the system in which they work. They carry out tasks that are important for others to achieve their purpose, which in this case, is quality communication within the office and customer satisfaction. As quality of communication increases, so will the pride-in-workmanship. The ending result will be that a new institutional culture will surface, one in which working becomes meaningful and prosperous (Maguad, 2007).

Institutional culture can influence frontline employees' attitudes, behaviors, and performance at work. Frontline employees play a pivotal role in face-to- face service encounters because they can influence customer perceptions of service quality, satisfaction, and value (Brady & Cronin, 2001). Moreover, Lomas (2007) discusses that public services around the world have been influenced by the quality management literature experts such as Deming (1986) and Crosby (1984), who claimed customer orientation is just as appropriate for service organizations as it is for manufacturing and commercial industries. The work of universities is much more directed and controlled today since the government uses public service management tactics (e.g. performance indicators and budget capping) and emphasizes customer-orientation and quality assurance (Henkel, 2000).

Although academic support staff members make up a significant portion of all employees at institutions of higher education, little research has been conducted on this group. These groups of people are either professional employees or office assistants and their functions are mainly to support their **department, students,** and **faculty**. "The literature on staff is almost non-existent," stated Dr. John Cheslock, professor of Higher Education Administration at the Penn State University (personal communication, October 7, 2010). According to Cheslock, the literature is very slim in terms of university staff productivity. In addition, Dr. Michael Siegel, assistant professor for Director of Administration of Higher Education Program at Suffolk University stated "I am afraid I am not aware of any substantial literature base on staff-related productivity issues in higher education" (personal communication, October 18, 2010). He further said that "most of the literature I have read focuses on other industries, but it is much more difficult to get data, I would believe, about higher education because the institutional culture from campus to campus is often disparate" (personal communication, October 18, 2010).

The following sections highlight several variables that explain how the academic support staff members influence institutions of higher education including job satisfaction and customer service.

Academic Support Staff and Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction is defined as an employee's influencing response to different aspects of the work environment (Wheeless, Wheeless, & Howard, 1984) and is investigated from the perspective of need fulfillment (Schaffer, 1953). The traditional approach is to measure job satisfaction by focusing on the attitudes of subordinates towards work, supervisor, pay, promotions, and co-workers (Smith, Kendall, & Hulin, 1969). A major part of a person's life is spent in work, which is a social reality and expectation. Employee satisfaction is thought to be one of the key requirements of a well-run organization (Khalid & Irshad, 2010). Job satisfaction is a primary aspect at work (Khalid & Irshad, 2010). The most important indication of job satisfaction is how an organization functions (Kaya, 1995). Thus, job satisfaction is an essential pre-requisite for a healthy organizational environment and ultimate treatment of customers (Khalid & Irshad, 2010).

Relational problems seem to be a major factor between supervisor and subordinate in all organizations in terms of job satisfaction. According to anecdotal information from a southern university study published on its website, staff leaders mentioned that super-subordinate relationships are a major problem at an institution of higher education (personal communication, October 4, 2010). In addition, one staff senate survey conducted in the summer of 2005 at a university in South Texas indicated that 16.4% of the 324 staff members who responded felt that they were not satisfied/very dissatisfied with the management skills of their supervisor. Thirty

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three percent (50 out of 136) of the additional comments submitted by staff members focused on the need to increase the management skills of supervisors. Some comments regarding supervisor skills were general, but others were quite detailed. For example, one staff member wrote, "supervisors need training on how to improve their management skills, how to be better communicators and be better informed on the rules for the university such as sick leave, vacation, and purchasing. I would suggest that is university start a mandatory supervisor training program for all individuals with supervisory responsibilities" (Employee Comments Report, 2009).

The flow of information from supervisor to subordinates is crucial for the job to be done effectively. In an organization, supervisors are important information providers to their subordinates at many levels (Andrews & Kacmar, 2001). The standard of communication among supervisor and subordinate can play a major role in the process and outcome of information, thus influencing overall management. Former research has sought to explore the relationship between overall communication satisfaction and job satisfaction. The relationship has been shown to be fairly strong (Downs, 1988). But one important aspect has largely been overlooked, which has serious implications on organizational success, and that is the communication and relationship specifically between supervisor and subordinate.

The previous paragraphs highlight the importance for the academic support staff members to have job satisfaction, because as it plays an important role in the ultimate behavior of the employee towards his or her job and thus, internal and external customer satisfaction. However, in any organization, the main customer service starts at home, which is within the organization.

Internal Customer Satisfaction

An internal customer is anyone in an organization who is supplied with products or services by others in the organization (Gremler, Bitner, & Evans, 1994). That is, employees of an organization can be considered internal customers who, like external customers, are looking to get their needs satisfied (Gremler et al., 1994). Lewis and Entwistle (1990) argue, "if these internal encounters are unsatisfactory, then the (external) customer may end up dissatisfied, complain, and see the fault as lying with the customer-contact employee" (p. 50).

In recent years, the concept of internal customers in service organizations has been introduced and discussed in the marketing literature. The consensus is that the satisfaction of these internal customers (i.e. employees) is also important to the success of a service firm. As with external customers, an internal customer's satisfaction with the firm can be significantly influenced by encounters experienced with internal service providers (Gremler et al., 1994).

In general, "customer satisfaction is defined as a measure of how a firm's product or service performs compared to customer's expectations" (Zondiros, Konstantopoulos, & Tomaras, 2007, p. 1086). A strong correlation has been found between job characteristics and leadership style (Banai & Reisel, 2007; Kuo & Ho, 2010), employee satisfaction (Hackman & Lawler, 1971; Hackman & Oldham, 1980; Kuo & Ho, 2010), working motivation (Debnath, Tandon, & Pointer, 2007; Kuo & Ho, 2010), sense of quality of work life (Wood, 2008; Kuo and Ho 2010), psychological well-being (Shattuck, 2007; Kuo & Ho, 2010), organizational commitment (Chang & Lee, 2006; Kuo & Ho, 2010), and performance (Butler, 2007; Kuo & Ho, 2010). Because universities are now faced with increasing competitive and commercial environments, they have turned to the strategy of addressing the quality of service delivery and related factors as a way of

obtaining a competitive advantage in this increasingly challenging environment (Poole, Harman, Snell, Deden, & Murray, 2000).

Academic research reveals that the service sector is now dominant in every developed economy. Thus, to compete effectively, all companies must become service oriented companies (Rust & Miu, 2006). Customer satisfaction is paramount, because customer perception is reality when it comes to buying decisions. In this viewpoint there is no such thing as actual *quality* except as perceived by the customer, and thus serving the customer better depends upon understanding how to increase quality perceptions and customer satisfaction (Rust & Miu, 2006).

A longitudinal research study conducted by Rust and Miu (2006), depicts that in the 1970s, service was considered different from goods; in the 80s, the stress was more on customer service quality and complaint management; in the 90s, the emphasis was on service improvement financially and direct marketing; and in the 2000s, the importance was focused on managing customer lifetime value and equity, profitable long-term relationships with customers, and basing corporate strategy on service. These findings also correlate to the education environment. The competition is growing among universities with the change of economy and technological advances (Rust & Miu, 2006).

In addition, research indicates that when a customer perceives service quality to be below the desired level, increasing customer satisfaction through improved service has a large positive influence on willingness to pay (Rust & Miu, 2006). Serving the customer effectively depends upon understanding customer expectations and the antecedents of satisfaction. Satisfying customers is particularly important because of the value of customer retention. It is less expensive to satisfy an existing customer than to invest in advertising to attract new customers.

Therefore, the road to profitability is to work hard to keep current customers (Rust & Miu, 2006).

Zondiros, et al. (2007) talks about "employee satisfaction" and according to them, many empirical studies show that satisfied and loyal employees are a prerequisite to maintaining satisfied and loyal customers (Vilares & Coelho, 2003). Further research findings show that between 40 and 80 percent of customer satisfaction and loyalty is determined by the customer-employee relationship (Boles, Babin, Brashear, & Brooks, 2001).

Tan and Kek (2004) mentioned that "customer service and quality are the driving forces in the business community" (p. 17). As higher education institutions tussle for a competitive advantage and high service quality, the evaluation of educational service quality is essential to provide motivation for and to give feedback on the effectiveness of educational plans and implementation (Tan & Kek, 2004).

Factors that Impact Job Satisfaction of Academic Staff Support

Supervisor Subordinate Communication

Job satisfaction in university settings can be attributed to several factors. The first factor encountered in the university is supervisor-subordinate relationship and communication, which is universal in all working environments. If an academic support staff member works under someone who is a good resource and helps the employee, the staff member can thrive. On the other hand, a boss who adds to an employee's difficulties can make a project seem filled with torture. If every step is met with resistance and time and energy are drained by just getting a project approved and ready to start, then it is very difficult to excel in work.

Trust is another influential factor in the supervisor-subordinate relationship (Cheng, 1990). The trust involves social personality characteristics that help stabilize interpersonal exchange relationships in both social and corporate contexts (Cheng, 1990; Zucker, 1986). According to Azzedin and Maheswaran (2002), the notion of trust is a complex subject relating to a firm belief in attributes such as reliability, honesty, and competence of the trusted entity.

In this study, "trust is defined as the firm belief in the competence of an entity to act as expected such that this firm belief is not a fixed value associated with the entity but rather it is subject to the entity's behavior and applies only within a specific context at a given time."

(p. 1)

Employee oppression and burnout are serious problems for many organizations, resulting in a number of negative work-related characteristics including emotional exhaustion, low job satisfaction, and diminished personal health (Wright & Bonett, 1997). Researchers have indicated that organizational commitment had been associated with increased job performance (Cohen, 1992), reduced turnover (Cohen, 1993), and lower levels of absenteeism (Shore, Barksdale, & Shore, 1995). Infante and Gordon (1991) found that supervisors' verbal aggressiveness was negatively related to subordinates' job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Madlock & Kennedy-Lightsey, 2010).

