

1-18-2019

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## Recommended Citation

Thomas, Dorothy M., "Transformational Leadership and Job Satisfaction in the Federal Government" (2019). *2019 Program & Posters*. 13.  
<https://scholarworks.waldenu.edu/symposium2019/13>

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# Transformational Leadership and Job Satisfaction in the Federal Government

Dorothy M. Thomas, DBA

## Problem

During the periods of 2002–2012 and 2010–2012, **Federal Employee Viewpoints Survey (FEVS)** results revealed effective leadership continued to fluctuate and dwindle (D'Agostino, 2014; Gill & Faust, 2013). Of the 1.6 million full- and part-time employees in the federal government, more than 392,000 reported feeling dissatisfied with their job and with leadership in their respective agencies (D'Agostino, 2014; OPM, 2014a).

The general business problem was that some leaders in the U.S. Department of Defense (DOD) are ineffective, resulting in decreased levels of employee job satisfaction, which leads to **low productivity, unwanted turnovers, and retirements**. Specifically, that some DOD leaders do not know the relationship between employees' perception of their leader's transformational leadership skills and employee job satisfaction.

## Purpose

The purpose of this correlational study was to examine the relationship between employees' perceptions of their leader's transformational leadership skills and job satisfaction.

## Significance

To date, not many researchers have focused on federal government workforce (Ghorbanian et al., 2012). The results may include pertinent information for leader-employee relationships concerning leader efficacy and employee fulfillments. In doing so, all stakeholders benefits from changes made in leadership developmental skills and employee's trust.

## Social Change Implications

Effective leadership has a profound impact on employees' productivity, which improves relationships between organizations and their local communities (Asencio & Mujkic, 2016). Social changes occur when both parties exchanges a relationship of mutual trust and respect that leads to positive results.

## Theory or Framework

A theoretical framework was the **five transformational leadership theory constructs**, (Bass, 1985) idealized attributes, idealized behaviors, intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation, individualized consideration, and job satisfaction.

## Relevant Scholarship

This study employs survey data on US federal employees, data that was taken from the yearly **FEVS** given to federal employees, located online at OPM. An investigation into whether employee perceptions of trust in leaders mediate the relationship between employee perceptions of transaction and transformational leadership behaviors and employee perceptions of job satisfaction (Asencio, 2016).

This study contributes to knowledge about the effectiveness of different leadership behaviors in building interpersonal trust within public organizations. Survey data taken from FEVS. Dissecting federal employee's relationship between employee perceptions of transactional and transformational leadership behaviors and employee perceptions of trust in leaders (Asencio & Mujkic 2016).

**The Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ)** evaluates three different leadership styles: transformational, transactional, and passive-avoidant. An instrument which allows researchers and professionals to measure how leadership styles are perceived regarding behaviors (Avolio & Bass, 2004).

This book purpose is to show the concept of full range of leadership, both transformational and transactional, and how the leadership style can be applied to specific areas of leadership, management, and organizational development (Bass & Avolio, 1994).

This book was developed for the uses of **Job Satisfaction Surveys (JSS)**, a list of questions that covers every area of the workplace. An assessment instrument used to measure job satisfaction (Spector, 1997, 1985).

## Research Question

**What is the relationship between employees' perceptions of their leader's transformational leadership skills and employees' job satisfaction?**

## Participants

The 192 randomly selected participants were provided from a list of names provided by their individual agencies, a specific group of employees who were within these criteria:

- A minimum of 3 years as a federal employees,
- A leader that has at least 6 months experience in a leadership role within the organization,
- Employees must be under the direct supervision of their leader for at least 6 months.
- Work in the metropolitan area in the midwestern United States.

## Procedures

All participants received a link to two online surveys.

- **Job Satisfaction Survey** or JSS, as a measurement of employee job satisfaction Spector (1985, 1997)
- **Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire** or MLQ to evaluate transformational, transactional, and passive avoidant leadership styles (Avolio & Bass, 2004).
- Participants surveyed their immediate supervisors

## Analysis

Multiple linear regression (MLR) analysis was used.

## Findings

A relationship was found between transformational leadership constructs and job satisfaction with **intellectual stimulation** receiving the highest correlation.

All variables, idealized attributes, idealized behaviors, intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation, individualized consideration have a high correlation to each other with  $F(5, 86) = .968, p = .44, R^2 (.053)$ .

## Interpretation

Findings are consistent with existing federal employee viewpoint survey or FEVS (OPM, 2012) and scholarly works involving federal employees research consisting of leadership styles and job satisfaction and how leader's style affect the federal workforce.

The findings also supported the transformational leadership theory used in this study.

## Limitations

Possible limitations include:

- Reliability and validity of the yearly FEVS may carry a risk if participants are not honest and accurate with their answers.
- The reliability and validity of the instruments (MLQ & JSS) limitations are the responses from the surveys also depended on the participants answers, which may or may not be honest.
- The results are not generalizable to the entire federal government workforce.
- The participants in this study might have engaged in biases behaviors.

## Recommendations

Future research should address the diversity of the federal government work force and include all agencies.

## Acknowledgements

**Ronald Black**, *Committee Chairperson*  
**Deborah Nattress**, *Committee Member*  
**Rocky Dwyer**, *University Research Reviewer*