

Information Flow to Front-Line Employees: Leader-Member Exchange Theory

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Introduction

This research is a case study within a large bureaucracy: the physical plant operations of a Tier-One university in the United States. The organization of study at this university received low scores for *internal communication* in their all-employee surveys in 2012 and 2014 and was cited for “lack of information flow to front-line employees” in a peer audit conducted in 2011. Root causes for these deficiencies are investigated through activity theory (AT) analysis along with Leader-Member Exchange Theory (LMX) within the organization.

Methods

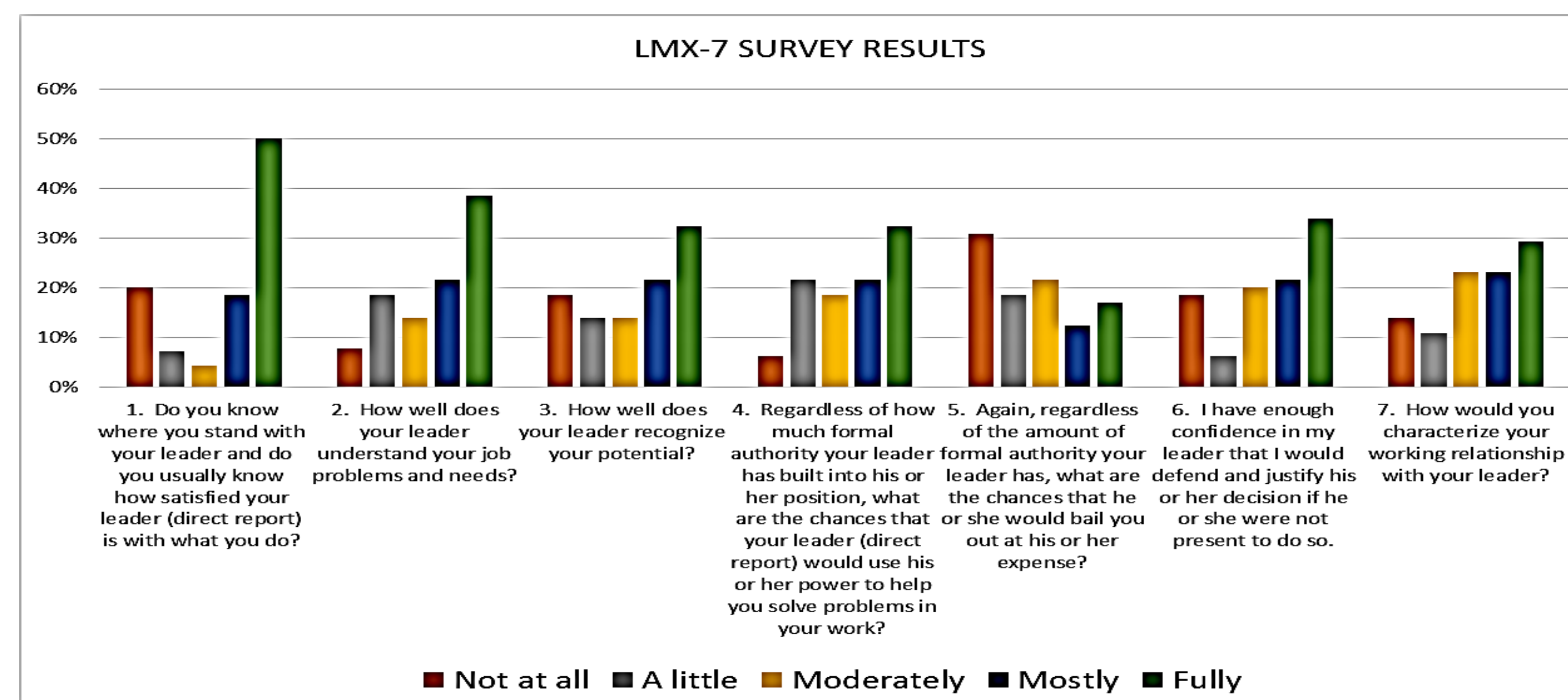
- Literature review on theories and studies of:
 - Activity Theory
 - Leader-Member Exchange Theory
 - Organizational Citizenship Behavior
- Qualitative research with survey of 726 employees using LMX-7 questionnaire (consensus measure for best measure of LMX).
- Interviews and observations with 15 participants from the survey group.
- Quantitative research tabulating results of research survey and 2014 all-employee survey.
- Linear regressions of all-employee survey responses to identify areas of improvement to improve overall survey score.

Results

- 13% response rate to the LMX-7 survey
- 30.3% of employees have poor relations with boss
- Clear documentation of “in-groups” and “out-groups”
- 87% of employees only see 2nd level manger 2x/year
- Human-computer interface requires substantial time

NEGATIVE SCORING	NEUTRAL SCORING	POSITIVE SCORING
30.3%	16.4%	53.3%

LMX-7 survey



STATEMENT	GROUP	ORGANIZATION	BENCHMARK
The right information gets to the right people at the right time	2.95	3.60	3.76
My work group uses the latest technology to communicate and interact	2.64	2.64	3.47

Conclusions

- LMX-7 survey results indicated dissatisfaction in 30% in the workforce (discontent openly shared during interviews).
- Every participant eager to be interviewed on subject of this research, indicating desire for positive change.
- Every participant displayed pride in their daily tasks, indicating dedication to group’s mission.
- Organization has opportunity to carry out meaningful initiatives to improve overall employee satisfaction.
- Improvements for employee satisfaction will simultaneously enhance organization’s internal communication and increase productivity.

Specific items to address should include:

- Provide a new work-order management software tool.
- Establish better leader-member relations.
- Continue all-employee surveys.
- Publish improvement plans.

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Further Information

Please contact me via e-mail (neil.crump@austin.utexas.edu) for further information or to discuss the findings of this study.