The second factor impacting job satisfaction among academic support staff member encountered in the university setting is that the education sector is now facing a worldwide recession, decreasing state funding, and increasing competitive pressures (Kezar, 2010). This is supported by the Higher Education Workplace (2010), the president for Arizona State University, Dr. Michael Crow said "The United States has undergone massive economic, social and cultural shifts over the past 50 years, but our higher education institutions have hardly

changes at all" (p. 15). Furthermore, according to Kezar (2004) institutes of higher education

need to develop leaders who can tackle the type of systemic and challenging problems that

higher education faces. Due to the severe budget cuts in higher institutions across the United

States, the leaders have to pay more attention to the job satisfaction of the all level employees to

retain employees, thus eventually customers.

Studies have shown that training and development can be a strategic weapon in

improving performance and in building and sustaining a competitive advantage. However,

studies suggest that employee training and development are under-valued and under-used as a

strategic plan (Kezar, 2010). Skills shortages are placing a greater importance than ever on the

training and retention of staff.

Equally as important, companies are waking up to the fact that investing in staff helps

create future wealth and competitiveness (Gordon, 1999). Moreover, employers now recognize

that the speed with which the supply of skills can match demand will influence their ability to

respond to technological developments and competitive pressures. Companies need to identify

their skills requirements and implement training programs that will attract and retain quality staff

and provide the necessary support past the induction process (Gordon, 1999).

An organization's decision to train employees influences the overall economy, even if the

firm does not factor the economy into its decision (Glance, Hogg, & Huberman, 1997). If all

firms within an industry fail to train their workers, the whole economy suffers (Glance et al.,

1997). Training workers is a type of public good, a category that encompasses a broad range of

social dilemmas. Employees face a similar dilemma in their choice of how much to contribute to

the overall productivity of the organization. If employees receive a share of the profits regardless

of their contribution, some may decide to free ride on the efforts of their fellow workers. If all employees decide to do so, the company will fail (Glance et al., 1997).

The third factor influencing job satisfaction among academic support staff member encountered in the university is subordinate-supervisor communication. Subordinate-supervisor communication satisfaction has received considerable attention in prior research, including its association with job satisfaction (Madlock, 2008; Pettit, Goris, & Vaught, 1997; Wheeless et al., 1984), productivity (Clampitt & Downs, 1993), job performance (Pincus, 1986), and organizational commitment (Varona, 1996). Pincus's (1986) research findings showed that supervisors have an important influence on the job and communication satisfaction of their subordinates.

Communication factors found to be associated with subordinate job satisfaction include supervisors' display of nonverbal immediacy (Richmond & McCroskey, 2000), communication satisfaction (Hilgerman, 1998), influence of gender (Madlock, 2006), supervisors' communication styles (Richmond, McCroskey, Davis, & Koontz, 1980), and mentoring (Bahniuk, Dobos, & Hill, 1990; Scandura & Williams, 2004). Moreover, strong positive relationships have been found between job satisfaction and communication satisfaction (Pettit et al., 1997). Favorable employee communication in the workplace has been shown to increase job satisfaction and employee performance (Ainspan & Dell, 2000), resulting in organizational success (Baskin, Aronoff, & Lattimore, 1996). This implies that the nature of supervisor's feedback has an influence on employee performance. The applicability of feedback research to research on supervisor-subordinate communication is verified by Hanser and Muchinsky (1980) who found consistent relationships between perceived feedback and dimensions of organizational communication.

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According to Hecht (1978), communication satisfaction is a socio-emotional feeling derived from positive relational interactions. Thus, employee communication satisfaction is important because it highlights a key issue for employees who assist in determining organizational effectiveness. Low employee communication satisfaction may result into reduced employee commitment, greater absenteeism, increased industrial unrest, higher employee turnover, and reduced productivity (Hargie, Tourish, & Wilson, 2002). At an individual level, poor communication can result in increased uncertainty about situations, increased occupational stress, and burnout (Ray, 1993).

To solve the problem of supervisor-subordinate issues, training for academic support staff members should be recognized by organizations. The University of Texas System indicates in its policy and procedures memorandum that "The UT System inspires employees to pursue education and training opportunities through four training programs: a university degree, an in-service training and education program, an out-of-agency staff development program, or an internship program" (Staff Senate Report, 2005, p. 5). Its objective is to improve "the efficiency and economy of operations by assisting all employees toward achieving their highest potential of usefulness" (Staff Senate Report, 2005, p. 5). This system memo would seem to suggest that universities within the UT System should be concerned with not only preparing staff members for their assigned duties, but also identifying and developing each staff member's full human potential through a variety of training experiences.

In summary, the current research study illustrates that the lack of attention to the academic support staff seems to be big an issue and important yet very little attention has been given to this group of employees. The supervisor-subordinate relationship is quite vulnerable and can eventually have an effect on the image and outcome of the services, like any other business

(Khalid & Irshad, 2010). Furthermore, employee job satisfaction, productivity and frequent turnover may be serious threats to an institution of higher education, thus influencing customer satisfaction. Despite the current economic crisis, employee productivity and turnover rate in organizations remain a concern, even in higher education. The current study develops this area of research in an effort to gain a better understanding about how the quality of supervisor-subordinate relationships may influence job satisfaction, and conversely good internal and external customer service in the organization.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The main argument presented in this research study is that there is a relevant relationship that exists between supervisor-subordinate communication, employee productivity, and customer satisfaction. Within this chapter, the following claims serve as a guide for the present argument and will be supported with relevant research.

Claim 1: Effective supervisor-subordinate communication leads to greater customer satisfaction.

Claim 2: Effective supervisor-subordinate communication leads to greater employee job satisfaction.

Claim 3: Employee job satisfaction will lead to greater customer satisfaction.

Importance of Academic Support Staff

Academic support staff members play a critical role in institutions of higher education. Universities and colleges must ensure that they deliver services in accordance with the required standards to ensure their survival within the competitive higher education environment (Mapesela & Strydom, 2004). Administrative assistants often help their employers prepare reports. They attend meetings with their employers, collect and preserve documents, and may do much of the writing themselves. They may produce computer graphics such as illustrations.

Administrative assistants regularly edit and enter reports and in-house publications into the computer. Some administrative assistants conduct internet research and collect facts and figures to be included in budgets. They perform complex clerical and administrative work tasks in support of one or more persons serving in an administrative or professional capacity and complete routine administrative tasks directly related to the work of their supervisor(s), and perform other related work as required.

According to Brainard, Fain, and Masterson (2009), the Center for College Affordability and Productivity, the back-office work force is classified by the Education Department as "other professional staff." They include a wide diversity of positions that support the college's academic, student, and institutional operations, like lawyers, librarians, clergy, coaches, and student counselors (Brainard et al., 2009).

As stated by Davis (1996), the main characteristics of a higher education institution as a work organization are its two distinct social structures: (a) academic staff, and (b) nonacademic administrative and support staff. These two constituencies rarely have similar jobs and supervisory structures, and this gives rise to significantly different employee problems and concerns. Support staff member play an important role in the creation and development of knowledge and innovation in higher education institutions (Gillespie, Walsh, Winefield, Dua, & Stough, 2001). The term *support staff* is used in the current study to refer to all non-academic staff employed within the higher education sector, including staff in academic support, administrative support, and technical areas.

Colleges have added managers and support personnel at a steady and vigorous clip over the past 20 years, far outpacing the growth in student enrollment and instructors. Support staff,

such as budget analysts, computer specialists, and loan counselors has nearly doubled from 1987 to 2007 (Brainard et al., 2009).

Problems with Academic Support Staff

The overall lack of attention paid to this crucial component of a university's success has resulted in several issues. There are three main issues associated with the academic support staff:

1. The ratio of academic support staff has increased over time, but little attention has been given to this group.

2. This group of organizational members has been overlooked by higher administrators thus leading to burnout and frequent turnover.

3. The overall lack of awareness towards this group leads to dissatisfaction in their work, thus the organization faces lack of customer satisfaction.

Academic Support Staff Growth. The first problem regarding the academic support staff is that very little attention has been given to them, despite the increase in number over the years (Kuh, 2007). Although a report by Brainard et al. (2009) draws no direct link between growth in back-office staff and rising tuition, it does conclude that the scale of the expansion reflects unproductive spending by academe. Enrollments also grew over a period, but the rate of growth of managers and support staff, many of whose positions did not exist 20 years ago, increased much faster (Brainard et al., 2009).

Junior academic support staff members in higher education institutions report different problems from those of more senior academic staff members (Smewing & Cox, 1998). For example, it seems that many of the pressures on academic and senior support staff are passed on

to secretarial and administrative employees, who are then required to take on more duties and work for a greater number of people. This produces problems regarding their control of workflow, deadlines, and conflicting pressures. In addition, the academic staff members are required to use new technology, sometimes without adequate training and often in circumstances where the people they work for do not understand the complexities of the tasks involved (Rothman & Essenko, 2007). For technical staff, there appears to be an increasing workload, yet many feel that their knowledge and expertise are no longer recognized or utilized effectively (Rothman & Essenko, 2007).

Support Staff Burn-out and Turnover. The second problem regarding the academic support staff members is that they have been overlooked by the higher administration thus leading to burnout and frequent turnover (Brown & Mazzarol, 2009). Support staffs at higher education institutions have been largely overlooked when the issues of quality service, stress, and burnout have come under scrutiny (Pitman, 2000). This is not surprising for the following reasons: First, higher education institutions remain focused on teaching and research, with the administrative tasks existing to facilitate these aims; second, most published studies have been done by only academics, and they focus on those areas that concern them most. The role of higher education support staff and their stress and burnout levels have thus largely been ignored. Banata and Kuh (1998) have drawn attention to this oversight, stating: "A faculty cannot by itself accomplish the higher education institution's objectives for a student's intellectual and personal development; it needs the cooperation of others who work with students where students spend the majority of their time." (p. 41)

Support Staff Dissatisfaction. The third problem in regards to the academic support staff is that the overall lack of respect towards this group leads to dissatisfaction in their work, thus the organization faces a reduction in customer satisfaction (Brown & Mazzarol, 2009). The university staff members play a vital role in the creation and development of knowledge and innovation, in addition to education and training. It is well documented that high levels of occupational stress, left unchecked and unmanaged, undermine the quality, productivity and creativity of employee's work, in addition to employee's health, well-being, and morale (Ivancevich, & Matteson, 1987; Nowack, 1989).

