

Communicating purpose enhances job satisfaction: A path-goal and leader-member exchange perspective.

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ABSTRACT

This research study addresses the problem of employees' internal communication preferences being unfulfilled. The study used exploratory factor analysis on an 18-item instrument from 206 respondents and identified employees' needs regarding internal communication, and measured how these needs are related to job satisfaction. The data was evaluated through the construct of path-goal and leader-member exchange (LMX) theories. Results indicated that employee job satisfaction is a function of their communication preferences and needs. Furthermore, job satisfaction was also identified as a function of employees' desires to know their purpose and understand how their work impacted the organization. Meaningful communication with employees allows individual purpose to be realized, creates high-quality exchanges in LMX theory, and leads to successful goal attainment through a path-goal lens.

Keywords: purpose, job satisfaction, path-goal theory, leader-member exchange, internal communication

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INTRODUCTION

Internal communication serves as a foundational component to the attainment of an organization's goals (Goodman, 2000; Gordon & Miller, 2012; Zerfass & Viertmann, 2017), increases job satisfaction (Chen et al., 2011; Dormann & Zapf, 2001; Men, 2014), provides employees purpose (Harter et al., 1996; Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001), and is crucial to an organization's success (Foreman & Argenti, 2005; Welch & Jackson, 2007). Effective communication among members in an organization is essential because it can create a competitive advantage (Dawkins, 2005) and can align internal stakeholders (e.g., employees) to the goals of the organization (Hall & Lawler, 1970; Kang & Sung, 2017).

How leaders communicate with their followers is also pivotal for an organization's success (Northouse, 2019; Sparks & Schenk, 2001; Velde & Gerpott, 2023). Leaders who are effective communicators can influence followers and help them understand a greater sense of significance behind their work. As quality communication can provide vast benefits, poor communication can result in a failure of leadership (Hackman & Johnson, 2013; Ruben & Gigliotti, 2016).

Although communication can benefit organizations if implemented correctly and is increasingly studied, leaders and organizations still must be mindful of current communication problems. Employees need help understanding how their work tasks connect to the organization's goals (Carton, 2018). In some cases, employees are unable to grasp their impact on the organization and the purpose behind work assignments. Limited literature explains how leaders can support employees to make those connections. George et al. (2023) explored purpose, but there is still a need to investigate this further from a communication lens. There are inclinations in literature and a handful of studies that suggest communication emphasizing purpose is worthwhile, but further research is recommended (Frank & Brownwell, 1989; Beck, 2020; Beck, 2023).

Leaders are also underutilizing task-relevant communication (Flynn & Lide, 2022). Under-communicating harms leaders' perceptions of their capabilities and affects employees' job satisfaction. Employees not only think their leaders are less qualified when they are not given more information about job tasks, but the lack of information hinders their ability to see how they contribute to the company which affects job satisfaction levels. Moreover, internal communication needs are unfulfilled in some cases (Uusi-Rauva & Nurkka, 2010; Welch and Jackson 2007; Welch, 2011). Further research is required to address these problems, understand employees' needs regarding internal communication, and grasp how alignment between these preferences may be related to job satisfaction (Beck, 2020; Hargie & Tourish, 2009).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Internal communication builds positive relationships by creating channels of communication between managers and leaders with employees (Welch, 2012). Managers spend most of their time on communication tasks, and literature suggests it could consume up to 78% of their working time (Mintzberg, 1973; Mintzberg, 1994). Moreover, as technology continues to develop and new methods of communication develop and evolve, there are even greater expectations and opportunities for managers to communicate with their subordinates (Golden et al., 2008; Hill et al., 2014).

If communication with employees is a top management priority (Young & Post, 1993), it is worrisome that poor communication from management to employees is a primary factor contributing to employee dissatisfaction (Buckingham & Coffman, 1999). Employee dissatisfaction leads to high turnover and poor performance, which can be costly to an organization. This dissatisfaction is often the product of faulty internal communication processes whereby managers are unable to effectively communicate to employees the value of their work and how it contributes to the organization's success (Truss et al., 2006). The many pressures managers face could cause this failure in communication because they are often time-starved (Hall & Lawler, 1970; Kotter, 1982; Mintzberg, 1973). Managers who lack time availability and are on cognitive overload tend to communicate transactionally (Quaquebeke & Felps, 2018).

