

10-31-2018

## The Impact of Supervisory Management on Extension Agent Job Satisfaction

Matt Benge

*University of Florida*, [mattbenge@ufl.edu](mailto:mattbenge@ufl.edu)

Amy Harder

*University of Florida*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarsjunction.msstate.edu/jhse>



Part of the [Social and Behavioral Sciences Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Benge, M., & Harder, A. (2018). The Impact of Supervisory Management on Extension Agent Job Satisfaction. *Journal of Human Sciences and Extension*, 6(3), 13. <https://scholarsjunction.msstate.edu/jhse/vol6/iss3/13>

This Original Research is brought to you for free and open access by Scholars Junction. It has been accepted for inclusion in *Journal of Human Sciences and Extension* by an authorized editor of Scholars Junction. For more information, please contact [scholcomm@msstate.libanswers.com](mailto:scholcomm@msstate.libanswers.com).

## The Impact of Supervisory Management on Extension Agent Job Satisfaction

**Matt Benge**

**Amy Harder**

*University of Florida*

*The relationship between a supervisor and his/her employee has a direct effect on the employee's level of job satisfaction and decision whether or not to remain in the organization. Extension agent retention has been shown to increase when a positive relationship and supervisory support exist between an Extension agent and his/her supervisor. Herzberg's Motivation-Hygiene Theory was used to examine relationships with and impacts of supervisor management on Extension agent job satisfaction. A census of Florida Extension agents were asked to describe their relationships with their County Extension Directors (CED). Significant positive relationships were found between agent job satisfaction and ratings of the hygiene factors of Effective Senior Management and Effective Supervisor. A significant positive relationship was also found between these two hygiene factors. A significant difference was found between effective senior management and the agents' CEDs gender, with agents with male CEDs reporting higher average levels of satisfaction with Effective Senior Management than agents with female CEDs. Significant differences also existed between agents' Effective Senior Management satisfaction and years of working relationship between agents and CEDs. Extension supervision and leadership training should be a focus of Extension administration as effective supervision and management have a positive impact on Extension agent job satisfaction.*

*Keywords:* Extension, job satisfaction, supervisor, management, training, development

### Introduction

County Extension Directors (CEDs) are Extension agents who have a split appointment between their educational programming and serving as the administrative leaders of the county Extension offices in Florida. CEDs perform administrative functions such as formulating and evaluating county Extension programs, coordinating personnel functions, serving as the link between the county Extension office and Extension administration, communicating and maintaining relationships with county stakeholders, and providing leadership and mentorship to the Extension agents in their office (Elizer, 2011; Radhakrishna, Yoder, & Baggett, 1994). Though CEDs are

---

Direct correspondence to Matt Benge at mattbenge@ufl.edu

the direct supervisors of the Extension agents in their offices, they do not administer the agents' annual performance reviews, which is the responsibility of the District Extension Director.

The relationship between an Extension supervisor and an Extension agent has a direct impact on the agent's work productivity and retention (Benge & Harder, 2017). Positive interactions between supervisors and employees can increase the success of Extension programming and performance, job satisfaction, and retention, whereas negative interactions can lead to premature turnover and Extension agent burnout (Branham, 2005; Elizer, 2011; Owen, 2004; Safrit & Owen, 2010). Elizer (2011) stated, "Effective leadership of Extension offices not only maintains programming, assessment, and accountability requirements, but also improves upon these as directors maximize their influence through satisfied employees" (para. 1). Little research has examined the relationships between Extension agents and CEDs.

The supervisory and management role of the CED can also impact an agent's job satisfaction (Coomber & Barriball, 2007). Job satisfaction "directly and negatively relates to employees' intentions to quit their jobs, which in turn is positively related to actual turnover" (Chen, Ployhart, Thomas, Anderson, & Bliese, 2011, p. 159). Extension agent turnover presents unique challenges for Extension administration due to programmatic and monetary losses for Cooperative Extension (Borr & Young, 2010; Ensle, 2005; Kutilek, 2000) and leads to a loss of knowledge, experience, community relationships, educational programming, and volunteers (Arnold, 2008; Bradley, Driscoll, & Bardon, 2012; Ensle, 2005; Strong & Harder, 2009). Harder, Gouldthorpe, and Goodwin (2014) found that 80% of Colorado Extension agents were satisfied with their job. Hodous, Young, Borr, and Vetter (2014) found that North Dakota Extension agents had an average level of job satisfaction. The level of job satisfaction of Florida Extension agents is unknown.