Research conducted in the UK, USA, New Zealand and Australia has identified several key factors commonly associated with stress among academic and general staff. These include work overload, time constraints, lack of promotion opportunities, inadequate recognition, inadequate salary, changing job role, inadequate management and/or participation in management, inadequate resources and funding, and student interaction (Daniels & Guppy, 1994; Hind & Doyle, 1996).

Marinova, Ye, and Singh (2008) focus on frontline employees because their direct contact with customers makes their performance a key factor in a service unit's effectiveness (Heskett, Sasser, & Schlesinger, 1997). Furthermore, researchers have argued that the productivity–quality trade-off should not be taken to imply that service firms should not seek improvements in both productivity and customer satisfaction (Anderson, Fornell, & Rust, 1997; Grönroos & Ojasalo, 2004).

Another set of issues discussed by researchers are regulation related and micromanagement, which are common types of grievances in higher education. Increased reporting responsibilities combined with the bulk and complexity of data required by both state

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and federal governments as well as governing boards and trustees have forced institutions to expand administrative staffs in order to comply (Massy & Wilger, 1992).

Supervisor-Subordinate Relationship

This section provides support for the Claims 1 and 2. According to Claim 1, supervisor-subordinate relations eventually impact customer service. According to Graen, Dansereau, and Minami (1972), the value of the relationship between a supervisor and subordinate can be determined by their communication exchanges. The current study applies the Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) theory and model (which provides understanding between the supervisor-subordinate relationships) to the supervisor-subordinate relationship and how this relationship enhances their staff productivity.

Leadership-Member Exchange Theory

Although the current study is using LMX as a lens to understand supervisor-subordinate relationships, a few overarching perspectives need to be addressed. The theory of LMX has enriched our understanding of communication behaviors and activities in organizations (Fairhurst, 2001; Lee, 2005). Graen and his colleagues (Graen, 2004; Graen & Scandura, 1987) indicated that leaders or supervisors develop somewhat unique dyadic exchange patterns with each of their followers or subordinates through negotiated interactions. Some exchange patterns are typically described as high-quality social exchange relationships (called "in-group") and others as low-quality economic exchange relationships (called "out-group") (Dienesch & Liden, 1986; Graen, 2004; Liden & Maslyn, 1998).

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Furthermore in regards to subordinate communication satisfaction, Downs and his colleagues (Clampitt & Downs, 1993; Downs & Hazen, 1977) suggested that it consists of eight stable dimensions: personal feedback, supervisory communication, subordinate communication, co-worker communication, organizational integration, corporate information, communication climate, and media quality. In brief, personal feedback has to do with an employee's understanding of performance procedures and standards. Supervisory communication refers to upward and downward communication with immediate supervisors, including openness to ideas and listening to problems. Subordinate communication focuses on both upward and downward communication with subordinates, such as responsiveness, communication initiation, and communication overload (Muller & Lee, 2002). Specifically, these three dimensions (personal feedback, supervisory communication, and subordinate communication) represent communication outcomes in an interpersonal context (Muller & Lee, 2002).

Yukl and his colleagues (Yukl & Falbe, 1990; Falbe & Yukl, 1992; Yukl, Guinan & Sottolano, 1995) have identified nine influence strategies used by managers and have tested the relative effectiveness of those strategies, as well as directional differences in tactic use among dyads involving subordinates, peers, and supervisors. Despite the differences in their approaches to leadership communication, these authors mentioned leadership communication skill as a means by which leaders expertly control members in order to manipulate ("persuade, "influence," and "direct") them to achieve the leader's/organization's goals. Persuasion is not only important in describing leadership effectiveness, it is crucial to recognize the importance of relationship building (seeking to achieve human commitment to the organization). It is commonplace in leadership theory not only to differentiate between leadership behaviors that are

task-focused and those that are relationship-focused, but also to include interpersonal as well as persuasiveness skills under relationship-focused behaviors (Campbell, White, & Johnson, 2003).

Alexander, Helms, and Wilkins (1989) talk about what communication is and how it relates to job satisfaction and performance, specifically in supervisor-subordinate relationships. They ask two questions "What is the content of supervisor to subordinate messages?" and "How does this content relate to subordinate outcomes?" With regard to the first question, Katz and Kahn (1978) provide a comprehensive categorization of the types of communication, which take place from supervisor to subordinate. They identify five types of communication, such as job instructions, job rationale, procedure and practices, feedback, and indoctrination.

An answer to the second question is provided by Huseman and his colleagues (Huseman, Hatfield & Gatewood, 1978). They suggest that communication from a supervisor to his or her subordinate can influence subordinate performance and satisfaction in four ways: (a) providing the right information, which is essential to effective performance; (b) providing appropriate feedback, which allows subordinates to evaluate their effectiveness; (c) providing reinforcement of desired subordinate behavior; and (d) developing and maintaining a positive interpersonal relationship with them. In each of these four ways, the messages from the supervisor have the potential of influencing subordinate satisfaction and performance.

Leadership Member Exchange (LMX)

According to LMX theory, supervisors distribute resources (such as decision making influence, tasks, and support) differently among their various employees (Graen et al., 1972). This differential treatment results in leader-member relationships that vary with respect to quality (Graen et al., 1972). High quality relationships are characterized by higher levels of trust and

attention, less direct supervision, higher levels of support from leader to member, and greater influence of the member on decision making than in low quality relationships (Dansereau, Graen, & Haga, 1975). Furthermore, according to Timm (1978), an individual's satisfaction at work may readily be influenced by communication interaction he or she experiences. Effective communication with a supervisor can be particularly rewarding in that such interaction can provide information that reduces uncertainty about one's present or future conditions at work.

In general, LMX theory focuses on abstract communication behaviors (Timm, 1978). Some researchers, however, have begun to consider communication as a more central mechanism in the leader-member relationship, in essence conceptualizing communication as another resource intentionally distributed differentially among employees. Fairhurst (1993) specifically identified communication practices that characterized LMX relationships of varying quality. High-quality LMX relationships were categorized by value convergence (discussion that shows the convergence of values between supervisor and subordinate), problem solving (communication by which a leader identifies a problem as complex, poses challenging questions to the member, and/or engages in brainstorming and evaluation of proposed solutions with the member), insider markers (utterances that establish common ground between the conversant such as address forms, jargon), support statements (a leader's stated acknowledgement of a member's contributions and willingness to ''stand behind'' the member), choice framing (statements by which a leader frames decision issues and then states that the decision is the member's choice), polite disagreement (statements of disagreement that neither challenge nor threaten the face of the conversation partner), role negotiation (communication by which the leader encourages the member to negotiate their organizational role), and coaching (leader's provision of career advice to a member).

In contrast, according to Fix and Sias (2006), Fairhurst's (1993) findings also indicate that low LMX relationships were characterized by performance monitoring (statements by which a leader gathers information from a member about the member's performance). In addition, the face-threatening acts (such as criticism and rebuke), competitive conflict (interruptions, face-threatening accusations, and no supportive statements), and power games (communication that empowers the speaker, elicits compliance, and generally controls the interaction) can be also considered contrasts.

An essential principle of leader-member exchange (LMX) theory is that leaders and supervisors have limited amounts of personal contacts within the organization (Dransereau et al., 1975). A social and organizational resource (e.g., time, energy, role, discretion, and positional power) distribute resources among their subordinates selectively (Dansereau et al., 1975; Graen & Scandura, 1987; Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). Leaders do not interact with all subordinates equally, which over time, results in the formation of LMXs that may vary in quality (Muller & Lee, 2002).

Furthermore, interactions in higher-quality LMXs are characterized by increased levels of information exchange, mutual support, informal influence, trust, and greater negotiating latitude and input in decision making. Lower-quality LMXs are characterized by more formal supervision, less support, and less trust and attention from the leader. LMX theory has enhanced our understanding of the leadership communication process between supervisors and subordinates. In particular, earlier research explicated how the quality of LMX influences subordinates' and supervisors' communication in areas such as discourse patterns, upward influence, communication expectations, cooperative communication, perceived organizational justice, and decision making practices (Fairhurst, 1993; Lee, 1997, 2001; Lee & Jablin, 1995;

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Yukl & Fu, 1999). However, a review of the related research reveals an important omission in LMX-related studies; that is, LMX research has not explored communication satisfaction as a meaningful dependent variable (Muller & Lee, 2002).

As noted previously, LMX theory suggests that supervisors expend their resources unequally among subordinates (Dansereau et al., 1975; Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). Subordinates tend to receive different amounts of resources from the same supervisor. Similarly, supervisors develop and maintain different types of exchange relationships with subordinates of the same workgroup. In this respect, LMX relationships exist on a continuum, ranging from high- to low-quality. High-quality exchange relationships are characterized by a high degree of mutual positive impact, loyalty, contributions or obligation to the exchange, professional respect, and trust, whereas, the opposite is observed in low-quality exchange relationships (Dienesch & Liden, 1986; Liden & Maslyn, 1998). Numerous studies have demonstrated that the quality of LMX is essential in influencing employees' work-related affective, cognitive, and behavioral experiences, in their organizations (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995; Liden et al., 1997).

supervisors and subordinates in different levels of LMX engage in varying relational maintenance and communication strategies (Lee & Jablin, 1995; Waldron, 1991), form different attributions to explain and interpret critical performance incidents (Heneman, Greenberger, Anonyuo, 1989; Wilhelm, Herd, & Steiner, 1993); enact different safety communication (i.e., discussing or raising safety-related issues, concerns, or problems; Hofmann & Morgeson, 1999), and use different amounts of consultation for decision making (Yukl & Fu, 1999). In short, research supports the observation that the quality of LMX leads to different interactional patterns and attitudes between supervisors and subordinates. In fact, it is safe to claim that LMX quality seems to dictate the type and quality of interactional pattern, biased heavily in favor of

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subordinates involved in high-versus low-quality LMX relationships. Thus, members in high-quality LMXs are likely to feel greater communication satisfaction than their peers in low-quality LMXs (Mueller & Lee, 2002).