Transactional communication often excludes the rationale or reasoning behind task assignments or fails to justify why they are happening (Young & Post, 1993). This type of communication is undesirable by employees as they seek to understand how their contributions advance organizational goals and ascribe meaning to their work. Delcampo et al. (2011) discovered that Generation X and Millennials value understanding the purpose or rationale behind their assigned tasks. Consequently, managers who withhold this information from subordinates, despite typically being aware of it, might contribute to rising employee dissatisfaction, especially considering the increasing representation of these generations in the workforce.

What must be communicated to satisfy this employee need encompasses the what, why, and how of the task. Frank and Brownell (1989) indicated that for employees to comprehend the impact of different tasks fully, internal communication should include information about the elements of the task assignment, why the task must be completed, and how employee efforts contribute to the organization's overall success. Organizations and managers who prioritize communicating this information exhibit transparency rather than transactional behavior. By doing so, they foster employee buy-in and enhance their understanding of their role and purpose within the organization. Ultimately this communication and understanding leads to a more positive relationship between employee, manager, and organization (Men & Stacks, 2014).

PURPOSE

Moreover, efficient internal communication can help employees find purpose in their work (Harter et al., 2002; Fine 1996; Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). Purpose can be defined as employees finding meaning in their work and understanding why the task must be completed. Purpose is often thought of as contributing to something larger than ourselves (Pink, 2009; Sinek et al., 2017). A meta-analysis of two decades of quantitative research found that employees who found purpose in their work resulted in more favorable outcomes, such as enhanced work engagement and job satisfaction, than those not finding meaning in their work or still searching for it (Riza et al., 2019). Furthermore, Bluestein, Lysova, and Luffy (2023) posits that purpose and meaning of work should be explored in different work environments. Finally, Lysova et al. (2023) calls for more empirical data on the subject. These findings further reiterate the need for managers, leaders, and organizations to emphasize the impact of employees' work in their communication.

Furthermore, communicating purpose with work tasks is valuable for employees to embrace the leader's vision. Grant (2012) suggested a need for more research on the impact of communicating purpose to employees in the management and leadership realm. Leaders and

managers can connect meaning and purpose with followers and employees' work through messages that foster perception of meaning to be interpreted from their work assignments (Griffin, 1983; Molinsky & Margolis, 2005). Work tasks and interactions occupy substantial portions of individuals' time and contribute to their sense of identity. Therefore, communicating with employees in a manner that enables them to derive meaning from their work can significantly influence motivation, identity, and satisfaction (Salanick & Pfeffer, 1978; Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001).

JOB SATISFACTION

Effective internal communication alone has demonstrated increased job satisfaction (Chen, 2011; Dormann & Zapf, 2001; Men, 2014). Job satisfaction is typically defined as the attitude or feelings of employees toward the company, job, coworkers, and overall work environment (Beer, 1964; Locke, 1976; Spector, 1997). Job satisfaction is an emotional state generated from an employee's experiences at work and is a crucial element of happiness. Job satisfaction is critical, not only for employees' overall health, but because it impacts essential areas of organizations such as turnover, absenteeism, commitment, and citizenship behaviors (Bateman & Organ, 1983; Chen, 2011; Dasgupta et al., 2013).

High-quality communication with employees, including providing purpose, enhances job satisfaction and performance (Podsakoff et al., 2000; Wayne et al., 1997). However, a recent meta-analysis suggests these connections should be further explored (Dobrow et al., 2023). Effective internal communication permits employees to align with the company's goals, understand the organization's strategy, achieve work expectations, and generate positive employee behaviors. Furthermore, when employees understand their purpose in the organization, they feel valued because they fully comprehend their role in the strategic direction of the organization (Henderson et al., 2015). The satisfaction of an organization's employees should be a primary area of concern among leaders and managers.