The turnover rate for Florida Extension agents in 2017 was 8.7%, which is more than double the national labor turnover rate (Benge & Harder, 2017). Retention has been shown to increase when a positive relationship occurs between an Extension agent and his/her supervisor, such as recognition, managerial support, and fairness (Chandler, 2004). Likewise, Branham (2005) described too little coaching and feedback, feeling devalued and unrecognized, and loss of trust in senior leaders as reasons for leaving an organization. Benge, Harder, and Carter (2011) explained that Extension supervisors should mentor and coach entry-level Extension agents.

Understanding the unique relationship among Extension agents and CEDs is important to maintaining a high-quality and satisfied workforce. State Extension systems can be strengthened by understanding the impacts CEDs have on Extension agent job satisfaction.

## Theoretical Framework

Herzberg's (1974) Motivation-Hygiene Theory explains employee job satisfaction and turnover from a motivation perspective. This theory is a "practical approach toward motivating employees" (Tan & Waheed, 2011, p. 5) and describes an employee's motivation to either stay or leave an organization due to factors affecting job satisfaction or dissatisfaction (Herzberg, 1974). The Motivation-Hygiene Theory proposes job satisfaction and employee turnover are influenced by both motivation and hygiene factors (Herzberg, 1974). Motivators (motivation factors) relate to job satisfaction and pertain to the job itself, such as the nature of the work, recognition, opportunity for advancement, professional growth opportunities, responsibility, good feelings about the organization, and clarity of mission (Smerek & Peterson, 2007). Maintenance factors (hygiene factors) relate to feelings of dissatisfaction and are extrinsic to the job itself, such as salary, supervision, and interpersonal relations (Tan & Waheed, 2011).

Effective Supervision and Effective Senior Management are the major constructs chosen for this study. Effective supervision and management has been found to explain Extension agent job satisfaction (Castillo & Cano, 2004). Extension agents also report high levels of job satisfaction when they are content with their supervisors (Riggs & Beus, 1993). Satisfying employees' maintenance factors is necessary for increasing employee satisfaction, which results in increased retention rates. Effective supervision is described as having an effective supervisor as well as a positive relationship with the employee, such as decision-making, trust, and providing feedback. Effective senior management is related to the ability of the supervisor to carry out the organization's policies, such as proper communication and communicating goals and strategies (Smerek & Peterson, 2007).

## Purpose and Objective

The purpose of the study was to understand if the supervisory relationship between CEDs and Extension agents impacts Extension agent affects job satisfaction. The objectives of the study were

1. To describe the level of Extension agent job satisfaction based on supervisory hygiene factors,
2. To determine if significant differences existed in job satisfaction and hygiene factors based on participant demographics, and
3. To determine if significant relationships existed between Extension agent job satisfaction and hygiene factors.

## Methods

The findings presented in this article are part of a larger study investigating the relationships between Extension agents and County Extension Directors in Florida. Approval from the University of Florida's Institutional Review Board (IRB) was acquired for the conduct of this study.

The population of interest for this study was Florida Extension agents who were not CEDs or Regional Specialized Agents (RSAs). RSAs were removed from the population of interest because they report to a District Extension Director rather than a CED and their job responsibilities vary from a county Extension agent. A census was conducted of county Extension agents. A list of current Florida Extension agents ( $N = 351$ ) was obtained from the UF/IFAS Extension County Operations office. The target population ( $N = 274$ ) was achieved after removing the CEDs and RSAs from the list.