Lee (1997) also reported that the quality of supervisors' LMX with their supervisors was positively related to subordinates' perceptions of cooperative communication in the workgroup. Similarly, Anderson and his associates (Anderson & Tolson, 1991; Anderson, Tolson, Fields, & Thacker, 1990) found that the amount of a leader's hierarchical influence was related to subordinates' sense of upward control, and perceptions of support and cooperative behavior (Muller & Lee, 2002).

Supervisor-subordinate communication has been generally termed as an exchange of information and influence among organizational members, and the supervisor has an official authority to direct and assess the behaviors of the subordinates in the organization (Jablin, 1979). Communication appears to play a critical role in the supervisor-subordinate relationship and a subordinate's feelings toward his/her job and the workplace. A form of communication such as that of verbal aggressiveness displayed by supervisors has been found to be negatively related to subordinates' levels of satisfaction and organizational commitment, and is considered to be mainly destructive (Martin & Anderson, 1996, 1997). Additionally, communication satisfaction is one outcome that has been negatively associated with verbal aggression, with Burgoon and Koper (1984) reporting that less-than-competent communicators often have their behaviors interpreted as hostile (Madlock & Kennedy-Lightsey, 2010).

The area of interpersonal relationships includes the old controversy of whether satisfaction influences performance. If it does, then satisfaction in the interpersonal dyad between the supervisor and the subordinate should lead to higher performance and outcome

levels. Although Sashkin (1984), Latham, Steele, & Saari., (1982), and Latham and Steele (1983) did not find support for the satisfaction-performance relationship, the majority of the studies found consistent evidence that a high level of satisfaction tends to be positively associated with relevant organization performance outcomes (Alexander et al., 1989).

O'Reily and Roberts (1977) as well as Indik (1961) found openness of communication channels between supervisors and subordinates was positively related to a high level of subordinate performance and satisfaction. Increased communication from the supervisor was also found to influence performance as well as the quality of the dyad relationship (Burke, 1970; Srivastava (1983) and Abdel-Halim (1983) found support for the view that worker participation in the administration of their institutions had a positive impact on job satisfaction and performance as well.

The study by Muller and Lee (2002) explored the extent to which the quality of leader-member exchange (LMX) influences subordinates' employee productivity perceptions of communication satisfaction. Findings indicate that the quality of LMX strongly influences subordinates' communication satisfaction in interpersonal (personal feedback and supervisory communication), group (co-worker communication and organizational integration in the workgroup), and organizational contexts (corporate communication, communication climate, and organizational media quality) (Muller & Lee, 2002).

Furthermore, the quality of the supervisor-subordinate relationship is essential to the employees as well as the organization, because subordinates identify their immediate supervisor as the most preferred source of information about events in an organization (Lee, 1997). Moreover, employees recognize their immediate supervisor as the key source for getting information from the top management (Lee, 2001).

Leader-member interaction is important to organizations. Unfortunately, such exchanges can also be a leading source of employee distress. A study by Campbell, et al. (2003), calls for leaders to develop higher quality relations with their members, which in turn will increase communication satisfaction. Scholars have also suggested additional research that focuses on interaction between leaders and members to better understand how leaders can and should manage such relationships. However, there is considerable evidence that leaders and members do not agree about the quality of their relationship (Campbell et al., 2003).

As supporting evidence of the discrepancy between leaders' actual and needed communication skills, a survey of leadership development programs found that, of all required leadership skills, communication is of most value to organizations (Delahoussaye, 2001). Unfortunately, the survey also found that, of all required leadership skills, communication showed the largest gap between importance to the organization and current competency (Delahoussaye, 2001). Good quality communication is crucial in a supervisor and subordinate relationship. Applying (positive) LMX allows the subordinates to have the sense of (appreciation) and thus providing customer satisfaction.

Management Style

According to Claim 2, effective supervisor-subordinate communication leads to greater employee job satisfaction. Worker satisfaction is an extremely important management goal (Likert, 1961). It is an emotional response workers have to their jobs, that is, to their work places, their benefits, their co-workers, and their supervisors (Smith et al., 1969; Wheeless & Reichel, 1990). A number of studies have suggested that a supervisor's style of influence over subordinates work satisfaction. Pelz (1952), in his study of the effectiveness of first-line

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supervisors, found that when supervisors sided with employees, satisfaction was enhanced

provided the supervisors were perceived as having influence with their own supervisors. Bleda,

Gitter, and D'Agostino (1977), in their investigation of military life, found higher worker

satisfaction with leaders categorized as initiators than those perceived as mere relaters of

organizational information. Furthermore, Fulk and Wendler (1982) found a negative association

between supervisor's use of arbitrary and punitive behavior and worker satisfaction.

The managerial style is influenced by the organization's philosophy. Supervisors have

different supervisory styles that tend to influence how they work and interact with subordinates.

Darling (1991) sees two dimensions of supervisor style: dominance over subordinates and

responsiveness toward subordinates' concerns. This is consistent with previous research

examining aspects of supervisory style: considerateness, that is, a manager's demonstration of

friendship, warmth, mutual trust, and respect toward the subordinate (Evans, 1970; House,

Filley, & Gujarati, 1971); openness (Jablin, 1978; Pincus, 1986); supportiveness (Pelz, 1952;

Wager, 1965); and articulation of leader-to-worker relations and communication norms (House

et al., 1971).

Power. One of the underlying variables in the association between supervisory style of

influence and worker satisfaction is the perception of the appropriate use of power. A relevant

construct in perceptions of power is Hofstede's (1984) notion of power distance, which he

operationalized in his Power Distance Index (PDI). The power distance between supervisor and

subordinate is high when subordinates describe their supervisors' decision making behavior as

autocratic, when workers are afraid to disagree with their supervisors, and when autocratic

decision making is preferred. Conversely, when the power distance is low, workers prefer

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participative decision-making and are not afraid to disagree with their supervisors. In short, PDI is a measure of the accepted inequality between the subordinate and the supervisor (Hofstede, 1984).

In addition, Massy and Wilger (1992) argue that colleges and universities gain productivity by improving quality, and that they cannot be expected to achieve quantitative productivity gains. Increasingly higher education's friends and critics alike are asking hard questions about institutional productivity, the possible reasons for its condition, and what can be done to improve the situation. Employee's satisfaction is enhanced when supervisors PDI is low, and they support participative decision-making from subordinates and are responsive toward the subordinates concerns.

Customer Satisfaction

The third claim in the literature review states that employee satisfaction will lead to greater customer satisfaction. Understanding customers is crucial to the organization's success, and not only in retaining customers, but also in acquiring new customers. In previous research, customer satisfaction has been defined as a customer's overall evaluation of performance for a service (Gustafsson, Johnson, & Roos, 2005). Czepiel, Rosenberg, and Akerele (1974) view customer satisfaction as an overall evaluation, representing a sum of subjective reactions from a customer regarding products with varied attributes. Muller (1991) argues that customer satisfaction will become a key factor for business success in the future. Singh (1991) also notes that customer satisfaction is a dimension of multiple items evaluated as a satisfaction measurement, which can vary from business to business.

In addition, Ostrom and Iacobucci (1995) hold that customer satisfaction is a multiple-item measurement that evaluates such items as product price, service efficiency, service personnel attitude, overall business performance, and ideal business service. Ford (1999) defined personalized service as "tailored service, or service that attempts to address the unique needs of individual customers (p. 343)." Examples of quality customer service include asking questions regarding customers' specific needs, offering options and advice to help customers make decisions, actively listening and responding to customers, spontaneously sharing information, and sometimes informal counseling (Ford, 1999). Such examples not only apply to traditional organizations but also apply to internal and external customers in higher education.

Kotler (1996) proposes from his integration of various theories that satisfaction is a difference function between perception and expectation. Accordingly, customer satisfaction is an expression of pleasure or disappointment resulting from a comparison between perception and expectation of product function/outcome. Customer satisfaction is a subjectively positive or negative feeling arising from a comparison between pre-consumption expectation and post-consumption perception. The aim of both academic researchers and business performance investigators should, therefore, be to accurately measure the level of customer satisfaction in order to develop appropriate responses.

According to Pham, Gaukens, Lehmann, & Stuart (2010), improving customer satisfaction is of great importance to marketers. Understandably, a large body of applied and theoretical research has focused on how to improve customer satisfaction by enhancing objective product and service quality (Gale 1994; Hauser & Clausing 1988) or by addressing organizational gaps that contribute to any misalignment between customer expectations and product/ service performance (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1985).

Customer Satisfaction in Higher Education

According to Maguad (2007), many institutions of higher education are hesitant to consider themselves as customer-driven entities as they fear that the education standard will be influenced. Even the suggestion of the term customer can arouse many emotions, preconceptions, and misconceptions. Customer- driven organizations are effective because they are fully committed to satisfying and anticipating customer needs. The future success of colleges and universities will increasingly be determined by how they identify and satisfy their various customers.

Most people think that the customer is the ultimate purchaser of the product or service. These people are more specifically referred to as consumers (Maguad, 2007). But before a product reaches the consumer, it may first flow through a chain of many firms or departments, each of which adds some value to the product. These types of customers may be referred to as internal customers. Every company also has internal customers who receive goods or services from suppliers within the company. Thus, understanding who one's customers are and what their expectations are key factors to achieving customer satisfaction (Maguad, 2007).

In higher education, the notion of having customers is foreign to many campuses. Even the suggestion of the term can arouse many emotions, preconceptions, and misconceptions (Canic & McCarthy, 2000). Faculty and administrators alike are reluctant to call a student or anyone else a customer (Teeter & Lozier, 1993). They find the commercial flavor distracting and difficult to translate to education. Campuses that do admit to having customers, perceive that businesses, government agencies, and the society at large are customers. Many faculty members feel threatened by the notion that students are customers of the educational process. The students (customers) are also partners in developing and delivering quality education, which is considered

product or service. All too often this perspective is reinforced by administrative actions that tend

to put the benefits of the institution before the needs of the student body (Maguad, 2007).

Customers of Higher Education

Lewis and Smith (1994) observed that every higher institution has a mission but very few

fully pinpoint who they serve. They also noted that even fewer institutions acknowledge that

they serve customers. This was surprising given the fact that in order to be effective,

organizations must be customer-driven. Customer-oriented organizations are successful because

they have a unified focus on what they do and who they serve. The term "customer" can be

defined as "the recipient or beneficiary of the outputs of work efforts or the purchaser of

products and services." It can be a person, a unit, a department, or an entire organization.