Despite the argument that management and leadership have different roles in the workplace (Kotter, 1990), effective communication is integral in both (Jansen et al., 2009; Northouse, 2019). Men and Stacks (2014) found that leadership serves a pivotal role in the success of an organization's internal communications. In addition to effective internal communication facilitating employees to find purpose in their work, leaders can exert influence in this way. The assertion that effective leaders are necessarily exceptional communicators (Kouzes & Posner, 1995; Goetsch & Davis, 2021) is supported by several leadership theories that emphasize the importance of effective communication as a necessary part of the definition of good leadership.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Path-Goal Theory

The findings from the present study is evaluated within the context of two theoretical frameworks: path-goal theory and leader-member exchange theory. The fundamental basis of path-goal theory is to enhance followers' performance and satisfaction through the nature of work tasks (Northouse, 2019; Schriesheim et al., 2006). Through a path-goal framework, leadership behavior should satisfy the needs of followers, and if this is fulfilled, it will increase performance and satisfaction (Evans, 1996; House, 1971). This theory is apt for this study as the researchers investigated why communication needs are often unfilled, leading to dissatisfaction. Therefore, it becomes incumbent upon the leader to integrate their understanding of follower needs in how they communicate assigned tasks, such that these needs are met along the path employees take to complete their goals. Within this framework, that means organizational leaders should communicate and describe the context in which employees work. They should ensure understanding from their employees through practices such as explicit goal setting, clarifying goals, discussion around how tasks are carried out, and conversation about other's expectations of the employee (House, 1996). In addition to meeting the needs of employees through purposeful communication, these discussions facilitate a positive culture in which individuals at different levels in an organization can collaborate toward employees' goals, allowing them to be completed more efficiently and generate satisfaction.

In the context of path-goal theory, and to the extent that effective communication along an employee's path toward goal completion aids in satisfaction, the leader's communication style is crucial (Indvik, 1986; Northouse, 2019). Strong communication skills within path-goal theory are typically directive, supportive, participative, and achievement-oriented. According to House and Mitchell (1974), directive leadership behavior involves informing subordinates what is expected, providing guidance on what should be done and how, ensuring that employees understand their part, and asking subordinates to follow the rules and regulations. Supportive leadership behaviors are characterized by a friendly and approachable leader who is concerned for the well-being and needs of employees (House & Mitchell, 1974; Silverthorne, 2001). The supportive leaders ensure elements to make work more pleasant and employees satisfied.

One way to facilitate the perception that a leader is approachable is through effective communication (Mishra et al., 2014). Among these communications may be elements of leadership behavior that are referred to as achievement-oriented. Through setting challenging goals, communicating an expectation of high performance, demonstrating accountability for success, and visible demonstrations of their effort toward shared goals, a leader communicates the importance of achievement but does so in a way that subordinates are integral to the overall effort (House & Mitchell, 1974). These leadership behaviors offer leaders the capability to change depending on the situation and the employees' needs. Path-goal theory also assumes leaders have advanced communication skills to switch from behavior to behavior and interact with all followers in any given situation (Northouse, 2019). House (1996) also stated that the essence of the path-goal theory is for leaders to complement subordinates' environments and abilities. This enrichment aids in the creation of employee satisfaction and work performance. Although the path-goal theory has existed for decades and is a main approach taught in leadership, management, and organizational behavior, some argue that there is a need for more empirical research that adequately tests the theory (Schriesheim, 2006).

Leader-Member Exchange Theory

Another theory that emphasizes communication is the leader-member exchange theory (LMX), a process centered on the interactions between leaders and followers (Gerstner & Day, 1997; Northouse, 2019). This theory was also suitable for the study as it emphasizes the communication aspect of leadership and focuses on the quality of messages exchanged between leader and follower, which is the scope of the research. In the LMX framework, leadership is described through high-quality (high degree of mutual trust, respect, and obligation) and low-quality (low trust, respect, and obligation) exchanges (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). Social transactions develop and become relationships through the LMX framework, and through this development, the leader attempts to influence a follower in terms of their relationship (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1991).