A 21-item scale from the Motivation-Hygiene Theory Questionnaire (Smerek & Peterson, 2007) was used in this study. The scale included items related to overall job satisfaction and two hygiene factors that specifically assess job satisfaction of the respondent regarding his or her supervisor. Respondents indicated their responses to the overall job satisfaction items on a Likert-type scale of one to five (1 = *Strongly disagree*, 2 = *Disagree*, 3 = *Neither agree or disagree*, 4 = *Agree*, and 5 = *Strongly agree*). Respondents were also asked to indicate their responses to Effective Senior Management and their Effective Supervisor on a Likert-type scale of one to five (1 = *Very dissatisfied*, 2 = *Dissatisfied*, 3 = *Neither satisfied or dissatisfied*, 4 = *Satisfied*, and 5 = *Very satisfied*).

Prior to conducting the study, the questionnaire was reviewed and assessed by a panel of experts who evaluated the instrument for construct and face validity. The panel consisted of county and state Extension faculty from the University of Florida. The questionnaire was formatted into an online survey using Qualtrics (Qualtrics, 2016).

The instrument was pilot-tested prior to implementation with Florida Extension agents. The pilot study included 40 Extension professionals from other states working in the program areas of agriculture, natural resources, family and consumer sciences (FCS), and 4-H youth development. Extension agents in the pilot study were from the state Extension systems of Kentucky, Louisiana, Georgia, New Mexico, Washington, Utah, Arizona, Ohio, Oklahoma, Maryland, Nebraska, and Texas. Twenty-four of the 40 individuals completed the pilot, resulting in a 60% response rate.

The internal consistency of a set of items in a scale is measured by Cronbach's alpha coefficient (Cronbach, 1951), which is utilized to indicate reliability of the set of items (Ary, Jacobs,

Razavieh, & Sorensen, 2006). Smerek and Peterson (2007) reported the Motivation-Hygiene Scale was a valid instrument for assessing the motivating and maintenance factors of motivation-hygiene theory. Table 1 provides the Cronbach's alpha levels for the study's scales.

**Table 1. Cronbach's Alpha Levels of 21-Item Subscale of the Motivation-Hygiene Theory Questionnaire**

Motivation-Hygiene Factors	Smerek & Peterson (2007) Alpha Levels	Pilot Study Alpha Levels	Study Alpha Levels
Effective Supervisor	0.87	0.97	0.97
Overall Job Satisfaction	0.95	0.91	0.80
Effective Senior Management	0.97	0.91	0.88

*Note:* Reliability levels  $\geq .80$  considered acceptable (Cronbach, 1951).

The Tailored Design Method (TDM) was followed because use of the TDM has been shown to yield high response rates, reduce sampling error, develop trust with the respondents, and allow the researcher to follow survey procedures that are scientifically founded (Dillman, Smyth, & Christian, 2009). An email with a link to the study's online Qualtrics questionnaire was sent to each of the 274 Florida county Extension agents in the target population. One hundred eighty-seven questionnaires were completed, for an overall response rate of 68% ( $n = 187$ ). Other studies using Florida Extension agents as the target population reported similar responses rates of 58% (Brain, Irani, Hodges, & Fuhrman, 2009), 69.09% (Benge et al., 2011), and 62% (Adams, Place, & Swisher, 2009).

Data were analyzed using SPSS version 24 statistical software package for Windows (IBM Corp, 2016). Descriptive statistics were calculated for the first objective. Inferential statistics, such as  $t$ -tests, Analysis of Variance, and correlations were used to analyze data for the second and third objectives. Specifically, Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and  $t$ -tests were used to analyze the second objective to determine if significant differences existed in the hygiene factors of Effective Senior Management and Effective Supervisor, and job satisfaction based on participant demographics. The researchers utilized  $t$ -tests to determine whether the difference between two means was statistically significant (Ary et al., 2006). ANOVA was used to determine if differences existed between the dependent variable scores based on independent variables with more than two levels. If the  $F$  statistic demonstrated significance, then the dependent variable means between at least two of the levels of the independent variables being investigated were statistically significant (Shavelson, 1996). When a significant  $F$  statistic was found, the Tukey HSD test was used to perform post hoc analyses to determine which levels of the independent variables were significantly different from the others. An alpha level of .05 was used for all statistical tests.