Customers have wants, opinions, perceptions, and desires which are often referred to as the voice

of the customer. The voice of the customer can also be defined in technical terms as the

"standardized, disciplined, and cyclic approach to obtaining and prioritizing customer

preferences for use in designing products and services" (Foster, 2007, p. 139).

The final recipient of a product or service is commonly referred to as the end-user or

sometimes just plain consumer. An institution committed to consumer satisfaction and

continuous improvement will need to work with students, faculty and staff and other customers

to understand their current expectations and also to anticipate their requirements in the future. It

is extremely important for the college or university to establish trust within the entire

organization where frank and open discussions are allowed, where opinions are respected, and

where participants are empowered to take corrective action on poor processes and to express

their true feelings about the tasks, processes, and systems that are out of control and require

urgent attention and solution (Maguad, 2007). In order to understand customer needs, an organization must first identify who its customers are. Often customers are classified as internal or external. Maguad (2007) described higher institution customers as internal and external.

Internal Customers. Internal customers are people or units, which receive goods and services from within the same organization. Their outputs provide inputs to other functions and activities within the organization. The internal customers include the students, faculty, administrators, and non-teaching staff.

External Customers. External customers are those individuals or organizations which are not part of the organization in question but are nevertheless impacted by that organization's activities. The external customers are the employers, other colleges/universities, suppliers, community, donors, government, alumni, and accrediting agencies.

In this study, internal customers are used because it was convenient to associate with the staff members and obtain the information required. In addition, according to the literature review, not much research has been done on customer satisfaction within an organization and that fact steered to a special interest for this particular research study.

Educational institutions that truly believe in the quality of their services make strong commitments to their customers. They address the principal concerns of customers, eliminate conditions that might weaken their trust and confidence and communicate clearly and simply to them. Building good customer relationships depends on the quality of customer-contact personnel. This begins with the recruitment process and the selection of employees who show the ability and desire to develop good customer relationships (Maguad, 2007). These customer-

contact employees must understand the products and services well enough to answer any question, develop good listening and problem recovery skills, and feel able to handle problems. Their actions are guided by a common vision, that is, a clear understanding of what actions they may or should take (Maguad, 2007).

Customer satisfaction is probably the most important element in managing quality in higher education. It is often used synonymously with "quality," which focuses on meeting and exceeding customer expectations (Sirvanci, 1996). Furthermore, Bergquist (1995) lists four sets of criteria by which quality could be defined and assessed to increase customer satisfaction. First, input criterion focuses on the nature and level of resources available to the institution like the characteristics of incoming students, credentials of faculty, size of library, structure and availability of physical facilities, and the amount of financial reserves (Bergquist, 1995). On the other hand, an output criterion stresses the nature and extent of institutional products, characteristics of graduating students, success of alumni, research and scholarly publications, and public service. The value-added and process-oriented criteria focus on the growth of all of its members and governance processes of the institution respectively (Bergquist, 1995).

Although, beyond economic magnitude, the university sector represents an interesting environment for a research study grounded in the discipline of services marketing (Nelson, 2005) and the high customer satisfaction ratings are widely believed to be the best indicator of a company's future (Kotler, 1991) even if it is service oriented. In order to have employee job satisfaction, colleges and universities should operate with an internal customer driven/ customer oriented mentality. This practice brings together focus to what they do and who they serve. It is of high importance that higher institutions of education build trust with their employees. This

trust includes the ability for employees to be part of an open discussions, feel respected, and empowered within.

Rationale

The research indicates that subordinates in high-quality LMXs receive and/or report more favorable outcomes (e.g., performance appraisal, challenging assignments, informal influence, leader support and attention, job satisfaction, commitment, empowerment, fairness in distributive and procedural justice, salary/pay, and career progress) than their peers in low-quality LMX relationships (Muller & Lee, 2002).

According to Duarte, Goodson, & Klich. (1994), poorly performing, high LMX employees are given favorable ratings, regardless of actual performance. Moreover, Dienesch and Liden (1986) discovered that high LMX members consistently received more formal and informal rewards than low LMX members. Yukl's (1994) research findings also suggested that members of lower quality exchanges might experience a sense of unfairness giving rise to feelings of second-class status. Perceptions of satisfaction are likely to be influenced by the outcomes experienced by individuals. Thus, compared to employees involved in low-quality LMXs, subordinates in high-quality LMXs are likely to report greater communication satisfaction in their interactions with supervisors.

The research suggests that interactions in LMXs are marked by different patterns and thus, are likely to influence communication satisfaction. In contrast, low-quality LMXs are closed communication systems, "supervision" in which supervisors uses formal authority to force the member to comply with a prescribed role (Dansereau et al., 1975; Graen & Scandura, 1987; Jablin, 1987). Therefore, subordinates in low-quality LMXs are limited in their

opportunities to influence decisions, and, hence frequently, complain of their supervisor's resistance, unresponsiveness, and inertia in their attempts to influence change (Graen, Cashman, Ginsburg, & Schiemann, 1977).

Subordinates in low-quality LMXs are likely to experience less communication satisfaction with supervisors than employees involved in high quality LMXs. The potential variation in communication satisfaction manifested in interactional patterns is further evident in specific communication behaviors and activities that occur between supervisors and subordinates in different LMXs. For example, supervisors and subordinates engaged in different levels of LMX display distinctive aligning, accommodating, and polarizing discourse patterns (Fairhurst, 1993); vary in the frequency in their communication (Baker & Ganster, 1985); adopt different persuasive, impression management, or ingratiation strategies to attempt upward influence (Deluga & Perry, 1994; Krone, 1992).

The importance of supervisor-subordinate communication in an academic context is summarized by these claims. Previous research indicates the importance of job satisfaction via supervisor-subordinate relationship, which ultimately may influence customer satisfaction (Khalid & Irshad, 2010).

Although such claims are widely accepted and supported throughout organizational communication, they have not been applied to the context of academic staff in higher education. Therefore, the following hypotheses are posited:

H1: Perceived internal customer satisfaction is positively related to supervisor-subordinate communication.

H2: Employee job satisfaction is positively related to supervisor-subordinate communication.

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H3: Perceived internal customer satisfaction is positively related to employee job

satisfaction.

CHAPTER III

METHOD

This chapter examines the methodology that was used to the test the hypotheses. Specifically, this chapter reviews participants, procedures, survey instrumentation, and data analysis.

Participants

The convenience sample for this study consisted of 171 employees (academic support staff) from a university in the Southern part of the US. This institution is designated as an Hispanic serving institution. This institution has approximately 717 faculty members and nearly 1,300 academic support staff members. To participate in this study, all participants were classified as academic support staff and had worked in their current position for a minimum of three months. Within this frame time, the relationship between the supervisor and subordinate is either determined to be effective or ineffective. In addition, the participants are also classified as either "S" or "M" category (S = Exempt Staff; M = Non-Exempt Staff). The M category is exempt from certain wage and hour laws, which is overtime pay. This group usually applies to administrative, executive, or professional employees. While the S category receive hourly wages and are subject to wage and hour laws, mostly concerning overtime pay.

<center>**Procedures**</center>

A link to the survey questionnaire (via Qualtrics) and consent form were distributed to all participants via university email. The survey questionnaire consisted of four parts. The first part included demographics items. The remainder of the survey consisted of scales measuring supervisor-subordinate relationship, employee job satisfaction, and perceived internal customer satisfaction. In the consent form, at the beginning of the survey, stated the clauses for anonymity and confidentiality. The employees had the option to either accept or decline the survey.

<center>**Instrumentation**</center>

Supervisor-subordinate communication

To measure supervisor-subordinate communication, the instrument developed by Graen and Uhl-Bien (1995) was used. The measure contains three dimensions: respect, trust, and obligation. The development of LMX is based on the characteristics of the working relationship as opposed to a personal or friendship relationship, and this trust, respect, and mutual obligation refer precisely to the individuals' assessments of each other in terms of their professional capabilities and behaviors. Members were asked to indicate the extent of the nature of their communication with their supervisors on 5-point, Likert-type scale ranging from (1) "rarely," (2) "occasionally," (3) "sometimes," (4) "fairly often," to (5) "very often." With the LMX measure, each 5-point, Likert-type scale item assesses a different quality of communication. Some assess (i.e. Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree, Strongly Agree) agreements, while others assess (i.e. None, Small, Moderate, High, Very High) frequencies. A sample of scale items include, "Do you know where you stand with your supervisor?" "How well does your supervisor understand your job problems and needs?" and "How would you characterize your working

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relationship with your leader?" In this study, the LMX instrument yielded a $M = 25.63$, $SD = 6.33$, and a Cronbach alpha of ($\alpha = .91$). See Appendix A for instrument.

Job satisfaction

To measure job satisfaction, Spector's (1985) Job Satisfaction Survey scale was used. Survey respondents were asked to indicate the extent of their job satisfaction using a 6-point, Likert-type scale ranging from (1) "disagree very much," (2) "disagree moderately," (3) "disagree slightly," (4) "agree slightly," (5) "agree moderately," to (6) "agree very much." This job satisfaction survey consisted of 31 items assessing job satisfaction with work environment, supervision, co-workers, benefits, and promotion. The examples of items include "I feel I am being paid a fair amount for the work I do," "I like the people I work with," and "There is really too little chance for promotion on my job." The average reliability coefficients for the four job satisfaction scales were .87 (Spector, 1985). Job Satisfaction instrument yielded a $M = 116.36$, $SD = 22.08$, and a Cronbach alpha of ($\alpha = .90$). See Appendix A for instrument.