The positive relationships between leaders and followers stem from effective communication between individuals at various levels within an organization. These relationships are both processes and outcomes developed with the aim of accomplishing mutual goals. Moreover, the interactions and relationships between leaders and followers benefit organizational outcomes and are formed from the communication they have with one another (Uhl-Bien, 2006). Relational perspectives emphasize the communication process through which relational realities are created (Dachal & Hosking, 2013). Omilion-Hodges & Baker (2017) echo these statements, indicating that the view of these special dyadic relationships in LMX theory are produced through continuous effective communication. Therefore, communication serves as the crucial conduit for building high-quality exchange relationships. Dansereau et al. (1975) found that in-group members (those who had high-quality exchanges) spent far more time communicating and had higher job satisfaction levels and higher performance than the out-group members (low-quality exchanges). However, the updated version of this theory focuses on leaders providing high-quality exchanges to both the in- and out-groups. These updated findings also align with the potential notion that member relationships should not be viewed as high or low but rather through social communicative interactions that progress during the completion of task assignments (Omilion-Hodges & Baker, 2017).

Moreover, if LMX is conducted efficiently, it improves performance, commitment, role clarity, citizenship behaviors, and job satisfaction (Buch et al. 2014; Gerstner & Day, 1997; Ilies et al. 2007; Wayne, 1997). Employees having high-quality exchanges with their supervisors can positively affect the entire work experience. Although literature indicates positive notions from effective leader communication, little attention has been paid to the internal communications that are associated with the leader-member dyadic level (Bakar & Omilion-Hodges, 2018; Gooty & Yammarino, 2016). LMX stresses the importance of high-quality exchanges, but fails to mention how to create them (Northouse, 2019).

Communication Structure

Employees engage in two social exchange relationships during their employment: one with their immediate supervisor and the other with the organization (Masterson et al., 2000). The organization typically communicates through downward, horizontal, and upward communication. Downward communication is the delivery of information flowing from higher levels of management to subordinates in a downward direction and aligns with the organization's structural hierarchy (White et al., 2010). The higher levels of management communicate

downward via speeches, messages, newsletters, e-mails, bulletin boards, and with policies and procedures (Daft & Marcic, 2009). Downward communication is used in decision-making, communicating strategic endeavors (Bacharach & Aiken, 1976), and informing of goals (Neves & Eisenberger, 2012), and if carried out effectively, can aid in satisfaction and purpose creation (Eisenberg & Witten, 1987; Men, 2014). The information usually consists of job instructions and rationale, procedures and practices, performance feedback, and strategic direction.

Conversely, upward communication flows from the lower levels of the organization to the higher levels, and it occurs to provide progress, notify of problems encountered, or to present solutions (Collinson & Tourish, 2015; Hay, 1974; Tourish & Robson, 2006). Typically, upward communication is used in organizations to gain perspective about job tasks from employees to enhance job performance. Upward communication can also aid in the clarification of employees' purpose within the organization (Tourish & Robson, 2006). In order for upward communication to be effective or efficient, it requires some facilitation by the organization. Organizations may use suggestion boxes or employee surveys, or encourage face-to-face conversations between workers and management by maintaining open-door policies (Daft & Marcic, 2009). Sometimes upward influence can occur through this upward interaction, which is when a subordinate attempts to influence an individual higher in the organization (Foste & Botero, 2012).

Horizontal communication within the workplace is when peers, colleagues, or co-workers who have no hierarchical relationship communicate with one another (Downs & Adrian, 2012). These interactions can occur both formally or informally. Typically, horizontal communication occurs to integrate plans, coordinate work, and compare methods or results (Ancona & Caldwell, 1992; Hay, 1974). The purpose of horizontal transmission is not just to inform but also to request support. Sometimes, informal conversations allow colleagues to engage in richer exchanges and process the organization's purpose better (Kirkhaug, 2010). The informal discussions also satisfy group members' social and professional needs. Horizontal communication can occur within or across departments or through teams and benefits organizations that value continuous improvement and problem-solving (Daft & Marcic, 2009). While various internal communication methods are discussed, there remains a need to delve deeper into why employees' preferences regarding internal communication often go unmet.