The Pearson  $r$ , which reveals the strength and direction of the association among two variables (Shavelson, 1996), was used to satisfy the third objective. A value of  $r = +.70$  or higher indicates a very strong association,  $+.50$  to  $+.69$  signifies a substantial positive association,  $+.30$  to  $+.49$  is a moderate positive association,  $+.10$  to  $+.29$  suggests a low positive association,  $+.01$  to  $+.09$  implies a negligible positive association, and a  $.00$   $r$  means no association exists (Shavelson, 1996).

Table 2 identifies the demographic characteristics of respondents. Horticulture agents in Florida are typically described as either environmental horticulture or commercial horticulture, with the former associating with traditional natural resources programming such as water conservation, and the latter associating with traditional agriculture. Therefore, Extension agents within the programmatic areas of horticulture, sea grant, and natural resources were combined due to similarities in programming and alignment with the organization's ten-year strategic plan (University of Florida, 2013).

**Table 2. Frequencies and Percentages of Respondents' Demographic Characteristics**

Demographic Characteristic	<i>F</i>	%	<i>N</i> (% Responding)
Years as an Extension Agent			
5 years or less	79	44.1%	179
6-10 years	35	19.6%	(95.7%)
11-15 years	23	12.8%	
16-20 years	18	10.1%	
21-25 years	9	5.0%	
More than 25 years	15	8.4%	
Gender			
Male	52	29.5%	176
Female	124	70.5%	(94.1%)
Age			
20-29 years	18	10.2%	176
30-39 years	51	29.0%	(94.1%)
40-49 years	37	21.0%	
50-59 years	50	28.4%	
60 years or older	20	11.4%	
Program Area			
4-H	46	26.9%	171
Agriculture / Livestock	28	16.4%	(91.4%)
FCS	34	19.9%	
Horticulture, Natural Resources, Sea Grant	63	36.8%	

<b>Demographic Characteristic (continued)</b>	<b><i>F</i></b>	<b>%</b>	<b><i>N</i> (% Responding)</b>
Extension District			
Central	49	28.3%	173
Northeast	38	22.0%	(92.5%)
Northwest	27	15.6%	
South	32	18.5%	
South Central	27	15.6%	
Education Level			
Bachelor's Degree	26	14.6%	178
Post-Graduate Degree	152	85.4%	(95.2%)
Gender of CED			
Male	90	50.6%	178
Female	88	49.4%	(95.2%)
Years of Working Relationship Between Agent and CED			
5 years or less	117	65.7%	178
6-10 years	40	22.5%	(95.2%)
11-15 years	10	5.6%	
16 years or more	11	6.2%	
Years of CED Experience			
5 years or less	78	44.6%	175
6-10 years	54	30.9%	(93.6%)
11-15 years	18	10.3%	
16-20 years	9	5.1%	
21-25 years	5	2.9%	
More than 25 years	11	6.3%	

*Note:* Post-Graduate Degree includes Master's, Ph.D., and Professional Degrees.

There were two limitations of this study. Respondents may have misinterpreted the questions, which would result in decreased validity. In addition, it was assumed the respondents in the study provided honest and accurate answers. Nonresponse was addressed by comparing early to late respondents. No significant differences existed between the groups. This suggests, based on Lindner, Murphey, and Briers (2001), that results may be generalized to the entire population.

## **Findings**

### **Objective One**

The first objective was to describe the level of Extension agent Overall Job Satisfaction based on supervisory hygiene factors. Table 3 identifies the means and standard deviations for overall job satisfaction and the two hygiene factors. Respondents reported an Overall Job Satisfaction mean



of 3.60 ( $SD = 0.84$ ). The hygiene factor with the highest mean was Effective Supervisor ( $M = 3.73$ ,  $SD = 0.94$ ), followed by Effective Senior Management ( $M = 3.63$ ,  $SD = 1.03$ ).