Customer Satisfaction

To measure customer satisfaction, an Internal Customer Satisfaction scale was developed for this study. This scale is developed and consists of 15 items used to measure customer satisfaction and respondents were given a list of communication behaviors, e.g. customer service, personalized service, and efficiency. These 15 items were generated from the perspective of what an employee (internal customer) would like from another fellow employee. General questions on regarding customer service (e.g. "**w**hen providing customer service to others, whether the members of their department handle requests efficiently?") were asked to academic support staff

from a university in the Southern part of the US. Based on those informal conversations, several questions were developed for this instrument. All measures were on a 5-point Likert scale from either (1) "strongly disagree" to (5) "strongly agree." The examples of items include **"When providing customer service to others, our department communication is professional," "When providing customer service to others, the members of my department handle requests efficiently,"** and **"When providing customer service to others, I am able to provide accurate information in a timely manner."** Internal Customer Satisfaction instrument yielded a $M = 60.66$, SD=11.10, and a Cronbach alpha of ($\alpha = .97$. Although there is an internal consistency of .97, this does not necessarily mean this scale is valid. Additional studies have to be conducted to confirm the validity of the measure. The Face Validity was assessed by using common-sense rules and it reflects the concepts being researched in a logical manner (Frey, Botan, & Kreps, 2000). The content validity was assessed by measuring the attributions of the items. The instrument is designed to measure only customer service related items and it sufficiently covers the concepts of internal customer service in a workplace. See Appendix A for instrument.

Data Analysis

The hypotheses were tested using Pearson, one-tail correlations. The Pearson correlation measures the degree and direction of the linear relationship between two variables tested in the hypotheses.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

This chapter reviews the results of the three hypotheses using one-tailed Pearson correlations. H1 stated that perceived internal customer satisfaction is positively related to supervisor-subordinate communication. This hypothesis was supported [r (157) = .35, p< .005]. As supervisor-subordinate communication increased, so did the perceived internal customer satisfaction. The coefficient of determination was r^2 = .12, meaning that 12% of the variance in perceived internal customer service satisfaction was attributed to supervisor-subordinate communication.

H2 stated that employee job satisfaction is positively related to supervisor-subordinate communication.

This hypothesis was supported [r (163) = .68, p< .005]. As supervisor-subordinate communication increased, so did employee job satisfaction. The coefficient of determination was r^2 = .46, meaning that 46% of the variance in perceived employee job satisfaction was attributed to supervisor-subordinate communication.

H3 claimed that perceived internal customer satisfaction is positively related to employee job satisfaction. This hypothesis was supported [r (151) = .38, p < .005]. As the employee job satisfaction increased, so did the perceived internal customer satisfaction. The coefficient of determination was r^2 = .14, meaning that 14% of the variance in perceived internal customer service satisfaction was attributed to employee job satisfaction.

This chapter revealed a number of important relationships that exist among the variables of leader-member exchange, job satisfaction, and internal customer service. The results of the study confirmed the first hypothesis that pertains to internal customer satisfaction and supervisor-subordinate communication. The study also confirmed the second hypothesis that pertains to job satisfaction and supervisor-subordinate communication. Finally, the study also confirmed the third hypothesis that pertains to internal customer satisfaction and employee job satisfaction. Overall, the results of the current study are in line with previous research concerning subordinate-subordinate relationships.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

This chapter will discuss the results of the current study, which are framed using the claims that originally formed the argument for the thesis. The analysis of each claim will be provided, followed by conclusions, implications, limitations, and directions for further research. The conclusion of this chapter will provide a summary of the entire study.

The purpose of this study was to support the following claims:

Claim 1:   Effective supervisor-subordinate communication leads to greater customer satisfaction.

Claim 2:   Effective supervisor-subordinate communication leads to greater employee job satisfaction.

Claim 3:   Employee job satisfaction will lead to greater customer satisfaction.

Analysis of Claims

Claim One

Claim 1 asserts that effective supervisor-subordinate communication leads to greater customer satisfaction for employees. Hypothesis 1 predicted a positive relationship between the supervisor-subordinate communication and internal customer satisfaction. This hypothesis was confirmed. Effective supervisor-subordinate communication leads to greater customer satisfaction.

As this hypothesis tested the relationship between perceived internal customer satisfaction and supervisor-subordinate communication, the expected results indicated a positive relationship between perceived internal customer satisfaction and supervisor-subordinate communication. The communication between supervisor-subordinate is tied directly to employee job satisfaction and performances. The most typical topics of such communication include job instructions, job rationale, procedure and practices, feedback, and indoctrination (Alexander, Helms, & Wilkins, 1989). In general, the current study indicates that good communication between a supervisor and a subordinate will result in greater customer satisfaction as a subordinate focuses on his or hers job performances in a positive manner, thus resulting in greater productivity and promptness in service.

According to Timm (1978), an individual's satisfaction at work may readily be influenced by communication interaction he or she experiences. Effective communication with a supervisor can be particularly rewarding in that such interaction can provide information that reduces uncertainty about one's present or future conditions at work. Furthermore, in present world, the main concerns of the organizations are productivity and employee satisfaction. In non-profit organizations, such as the institution of higher education, better productivity can lead to better service (Richmond, Wagner, McCrosky, 1983).

Effective communication with a supervisor can be fulfilling and such interactions can provide information that reduces uncertainty about one's present or future conditions at work (Timm, 1978). The supervisors tend to develop and maintain LMX relationships with their subordinates that vary in quality. Leader-member exchange (LMX) theory indicates that subordinates in high-quality LMX relationships received and report more favorable outcomes than their peers in low-quality LMX relationships (Dansereau et al, 1975). Therefore, the more

effectively supervisors communicate with their academic support staff, the better the support

staff will be able to provide quality customer service for co-workers and other employees.

Claim Two

Claim 2 asserts that effective supervisor-subordinate communication leads to greater

employee job satisfaction. Hypothesis 2 predicted a positive relationship between employee job

satisfaction and supervisor-subordinate communication. This hypothesis was confirmed.

Effective supervisor-subordinate communication is related to greater employee job satisfaction.

As this hypothesis tested the relationship between employee job satisfaction and

supervisor-subordinate communication, the expected results indicated a positive relationship

between employee job satisfaction and supervisor-subordinate communication. This finding is in

line with previous research indicating the importance of employee job satisfaction and the impact

that the organization's culture and management styles have on such perceptions (Likert, 1961).

Specifically, the power difference between supervisor-subordinate influences how a

supervisor will communication with his or her employees (Hofstede's, 1984). Employee's job

satisfaction is enhanced when supervisors have lower power distance as this allows an employee

to interact freely with the supervisor. Yukl (2008) found that relationship can be formed through

mutual interests, common objectives, and communication explaining the importance of

cooperation for reaching common goal and this requires sharing of information and resources.

Furthermore, previous studies indicate that there is a positive relationship between job

satisfaction and productivity. When a significant relationship exists between supervisor-

subordinate, it is a positive one (Richmond, McCroskey, & Davis, 1986). However, the

communication may not be the only factor for job satisfaction. Other factors, such as salary,

relationship among co-workers, benefits may also impact the job satisfaction. Therefore, the more effectively supervisors communicate with their academic support staff, the better the support staff will be satisfied with his or her job.

Claim Three

Claim 3 asserts that employee job satisfaction leads to greater customer satisfaction. Hypothesis 3 predicted a positive relationship between internal customer satisfaction and job satisfaction. This hypothesis was confirmed, which is to say that as employee job satisfaction increases, so does internal customer satisfaction.

As this hypothesis tested the relationship between perceived internal customer satisfaction and employee job satisfaction, the expected results indicated a positive relationship between perceived internal customer satisfaction and employee job satisfaction. Employees are the face of an organization, therefore, they must understand the products and services well enough to answer any questions internal customers may have. Yukl (2008) suggested that satisfaction is a common sign of efficiency in organizational leadership and it is logical that satisfied employees contribute greater work reliability, responsiveness, and quality to an organization. Moreover, strong positive relationships have been found between job satisfaction and communication satisfaction (Pettit, Goris, & Vaught, 1997). Favorable employee communication in the workplace has been shown to increase job satisfaction and employee performance (Ainspan & Dell, 2000), resulting in organizational success (Baskin, Aronoff, & Lattimore, 1996). In addition, employees must have good listening and problem solving skills in order to effectively handle customer issues (Maguad, 2007). This in turn will satisfy a customer and vice versa, as customer satisfaction is one of the most influential elements in managing the

quality of an organization. Organization that creates a culture, which values employee job satisfaction and commitment, will be more likely to see the positive repercussion of the customer service, both internal and external. Therefore, the more satisfied an academic support staff is with his or her job, the better the support staff will be able to provide quality customer service for co-workers and other employees.

Conclusions

A number of patterns and relationship emerged from this study, resulting in three key conclusions. This correlational study supported the relationships among the variables of supervisor-subordinate communication, job satisfaction, and perceived internal customer satisfaction. The results of the relationships tested were consistent with what was predicted. As expected, the quality of LMX communication among supervisors and subordinates was related job satisfaction and internal customer service. It is very important for the supervisors to understand the significance of employee job satisfaction. The reason for the current study was to develop this area of research in an effort to gain a better understanding about how the quality of supervisor-subordinate relationships may influence job satisfaction, and conversely good internal customer service in the organization.

Leader-Member Exchange

The first conclusion suggests that the supervisor-subordinate communication is an essential component of a positive relationship between a supervisor and a subordinate. The data suggest that internal customer satisfaction and job satisfaction are influenced by the positive perceived support of a supervisor to an employee. For example, when participants were asked,

"Do you know where you stand with your supervisor…do you usually know how satisfied your supervisor is with what you do?", responses suggested 67% claimed "very often" to "fairly often" and 32% claimed "sometimes" to "rarely."

These results support the idea that the relationship between a supervisor and subordinate can be determined by their communication exchanges (Graen, Dansereau, & Minami, 1972). An individual's satisfaction at work may be influenced by communication interaction he or she experiences. Effective communication with a supervisor can be fulfilling and such interactions can provide information that reduces uncertainty about one's present or future conditions at work (Timm, 1978).

The supervisors tend to develop and maintain LMX relationships with their subordinates that vary in quality. Leader-member exchange (LMX) theory indicates that subordinates in high-quality LMX relationships received and report more favorable outcomes than their peers in low-quality LMX relationships (Dansereau et al., 1975). A number of researches suggested that supervisors' communication style influences employees' job satisfaction (Richmond et al., 1980). Overall, communication is exhibits that the well informed employees are not unclear and more satisfied with their jobs, and are better with their performance. Thus, greater quality LMX relationships may result in well-informed employees and being a well-informed employee can lead to the progress of a greater quality LMX communication.