RESEARCH METHODS

The researchers used Beck's (2023) questionnaire instrument for this study, which measures communication preferences and job satisfaction. The questionnaire was sent to a convenience sample of 678 individuals and 206 responses were received (30.3% response rate). Using the snowball technique, the instrument was sent to individuals separately and to four human resource representatives of businesses. The human resource members forwarded the questionnaire to employees, and the individuals who received it separately forwarded it to others in their network. Most respondents were located in Pennsylvania ($n = 143$, 69.4%), followed by California ($n = 23$, 11.4%), and the remaining 19.2% from fifteen other states. Respondents from the four companies consisted of two technical training companies, a manufacturing company, and a delivery/logistics company. The respondents self-identified their role within the company and the researchers then classified these roles as either "white-collar" ($n = 55$, 26.7%) or "blue-collar" ($n = 111$, 53.9%) jobs. The average age of respondents was 41.8 (SD = 13.13), of those

choosing to self-identify, most did so as white ($n = 138, 93.2\%$) and male ($n = 88, 59.9\%$), having a bachelor's degree ($n = 67, 33.3\%$), and not being a supervisor at work ($n = 137, 67.2\%$).

RESULTS

The researchers investigated employees' needs and preferences related to internal communication. The nature of the communication under study is a typical downward internal communication process whereby leaders or managers in an organization communicate with and to subordinates. Through this approach, the researchers surveyed employees about their needs and preferences. The analyses presented indicate a connection between employees' internal communication needs and preferences and their job satisfaction. Furthermore, by expanding upon this association, the researchers suggest internal communication practices that leaders and managers could consider implementing to optimize employee job satisfaction.

Factor Analysis

An exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted on an eighteen-item instrument Beck (2023) to identify the latent structure of the items on the instrument and to create sub-scale scores for subsequent data analysis aligned to the guiding research questions of this study. In order to evaluate the EFA for overall fit and individual item-factor loadings, several common criteria were used (Gordon & Courtney, 2013; Larsen & Warne, 2010; Russell, 2002; Warne & Larsen, 2014). An initial EFA resulted in a coherent model of the instrument whereby all eighteen items were retained (no extraction communality was $< .2$) across five distinct latent factors whose initial eigenvalues accounted for 62.6% of the variance across the 18 items on the instrument.

The rotated version of these five latent factors, here forward, are labeled as: (1) *My Purpose*; (2) *Direct Supervisor*; (3) *Making Meaning*; (4) *My Current Work*; and (5) *Communication Satisfaction*. Though guided in this study by the dual frameworks arising from path-goal theory and leader-member exchange theory, the researchers chose to employ an exploratory rather than confirmatory factor analytic technique to allow the data to inform conclusions rather than fitting the data to a priori assumptions about the nature of these relationships. Moreover, by utilizing an oblique extraction method (principal axis factoring; PAF) paired with a rotation method such as the promax method, which aids in the interpretability of the latent factors that arise, was the researcher's choice of method which allows factors to be correlated with one another. Whereas orthogonal extraction methods may produce a more parsimonious factor structure, the researchers rejected this approach and prioritized a method whereby the connections among elements from each theoretical framework can arise empirically and naturally depending on the responses of our respondents across the eighteen-item instrument. The oblique method reveals the latent structure across these eighteen items empirically, as opposed to a confirmatory orthogonal approach, which surmises the structure and forces the model to fit.