**Table 3. Index Means and Standard Deviations of Overall Job Satisfaction and Hygiene Factors**

Factor	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>N</i>
Effective Supervisor	3.73	0.94	175
Effective Senior Management	3.63	1.03	184
Overall Job Satisfaction	3.60	0.84	185

*Note:* Respondents were asked to rate their level of agreement or disagreement with statements about his/her County Director on a Likert-type scale (1 = *Strongly disagree*, 2 = *Disagree*, 3 = *Neither agree nor disagree*, 4 = *Agree*, and 5 = *Strongly agree*).

Table 4 identifies the means and standard deviations for Overall Job Satisfaction and the hygiene factors based on demographic characteristics of respondents. Female respondents reported higher Overall Job Satisfaction ( $M = 3.65$ ,  $SD = 0.82$ ) than male respondents ( $M = 3.53$ ,  $SD = 0.92$ ). Extension District 5 had the highest mean score for both Effective Supervisor ( $M = 4.18$ ,  $SD = 0.91$ ) and Effective Senior Management ( $M = 4.06$ ,  $SD = 0.93$ ), and Extension District 3 had the lowest mean score for both Effective Supervisor ( $M = 3.63$ ,  $SD = 0.95$ ) and Effective Senior Management ( $M = 3.50$ ,  $SD = 1.13$ ).

**Table 4. Means and Standard Deviations for Overall Job Satisfaction and Hygiene Factors Based on Demographic Characteristics of Respondents**

Demographic Characteristic	Effective Supervisor		Effective Senior Management		Overall Job Satisfaction	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Years as an Extension Agent						
5 years or less	3.83	0.95	3.75	1.00	3.60	0.75
6-10 years	3.65	1.00	3.43	1.20	3.70	0.82
11-15 years	3.32	1.00	3.31	0.94	3.53	1.07
16-20 years	3.97	0.77	3.77	0.92	3.45	1.00
21-25 years	4.02	0.75	3.96	0.73	3.51	0.80
More than 25 years	3.99	0.64	3.93	0.78	3.66	1.05
Gender						
Male	3.87	0.90	3.78	0.98	3.53	0.92
Female	3.72	0.95	3.62	1.03	3.65	0.82
Age						
20-29 years	4.16	0.53	4.05	0.74	3.72	0.44
30-39 years	3.71	1.01	3.54	1.04	3.48	0.80
40-49 years	3.70	0.96	3.70	1.08	3.63	0.94
50-59 years	3.71	0.89	3.55	1.01	3.66	0.82
60 years or older	3.89	1.02	3.94	0.90	3.70	1.09

Demographic Characteristic (continued)	Effective Supervisor		Effective Senior Management		Overall Job Satisfaction	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Program Area						
4-H	3.74	1.00	3.68	1.05	3.39	0.84
Agriculture/Livestock	3.88	0.71	3.73	0.82	3.46	0.69
FCS	3.98	0.85	3.94	0.93	3.92	0.82
Horticulture/ Natural Resources/Sea Grant	3.74	0.90	3.59	1.02	3.66	0.87
Extension District						
Extension District 1	3.63	0.95	3.50	1.13	3.49	0.93
Extension District 2	3.77	0.81	3.69	0.95	3.67	0.73
Extension District 3	3.88	1.00	3.80	0.96	3.70	0.88
Extension District 4	4.18	0.91	4.06	0.93	3.70	0.88
Extension District 5	3.66	0.79	3.58	0.85	3.60	0.79
Education Level						
Bachelor's	3.83	1.10	3.82	1.11	3.56	0.79
Post-Graduate	3.78	0.88	3.64	1.00	3.64	0.82

*Note:* Respondents were asked to rate their level of agreement or disagreement with statements about his/her County Extension Director on a Likert-type scale (1 = *Strongly disagree*, 2 = *Disagree*, 3 = *Neither agree nor disagree*, 4 = *Agree*, and 5 = *Strongly agree*).