Job Satisfaction

The second conclusion proposes that the affiliation of job satisfaction with supervisor-subordinate communication and customer satisfaction found in this study proved to be important. When participants were asked to rate the statement, "Does my supervisor shows too little in the

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feelings of subordinates," 50% of the participants "agreed slightly" to "agreed very much," while

50% responded "disagree slightly" to "disagree very much."

Employee job satisfaction is an important management goal (Likert, 1961). It is an

emotional response workers have to their jobs and work places, their benefits, their co-workers,

and their supervisors (Smith et al., 1969). Employees happy with their jobs are dedicated to

knowing their job characteristics and produce better service. Thus, employees can contribute to

their fullest and improve the organizational quality in general. Zhou, Li, Zhou, and Su (2008)

have found that job satisfaction considerably relates to organizational performance, examining

the job satisfaction-performance relationship at the organizational level by measuring return on

assets. Overall, it is logical that employees who are satisfied with their jobs will be extra

productive and will engage more to the organizations they work in.

Internal Customer Satisfaction

The third conclusion suggests that supervisor-subordinate communication and job

satisfaction are tied to internal customer satisfaction. When asked the statement "Do you know

where you stand with your supervisor…do you usually know how satisfied your supervisor is

with what you do," 67% of participants claimed "very often" to "fairly often" and 32% claimed

"sometimes" to "rarely."

In previous research, customer satisfaction is defined as a customer's overall evaluation

of performance for a current offering (Gustafsson et al., 2005). Customer satisfaction is thus a

positive or negative feeling arising from a comparison between pre-consumption expectation and

post-consumption perception (Kotler, 1996). An organization's culture is usually reflected in the

way the employees behave and provide service. When serving others, sometimes positive or negative attitude can reveal the way they feel towards the organization or their employers.

Implications

This study yielded a number of implications and their influence on employee job satisfaction. The following section focuses on implications for institutions of higher education, for supervisors, and communication skills that should be incorporated into training programs.

Institution of Higher Education

Institutions of higher education should focus on developing their employees. In the recent severe budget crisis in education, employees will tend to expect at minimum better work environment since, at least for the next few years, there may not be other employment options for the employees. Due to the economic constraints, institutions need to give more importance to customer service, both internally and externally. In addition, students will appreciate and value a good customer service since, other is educational services are decreasing (e.g. financial aids and grants). Customer service should be a motto for institutions of higher education like any other customer based organizations.

To succeed in today's competitive market, the organizations must adhere to the continuous requirement for individual and organizational development. Specifically, universities should focus on enhancing employee skills (e.g. soft and technological) and knowledge for greater productivity. Training is one of the most effective methods for enhancing the productivity and communicating organizational goals to employees.

Training for Supervisors

Supervisors must be aware of their communication styles with their subordinates as this will ultimately influence the quality of customer service within the organization. Supervisor trainings could be a great solution for organizations to think about in developing their supervisory level employees.

Training is one of the most pervasive methods for enhancing the productivity of individuals and achieving organizational goals. Communication skills training are important for professional development and should be recommended by the organization on a regular basis. "The highest valued skills and competencies by employers require for the most part an employee's ability to interact with and relate well with others in the workplace and among the top-rated nine skills and competencies, none were technical in nature and eight represented abilities to successfully interact in the workplace" (Wilhelm, 1999, p. 120).

Beebe, Mottet, and Roach (2004) mention that "communication, management, and leadership trainings are designed to teach people specific skills that will enhance the quality of messages and human relationships" (p. 5). When undergoing rapid growth, an institution can place staff under increased workplace stress and one way this stress can be reduced is through the development of a more visible and comprehensive training program (Vale & Sethi, 2004). If staff employees are well trained, colleges and universities can avoid wasteful spending and improve performance and productivity. In addition, Mintzberg (2004) notes that managers must develop effective communication skills, which include the ability to scan the environment informally while interacting nonverbally and orally to gather information and to focus on affective aspects of the organization.

The managers can achieve this by polishing their "soft skills," which are attitudes and behaviors displayed in interactions among individuals that influence the outcomes of such encounters (Mintzberg, 2004). These differ from hard skills, which are the technical knowledge and abilities required to perform specific job related tasks more formally stated in job descriptions. In the past, it was felt that managers and employees did not need soft skills as long as they could do their work, but now even positions in hard, task-oriented areas such as accounting (Cole, 1999) and information systems (Solomon, 2002) require soft skills as well as technical skills (Muir, 2000).

By using the LMX measure, the supervisors can pinpoint specific communication skills that need to be addressed in order to foster a positive supervisor-subordinate relationship. In order to understand the perception of the subordinates, supervisors need to adapt communication skills to meet the subordinates' expectations. The ultimate goal of any organization should be employee job satisfaction, since this may play as one of the vital role in financial success of the organization. The organizations can emphasize importance of communication trainings for their supervisors. This study highlights few communication components using the LMX instruments items used in the current study.

Question 1: *Do you know where you stand with your supervisor…do you usually know how satisfied your leader is with what you do?*

Participants who answered "Rarely," "Occasionally," or "Sometimes" are indicating there is a lack of feedback and open communication from their supervisor. An open communication relationship "perceive the other interactant as a willingness and receptive listener and refrain from responses that might be perceived as providing negative relational or disconfirming feedback" (Jablin, 1979, p. 1204). Feedback must be timely, frequent, and

specific. Annual performance reviews have been shown to be ineffective influencing employee behavior (Ilgin & Knowlton, 1980). Therefore, supervisor training should address skills effective feedback messages, including:

- Share the celebration by recognizing and rewarding-It encourages and allows improved performances.

- Let them know when they succeed in front of others if they are comfortable with it.

- Be specific with the feedback, use clear communication, and focus on what is important. It shows one is paying attention and reinforces efforts to improve work, attitude, and relationships.

- Avoid imposing aspects of personal working styles and preferences. Demeaning comments can be de-moralizing.

- Keep in control and be sensitive with response. Positive feedback lets an employee know they are in tract. Constructive criticism is more effective when there is a problem.

- Encourage asking questions and acknowledge improvement. Paraphrase when appropriate.

- Encouragement and feedback do not need to wait for formal performance appraisal.

Question 2: *How well does your supervisor understand your job problems and needs?*

Participants who answered "Not a Bit," "A Little," or "A Fair Amount" are indicating there is a lack of active listening and empathy from their supervisor. According to Eisenberg, Goodall, & Trethewey (2007), active listening and taking genuine interest in the employees are very useful to organizational leaders. Therefore, supervisor training should address skills in effective listening, including:

- Listen to obtain information, to understand, and to learn.

- Maintain eye contact with the employees when talking. Smile and nod occasionally.

- Note your posture and make sure it is open and inviting.

- Focus on content, not delivery of the conversation.

- Avoid emotional involvement. Try to remain objective and open-minded.

- Avoid distractions. Mind can wander easily when distracted.

- Stay active by asking mental questions.

- Use the gap between the rate of speech and your rate of thought.

Question 3: *How well does your supervisor recognize your potential?*

Participants who answered "Not at All," "A Little," or "Moderately" are indicating there is a lack of challenge, motivation, and open communication from their supervisor. There are various factors that contribute to employee motivation, but the main it all matters how the supervisors encourage and discourage motivation through their communication (Eisenberg, Goodall, & Trethewey, 2007). To motivate the employees, the communication can function in two ways: Supervisors "can (1) provide information and feedback about employees' tasks, goals, performance, and future directions and (2) communicate encouragement, empathy, and concern" (Eisenberg, Goodall, & Trethewey, 2007 p. 289). Therefore, supervisor training should address skills on effective motivation and open communication, including:

- Goal setting; expectation; equity; compliance-gaining; and frequent feedback

Question 4: *Regardless of how much formal authority he/she has built into his/ her position, what are the chances that your supervisor would use his/ her power to help you solve problems in your work?*

Question 5: *Again, regardless of the amount of formal authority your supervisor has, what are the chances that he/she would "bail you out," at his/ her expense?*

Participants who answered "None," "Small," or "Moderate" in questions 4 and 5 are indicating there is a lack of trust and from their supervisor. According to LMX theory, supervisors normally divide their employees into two types and form very different relationships with members each group. The two types of relationships are (1) in-group relationships, which are "characterized by high trust, mutual influence, support, and formal/informal rewards," and (2) out-group relationships, which are "characterized by…formal authority, [and] low trust, support, and rewards" (Fairhurst & Chandler, 1989, p. 215-216).

Question 6: *I have enough confidence in my supervisor that I would defend and justify his/ her decision if he/she were not present to do so?*

Participants who answered "Strongly Disagree," "Disagree," or "Neutral" are also indicating there is a lack of trust from their supervisor. In-group relationships tend to be more trusting and the relationships are associated with greater employee satisfaction, performance, agreement, decision-making involvement, and lower turnover rates compared to out-group relationships.

Questions 4, 5, and 6 are all related to trust between a supervisor and a subordinate, therefore, these skills are the strategies that could enhance trust in a workplace relationship and should be addressed in supervisor trainings. Such skills include:

- Listen to obtain information, to understand, and to learn.

- Maintain eye contact with the employees when talking. Smile and nod occasionally.

- Note your posture and make sure it is open and inviting.

- Focus on content, not delivery of the conversation.

- Avoid emotional involvement. Try to remain objective and open-minded.

- Avoid distractions. Mind can wander easily when distracted.

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- Stay active by asking mental questions.

- Use the gap between the rate of speech and your rate of thought.

Question 7: *How would you characterize your working relationship with your supervisor?*

Participants who answered "Extremely Ineffective," "Worse Than Average," or "Average" are indicating there is a lack of mutual persuasion from their supervisor. Therefore, supervisor training should address skills including:

- Developing credibility; positive attitude; and rapport

Limitations and Direction for Future Research

The results of this study have provided support for various relationships between the presented variables (supervisor-subordinate communication, job satisfaction, and internal customer satisfaction). Although, the information achieved from this study is meaningful, there were a number of limitations in this study.