Latent Factor Structure and Subscales

As noted above, eighteen-items were reduced to five coherent factors: (1) *My Purpose*; (2) *Direct Supervisor*; (3) *Making Meaning*; (4) *My Current Work*; and (5) *Communication Satisfaction*. The pattern matrix showing items and their rotated factor loadings is presented in Table 1. Based on this factor structure, the rotated items loading on each factor were considered as a subscale. Subscale scores were thus calculated, and reliability analyses were performed for the instrument overall and for each subscale as indicated in Table 1 (Appendix)

Reliability and Validity

The eighteen-item instrument had good reliability across eighteen items and 206 complete responses, *Cronbach's* $\alpha = 0.838$. Following the EFA and subsequent identification of five distinct factors, additional reliability analyses were performed on each set of items comprising each factor. All but one of these subscales had adequate reliability (>0.7). These analyses are summarized in Table 2 subscale as indicated in Table 2 (Appendix)

Satisfaction as a Dichotomous Outcome (Binary Logistic Regression)

In order to identify the relative contribution of each latent factor in classifying an employee as satisfied with their job (or not), an iterative binary logistic regression analysis was performed. Satisfaction was operationalized by transforming the Likert-type "I am satisfied with my job" item into a dichotomous outcome whereby respondents strongly agreeing or agreeing with the statement were evaluated to be satisfied and those respondents who strongly disagreed, disagreed, or were neutral were considered not satisfied. An initial model including four of the five subscale scores, and a revised *Communication Satisfaction* subscale score (excluding the "I am satisfied with my job" item), significantly accounted for over 50% of the variability in the dichotomous satisfaction outcome, $\chi^2(5, N = 207) = 82.297, p < .001, Nagelkerke R^2 = .529$ and correctly classified participants as satisfied or not 87.9% of the time. Moreover, a Hosmer and Lemeshow test indicated that this model had adequate goodness of fit ($p = .710$). In this model, three factors were significant predictors of satisfaction. For each unit increase in the *My Purpose* factor above the mean, given the other coefficients in the model, there was more than a five-fold increase in the likelihood that an employee would be satisfied with their job ($Exp^{\beta} = 5.295, p < .001$); positive effects were also found for *My Current Work* ($Exp^{\beta} = 5.179, p = .001$) and *Communication Satisfaction* ($Exp^{\beta} = 4.105, p < .001$). The *Making Meaning* factor ($Exp^{\beta} = .701, p = .343$) and the *Direct Supervisor* factor ($Exp^{\beta} = .453, p = .173$) were also included in this initial model, but both had a nonsignificant negative effect on satisfaction.

In the second step of the iterative process, and to understand what effect age (as a proxy for employment experience or job level) may have on satisfaction within the context of the domains measured by the instrument, age was added to the previous model. This second model was also significant and accounted for 56% of the variability in a dichotomous satisfaction outcome, $\chi^2(6, N = 207) = 88.393, p < .001, Nagelkerke R^2 = .560$ and correctly classified participants in terms of their job satisfaction 87.9% of the time. Moreover, a Hosmer and

Lemeshow test indicated that this model also had adequate goodness of fit ($p = .076$). Each of the significant predictors of satisfaction from the original model were again significant and positive predictors of satisfaction. However, relative to one another and in absolute terms, each contributed slightly differently to the classification of an employee as satisfied or not. Additionally, age was a significant positive predictor of satisfaction, such that for each additional year above the mean, within the context of the other variables in the model, there was approximately a 5% increase in the odds that an employee would report that they were satisfied with the job ($Exp^{\beta} = 1.052$, $p = .019$). A complete summary of the final model is represented in Table 3 (Appendix)

DISCUSSION

Previous researchers have suggested that employees who find purpose in their work are also satisfied (Colbert et al., 2016; Riza, 2019). The results of this study are novel and build further upon these findings by identifying that satisfaction is a function of effective communication as it increases employees' understanding of their purpose within the larger organizational context. Moreover, among the five factors that emerged, no two are more closely related than the *Direct Supervisor* and *Making Meaning* factors ($r = 0.568$), suggesting the vital importance of leaders within an organization to facilitate employees finding meaning in their work, largely through effective and intentional communication about why employees complete job assignments and the impact it has on the organization. Providing meaning in work is desirable to employees, as shown in previous literature (Harter, 2002; Omilion-Hodges & Baker, 2014; Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001).