Table 5 identifies the means and standard deviations for Overall Job Satisfaction and the hygiene factors based on demographic characteristics of CEDs. Regarding the gender of CEDs, female CEDs were perceived more favorably as an Effective Supervisor ( $M = 3.91$ ,  $SD = 0.86$ ) and for their Effective Senior Management ( $M = 3.81$ ,  $SD = 0.93$ ). However, male CEDs were perceived more favorably regarding respondents' Overall Job Satisfaction ( $M = 3.68$ ,  $SD = 0.85$ ) than female CEDs ( $M = 3.54$ ,  $SD = 0.82$ ).

Regarding the years of CED experience, CEDs with more than 25 years of experience had the highest mean scores for both Effective Supervisor ( $M = 4.11$ ,  $SD = 0.82$ ) and Effective Senior Management ( $M = 4.00$ ,  $SD = 0.88$ ). CEDs with 11 to 15 years of experience had the highest mean score for Overall Job Satisfaction ( $M = 3.92$ ,  $SD = 0.89$ ), and CEDS with 21 to 25 years of experiences had the lowest mean score for Overall Job Satisfaction ( $M = 3.13$ ,  $SD = 1.16$ ).

**Table 5. Means and Standard Deviations for Overall Job Satisfaction and Hygiene Factors Based on Demographic Characteristics of CEDs**

Demographic Characteristic	Effective Supervisor		Effective Senior Management		Overall Job Satisfaction	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Gender of CED						
Male	3.60	0.99	3.50	1.08	3.68	0.85
Female	3.92	0.86	3.81	0.93	3.54	0.82
Years of CED Experience						
5 years or less	3.67	0.98	3.51	1.04	3.55	0.82
6-10 years	3.86	0.88	3.80	0.97	3.55	0.84
11-15 years	3.95	0.81	3.96	0.96	3.92	0.89
16-20 years	3.65	0.57	3.70	0.63	3.74	0.96
21-25 years	3.13	1.65	3.00	1.64	3.13	1.16
More than 25 years	4.11	0.82	4.00	0.88	3.67	0.81
Years of Working Relationship Between Agent and CED						
5 years or less	3.65	0.97	3.51	1.00	3.47	0.82
6-10 years	3.90	0.83	3.80	1.04	3.68	0.76
11-15 years	4.12	0.74	4.16	0.90	3.86	1.23
16 years or more	4.16	0.87	4.18	0.81	4.11	0.81

*Note:* Respondents were asked to rate their level of agreement or disagreement with statements about his/her County Extension Director on a Likert-type scale (1 = *Strongly disagree*, 2 = *Disagree*, 3 = *Neither agree nor disagree*, 4 = *Agree*, and 5 = *Strongly agree*).

## Objective Two

The second objective was to determine if significant differences existed in Overall Job Satisfaction based on participant demographics. A significant difference existed between Overall Job Satisfaction and the respondents' program area,  $F(3, 165) = 3.01, p < 0.05$ . Post hoc analyses were conducted using the Tukey HSD test given the statistically significant differences between respondents' Program Area and Overall Job Satisfaction. The mean scores between FCS ( $M = 3.92, SD = 0.82$ ) and 4-H ( $M = 3.39, SD = 0.84$ ) were significantly different.

A significant difference existed between agents' level of satisfaction with Effective Senior Management and the gender of an agent's CED,  $t(174) = 4.63, p < 0.05$ , with agents who had male CEDs reporting a higher average level of satisfaction with Effective Senior Management than agents with female CEDs.

Significant differences also existed between agents' level of satisfaction with Effective Senior Management and years of working relationship with the agents' CEDs,  $F(3, 170) = 2.74, p < 0.05$ . Using the Tukey HSD test, the mean score of satisfaction with Effective Senior Management for agents who had 5 years or less of a working relationship with their CEDs ( $M =$

3.51,  $SD = 1.00$ ) was significantly lower than the mean satisfaction ratings of both agents with 11–15 years of a working relationship ( $M = 4.12$ ,  $SD = 0.74$ ) and agents with 16–20 years of a working relationship ( $M = 4.16$ ,  $SD = 0.87$ ).