The first limitation for this study is the lack of previous research done with the targeted group of academic support staff. Previous research focused more on higher administration, faculty, and students. It was a challenge to find information on academic support staff to support this research study. Future research, more attention should be geared toward the group members who provide the service to the customers, especially the external customers.

The second limitation for this study was getting sincere feedback from the subordinates, as some employees may feel they would reveal too much information if they were answering honestly. They are in the social desirable bias that is they feel someone is watching them and tend to behave alert. For future research, the study can use a return envelope survey and, in addition, collect data from other institutions for comparison purposes.

The third limitation for this study was time. Not enough time was available to survey supervisors and the external customers. For future research, studies should focus on how supervisors perceive job satisfaction and customer satisfaction intended for their employees. This exploratory thesis has provided a variety of information concerning supervisor-subordinate communication, job satisfaction, and how all these may influence customer satisfaction (in this case internal customer satisfaction was considered). Although, much has been left for further probing, the main purpose of the current study has been accomplished.

A clear relevance is established among supervisor-subordinate communication, job satisfaction, and customer satisfaction. However, there are plenty of opportunities to further research these variables and conduct correlational studies concentrating on demographics variables. Although, it is very important for an effective communication to occur between the supervisors and subordinates, this may not be the sole reason for job employee satisfaction. However, for institution of higher education to survive and thrive in the competitive market today, effective communication is a key factor.

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APPENDIX A

APPENDIX A

CONSENT DOCUMENT

Study title: Relationship Among Supervisor-Subordinate Communication,
Job Satisfaction and Internal Customer Satisfaction in Higher Education

This research survey is being conducted by <u>Tanzeer Ahmed</u> from The University of Texas–Pan American/UTPA. I am conducting a research study, as partial fulfillment of a Master's degree, about <u>supervisor-subordinate communication, job satisfaction, and internal customer service in higher education</u>. Dr. Timothy Mottet is my faculty advisor and thesis committee chair. The following survey should take about <u>10</u> minutes to complete.

If you would prefer not to participate, simply return the blank survey. Your responses are anonymous; you should not include any identifying information on this survey. We ask that you try to answer all questions. However, if there are any questions that you would prefer to skip, simply leave the answer blank. You must be at least 18 years old to participate. *If you are not 18 or older, please inform the researcher and do not complete the survey.*

Researcher contact information: Name: Tanzeer Ahmed
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Advisor contact information: Name: Timothy Mottet
                                                Title: Professor and Chair
                                              Dept.: Department of Communication
                                              The University of Texas-Pan American
                                              Phone: 956/665-3583
                                              Email: mottetp@utpa.edu

This research has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board for Human Subjects Protection (IRB). If you have any questions about your rights as a participant, or if you feel that your rights as a participant were not adequately met by the researcher, please contact the IRB at 956.665.3002 or irb@utpa.edu. You are also invited to provide anonymous feedback to the IRB by visiting www.utpa.edu/IRBfeedback.

By accepting "Agree" below, you indicate that you are voluntarily agreeing to participate in this study and that the procedures involved have been described to your satisfaction. You may print out a copy of this form for your own reference.

☐ Agree
☐ Disagree

SURVEY INSTRUMENT

Part I

The demographic questions measure general information about you. Please read each statement carefully and indicate the most appropriate answer.

1. What is your sex?　　□ Male　　　□ Female

2. What is your age? _____

3. What is your ethnicity?

    □ American Indian or Alaskan native　　　□ Asian or Pacific Islander

    □ Black/African American　　□ Hispanic/Latino　　□ White/Caucasian

    □ Other (please specify) _____

4. What is the highest level of education you have completed?

    □ 12th grade or less (no diploma)　　　□ High school diploma

    □ Some college, no degree　　　□ Associate or technical degree

    □ Bachelor's degree　　　□ Graduate degree/professional

    □ Other _____

5. How long have you worked at UTPA?

    □ Less than 2 years　　□ 2-5 years　　□ 6-10 years　　□ 11-20 years

    □ More than 20 years

6. What is your job title?

□ Professional Staff   □ Technical/Skilled   □ Clerical/Secretarial

□ I don't know

□ Other _____

7. How long have you worked with your current supervisor?

□ Less than 2 years   □ 2-5 years   □ 6-10 years   □ 11-20 years

□ More than 20 years

Part II

A. The Leader-Member Exchange Instrument measures working-relationship between you and your supervisor. Please read each statement carefully and indicate the most appropriate response.

1. Do you know where you stand with your supervisor…do you usually know how satisfied your leader is with what you do?

□ Rarely   □ Occasionally   □ Sometimes   □ Fairly Often   □ Very Often

2. How well does your supervisor understand your job problems and needs?

□ Not a Bit   □ A Little   □ A Fair Amount   □ Quite a Bit

□ A Great Deal

3. How well does your supervisor recognize your potential?

☐ Not at All ☐ A Little ☐ Moderately ☐ Mostly ☐Fully

4. Regardless of how much formal authority he/she has built into his/ her position, what are the chances that your supervisor would use his/ her power to help you solve problems in your work?

☐ None ☐ Small ☐ Moderate ☐ High ☐ Very High

5. Again, regardless of the amount of formal authority your supervisor has, what are the chances that he/she would "bail you out," at his/ her expense?

☐ None ☐ Small ☐ Moderate ☐ High ☐ Very High

6. I have enough confidence in my supervisor that I would defend and justify his/ her decision if he/she were not present to do so?

☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neutral ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly Agree

7. How would you characterize your working relationship with your supervisor?

☐ Extremely Ineffective ☐ Worse Than Average ☐ Average

☐ Better Than Average ☐ Extremely Effective

(The above LMX scale was developed by Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995)

B. The Job Satisfaction Instrument measures your job satisfaction in your current employment. Please read each statement carefully and circle the one number for each question that comes closest to reflecting your opinion about it.

		Disagree very much	Disagree moderately	Disagree slightly	Agree slightly	Agree moderately	Agree very much
1	I feel I am being paid a fair amount for the work I do.	1	2	3	4	5	6
2	There is really too little chance for promotion on my job.	1	2	3	4	5	6
3	My supervisor is quite competent in doing his/her job.	1	2	3	4	5	6
4	I am not satisfied with the benefits I receive.	1	2	3	4	5	6
5	Many of our rules and procedures make doing a good job difficult.	1	2	3	4	5	6
6	I like the people I work with.	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	I sometimes feel my job is meaningless.	1	2	3	4	5	6
8	Communications seem good within this organization.	1	2	3	4	5	6
9	Raises are too few and far between.	1	2	3	4	5	6
10	Those who do well on the job stand a fair chance of being promoted.	1	2	3	4	5	6
11	The benefits we receive are as good as most other	1	2	3	4	5	6

	organizations offer.						
12	My efforts to do a good job are seldom blocked by red tape.	1	2	3	4	5	6
13	I find I have to work harder at my job because of the incompetence of people I work with.	1	2	3	4	5	6
14	I like doing the things I do at work.	1	2	3	4	5	6
15	The goals of this organization are not clear to me.	1	2	3	4	5	6
16	I feel unappreciated by the organization when I think about what they pay me.	1	2	3	4	5	6
17	People get ahead as fast here as they do in other places.	1	2	3	4	5	6
18	My supervisor shows too little interest in the feelings of subordinates.	1	2	3	4	5	6
19	The benefit package we have is equitable.	1	2	3	4	5	6
20	There are few rewards for those who work here.	1	2	3	4	5	6
21	I have too much to do at work.	1	2	3	4	5	6
22	I enjoy my coworkers.	1	2	3	4	5	6
23	I often feel that I do not know what is going on with the organization.	1	2	3	4	5	6
24	I feel a sense of pride in doing my job.	1	2	3	4	5	6
25	I feel satisfied with my chances for salary increases.	1	2	3	4	5	6

26	There are benefits we do not have which we should have.	1 2 3 4 5 6
27	I have too much paperwork.	1 2 3 4 5 6
28	I am satisfied with my chances for promotion.	1 2 3 4 5 6
29	There is too much bickering and fighting at work.	1 2 3 4 5 6
30	My job is enjoyable.	1 2 3 4 5 6
31	Work assignments are not fully explained.	1 2 3 4 5 6

(The above Job Satisfaction scale was developed by Spector, 1994)

C. The Internal Customer Satisfaction Instrument measures how satisfied you are with members of your department or team. Please read each statement carefully and indicate the most appropriate response for you.

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	When providing customer service to others, the department I work in communicates in a professional manner.	1	2	3	4	5
2	When providing customer service to others, I am able to provide accurate information in a timely manner.	1	2	3	4	5
3	When providing customer service to others, the people in my department are cooperative in meeting other's needs.	1	2	3	4	5
4	When providing customer service to others, I am satisfied how members of department work together.	1	2	3	4	5
5	When providing customer service to others, the members of my department handle requests efficiently.	1	2	3	4	5
6	When providing customer service to others, the members of my department listen effectively to other's needs.	1	2	3	4	5

7	When providing customer service to others, the members of my department handle problems skillfully.	1	2	3	4	5
8	When providing customer service to others, the members of my department respond to problems quickly.	1	2	3	4	5
9	When providing customer service to others, the members of my department respond promptly to customer requests.	1	2	3	4	5
10	When providing customer service to others, the members of my department treat others as valued customer.	1	2	3	4	5
11	When providing customer service to others, members of my department show consideration and respect.	1	2	3	4	5
12	When providing customer service to others, the members of my department provide a valuable service.	1	2	3	4	5
13	When providing customer service to others, the members of my department follow through well on their commitments.	1	2	3	4	5
14	When providing customer service to others, the members of my department meet expectations.	1	2	3	4	5
15	When providing customer service to others, the members of my department look for ways to	1	2	3	4	5

	improve their service.					

(The above Internal Customer Satisfaction scale was developed as an instrument for this research study)

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Tanzeer Ahmed received her Bachelor's degree from The University of Texas-Pan American (UTPA) in 2004 in Advertising and Public Relation and her Master's in Communication from UTPA in 2011. She is currently working as a Training Coordinator at the UTPA Human Resources. Tanzeer has 17 years of working experience in various fields, including teaching. She has received several educational awards and participated in various student organizations during her undergraduate studies. Tanzeer is a life-time member of the Golden Key International Honor Society.

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