Interestingly and importantly, however, the logistic regression model demonstrates the primacy of both effective organizational communication (*Communication Satisfaction*) and understanding of one's purpose within the organization (*My Purpose*) as drivers of job satisfaction. The two factors are also closely related ($r = 0.491$) and further suggest that effective organizational communication leads to an understanding of purpose; together, both are positive predictors of job satisfaction.

That *Making Meaning* and *Direct Supervisor* were not significant predictors in the logistic model is somewhat curious. However, this may be due to the specific construction of the items in each of these factors as the wording of these items was more generalized or preference-oriented, whereas the items in *Communication Satisfaction* and *My Purpose* were more direct or specific. Thus, evaluation of respondents' current job satisfaction revealed less connection between these more general factors than evidenced in the predictive utility of the specific factors. This divergence in scope or tone of these factors' items is supported by the less strong relationships between the generalized and the specific factors. This is especially true for the relationship between the specific *Communication Satisfaction* factor and *Making Meaning* ($r = -0.006$) and *Direct Supervisor* ($r = 0.144$), strongly suggesting that the instrument measures both respondents' preferences and current situation vis a vis communication and satisfaction. Moreover, while the logistic model was more focused on actual current job satisfaction, the specific pairing and strong association between *Communication Satisfaction* and *My Purpose* as well as the general or preference pairing and strong association between *Making Meaning* and *Direct Supervisor* clearly underscores the connection between supervisor communication and employee understanding of purpose.

THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

This study's theoretical and empirical findings on communication and leadership contribute to the body of literature related to LMX and path-goal theories. The LMX framework suggests that leaders should strive to provide high-quality exchanges with in-group and out-group members, but previous literature fails to provide instruction on how to create these high-quality exchanges (Dansereau, 1975; Northhouse, 2019; Omilion-Hodges & Baker, 2017). This study addresses this problem by presenting a way to communicate effectively and provide high-quality exchanges. Leaders should communicate purpose and let employees know how their work contributes to and impacts the organization. Helping employees find meaning in their work addresses the gap in the literature on how to provide high-quality exchanges, and the results of this study indicate that this enhances employee job satisfaction. These findings align with other studies showing that if LMX is conducted efficiently, it can improve job satisfaction (Buch, 2014; Fisk & Friesen, 2012; Gerstner & Day, 1997).

This study also investigated the data through the path-goal theory theoretical lens. Previous literature indicated a need for more empirical research that adequately tests path-goal theory (Schriesheim, 2006). The empirical results of this study address this gap and find that leaders and managers should be aware that employees want communications about their purpose. Along the path toward goal completion, supervisors should understand that they need to articulate why the goals are designed and how employees' specific contributions impact the company. Furthermore, the path-goal theory emphasizes improving followers' performance and satisfaction through the nature of work assignments (Northhouse, 2019; Schriesheim, 2006). Leaders must understand that providing effective communication can impact employees' job satisfaction.

CONCLUSION

Employees need to understand why and how their work contributes to larger organizational goals. As these needs are increasingly met, job satisfaction is overwhelmingly more likely than if unmet. These two related findings extend and confirm what previous researchers have surmised (Beck, 2020; Beck, 2023; Welch, 2011). Through effective downward communication, organizational leaders can facilitate employee understanding, purpose, and ultimately, job satisfaction. It behooves organizations to train their leaders to focus not just on directives in their downward communication, but also to be mindful that the context and personal understanding of the communicated information matters deeply to their employees. Time-starved (Kotter, 1982; Mintzberg, 1973) managers who put forth more effort to make their downward communication more dialogue than monologue may find less time and effort required on the backend of task processes. Another benefit is that more informed and satisfied employees are more likely to perform at higher levels than their less satisfied counterparts.