### Objective Three

The third objective was to determine if significant relationships existed between Extension agent Overall Job Satisfaction and the hygiene factors. Table 6 identifies the correlations between Overall Job Satisfaction, the hygiene factors, and demographic characteristics of respondents. Effective Supervisor and Effective Senior Management had a very strong, positive correlation ( $r = .90$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Moderate, positive relationships existed between Job Satisfaction and both Effective Supervisor ( $r = .39$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) and Effective Senior Management ( $r = .38$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). There were no significant relationships between either Overall Job Satisfaction or the hygiene factors and demographic characteristics of respondents.

**Table 6. Correlations between Job Satisfaction, Hygiene Factors, and Demographic Characteristics of Respondents**

Factor/Characteristic		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Overall Job Satisfaction	<i>r</i>	---	.39*	.38*	-.02	.06	.04	.15	.06	.04
2. Effective Supervisor	<i>r</i>		---	.90*	.05	-.07	-.06	.00	.10	-.02
3. Effective Senior Management	<i>r</i>			---	.05	-.07	-.01	-.02	.10	-.06
4. Years as an Extension Agent	<i>r</i>				---	-.02	.57	.00	.07	.26
5. Gender of Extension Agent	<i>r</i>					---	-.22	-.07	.02	-.19
6. Age of Extension Agent	<i>r</i>						---	.21	.12	.21
7. Program Area	<i>r</i>							---	-.01	.16
8. Extension District	<i>r</i>								---	-.04
9. Education Level	<i>r</i>									---

Note: \*  $p < 0.05$

Table 7 identifies the correlations between Overall Job Satisfaction, the hygiene factors, and demographic characteristics of respondents' CEDs. Other than the significant very strong, positive relationship between Effective Supervisor and Effective Senior Management and the significant moderate, positive relationship between Overall Job Satisfaction and both hygiene factors of Effective Supervisor and Effective Senior Management, none of the relationships between these three factors and the respondents' demographic characteristics were statistically significant.

**Table 7. Correlations between Job Satisfaction, Hygiene Factors, and Demographic Characteristics of CEDs**

Factor/Characteristic		1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Overall Job Satisfaction	<i>r</i>	---	.39*	.38*	-.09	.04	.20
2. Effective Supervisor	<i>r</i>		---	.90*	.17	.06	.17
3. Effective Senior Management	<i>r</i>			---	.15	.09	.21
4. Gender of CED	<i>r</i>				---	-.07	-.04
5. Years of CED Experience	<i>r</i>					---	.27
6. Years of Working Relationship Between Extension Agent and CED	<i>r</i>						---

Note: \*  $p < 0.05$

### Conclusions, Implications, and Recommendations

The relationship between a county Extension director (CED) and an Extension agent is dynamic and multidimensional, with the CED serving both as a supervisor and a colleague of the agent. The literature suggests that positive working relationships between a CED and an Extension agent increase the success of Extension programming and agent performance, job satisfaction, and retention (Benge & Harder, 2017; Elizer, 2011; Owen, 2004). Florida CEDs serve as the leaders of the county Extension offices with administrative responsibilities, such as coordinating personnel functions and communicating and maintaining relationships with county stakeholders (Elizer, 2011; Radhakrishna et al., 1994). In addition, a positive relationship between a supervisor and employee increases the job satisfaction of an employee and decreases intent to leave an organization (Branham, 2005).

The results of this study indicate that Florida county Extension agents are moderately satisfied with their jobs, which is consistent with other job satisfaction studies of Extension agents (Enslie, 2005; Harder et al., 2014; Hodous et al., 2014). Florida county Extension agents were also moderately satisfied with the supervisory and management skills of their CEDs.

Significant positive relationships were found between agent Overall Job Satisfaction and their ratings of the hygiene factors of Effective Senior Management and Effective Supervisor. A significant positive relationship was also found between these two hygiene factors. These results of the relationship between Overall Job Satisfaction and supervisory and management hygiene factors provide support for the importance of the individual in a supervisory position to an agent's job satisfaction and the importance of the relationship between those two individuals to the agent's job satisfaction. No other significant relationships existed between Overall Job Satisfaction or the hygiene factors and the demographic characteristics of both respondents and CEDs.