The results shared herein, being framed by two complementary theoretical frameworks (path-goal and LMX theories), provide a myriad of opportunities for further research to more fully understand the interplay between employee job satisfaction as a function of high-quality communication exchanges and as a need to understand the paths by which goals may be attained. Perhaps a hybrid theoretical model of path-goal and LMX theories may be developed as a driver

of employee job satisfaction that more completely captures the interplay between persons' intrinsic need to understand and subsequently feel purpose in their work and the path by which they can maximize the likelihood of attaining their work goals. It is precisely this interplay that we intend to study in subsequent efforts.

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APPENDIX**Table 1: Five Factor Pattern Matrix**

Item	Pattern Matrix					Factor
	1	2	3	4	5	
(q4) My job satisfaction is positively related to my understanding of how I contribute to organizational purpose.	0.84	2				My Purpose
(q6) My job performance is positively related to my understanding of how I contribute to the organization.	0.75	7				
(q2) My job motivation is positively related to my understanding of how I contribute to the organization.	0.70	4				
(q12) I prefer that my direct supervisor makes me feel like my work counts.		0.94				Direct Supervisor
(q11) I like to receive feedback from my direct supervisor.		0.51				
(q13) I prefer that my direct supervisor communicates organizational updates.		0.48				
(q18) I have made career decisions based on my communication preferences.		0.35				
(q7) I like to be recognized for my accomplishments.		0.34				
(q14) I want my direct supervisor to be transparent in their communication with me.		0.32				
(q8) I prefer to know why tasks are assigned to me.			0.79			Making Meaning
(q10) Communicating why tasks are assigned is essential to maintaining a positive organizational culture.			0.74			
(q15) I understand how my work contributes to my organizations purpose.				0.61		My Current Work
(q5) I perform my job at a high level.				1		
(q9) I expect honest communication from my organization.				0.56		
(q1) I am motivated to complete tasks most commonly assigned to me.				3		
(q17) My organization transparently communicates with me.					0.71	Communication Satisfaction
(q16) My current direct supervisor effectively communicates why I am assigned tasks.					5	
(q3) I am satisfied with my job.					0.69	
					6	
					0.49	
					9	

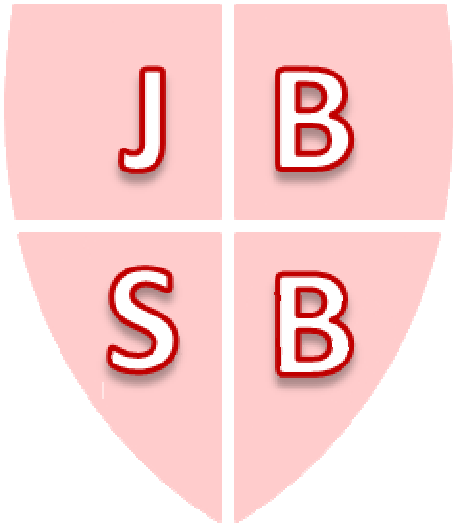


Table 2: Overall and Subscale Reliability Analyses

Scale	N responses	N items	Cronbach's α
My Purpose	217	3	0.819
Direct Supervisor	215	6	0.741
Making Meaning	219	2	0.734
My Current Work	217	4	0.636
Communication Satisfaction	216	3	0.738
Overall	206	18	0.838

Table 3: Binary Logistic Regression Model of Employee Job Satisfaction

Variable	B	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)	95% C.I.	
Communication Satisfaction	1.454	23.196	1	0.000	4.280	2.369	7.734
My Purpose	1.434	8.708	1	0.003	4.197	1.619	10.883
My Current Work	1.377	7.483	1	0.006	3.963	1.478	10.631
Age	0.050	5.546	1	0.019	1.052	1.008	1.097
Making Meaning	-0.359	0.889	1	0.346	0.698	0.331	1.473
Director Supervisor	-0.536	0.764	1	0.382	0.585	0.176	1.945
Constant	-13.395	17.196	1	0.000	0.000		