Cooperative Extension must strive to minimize burnout effects to maintain high levels of satisfaction among employees. One method not often discussed in the literature is to provide high impact professional development for Extension supervisors, both new and experienced. Development for CEDs should be ongoing and have an intentional focus on human resources, management, and leadership training. UF/IFAS Extension typically promotes successful Extension agents to become CEDs. However, little supervisory or management training is provided. Current CED development in Florida consists of an annual in-service training and sporadic trainings throughout the year. There is no intentional leadership development for new CEDs when they are newly hired.

Current CEDs should be assessed individually to identify leadership competency gaps that can be used to create a professional development plan tailored to fit each CED's need. Extension agents that display leadership skills and positive management attributes could be targeted and developed through these professional development programs as a form of succession planning. UF/IFAS Extension should also take advantage of leadership and supervisory trainings disseminated at the university level in which CEDs could participate.

An onboarding leadership academy should be developed to help new CEDs understand their roles and expectations as both a supervisor and manager, as being an Extension leader is just as important as being an Extension agent. For experienced CEDs, a management and supervisory skills program for all Extension supervisors and directors could also be developed to provide high-quality leadership programming and development. Long-term evaluations of the leadership academy and management and supervisory program can be implemented, ensuring that CEDs are developing the necessary skills required of them to successfully manage and lead the county Extension offices in Florida.

UF/IFAS Extension should also consider modifying its CED application process to include management styles assessments. Extension administration could use the results as an added measure to screen potential candidates, ensuring that newly hired CEDs would have the management skills necessary to lead an Extension office. Newly hired CEDs who do not possess the appropriate management skills could participate in the leadership academy mentioned above and other management professional development opportunities. In addition, CEDs with specific management skills could be intentionally matched to a particular county and or district. Another possible opportunity would be to expand the management capabilities of highly skilled CEDs by having them assigned to multiple counties rather than single counties.

## References

- Adams, A. E., Place, N. T., & Swisher, M. E. (2009). Knowledge levels regarding the concept of community food security among Florida Extension agents. *Journal of Extension*, 47(4), Article 4RIB2. Retrieved from <http://www.joe.org/joe/2009august/rb2.php>
- Arnold, S. K. (2008). *Career decisions of Florida agricultural Extension agents*. Dissertation Abstracts International, 68(9). (UMI No. 3281495)
- Ary, D., Jacobs, L. C., Razavieh, A., & Sorensen, C. (2006). *Introduction to research in education* (7th ed.). Belmont, CA: Thompson-Wadsworth.
- Benge, M., & Harder, A. (2017). The effects of leader-member exchanges on the relationships between Extension agents and county Extension directors in Florida. *Journal of Human Sciences and Extension*, 5(1), 35–49. Retrieved from [https://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/c8fe6e\\_abf482fce12b43e79bdc759ad61bce87.pdf](https://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/c8fe6e_abf482fce12b43e79bdc759ad61bce87.pdf)
- Benge, M., Harder, A., & Carter, H. (2011). Necessary pre-entry competencies of Florida Extension agents. *Journal of Extension*, 49(5), Article 5FEA2. Retrieved from <http://www.joe.org/joe/2011october/a2.php>
- Borr, M. L., & Young, R. B. (2010). Retirement and attrition trends of Extension professionals in North Dakota. *Journal of Extension*, 48(1), Article 1RIB4. Retrieved from <http://www.joe.org/joe/2010february/rb4.php>
- Bradley, L., Driscoll, E., & Bardon, R. (2012). Removing the tension from Extension. *Journal of Extension*, 50(2), Article 2TOT1. Retrieved from <http://www.joe.org/joe/2012april/tt1.php>
- Brain, R. G., Irani, T. A., Hodges, A. W., & Fuhrman, N. E. (2009). Agricultural and natural resources awareness programming: Barriers and benefits as perceived by county Extension agents. *Journal of Extension*, 47(2), Article 2FEA3. Retrieved from <http://www.joe.org/joe/2009april/a3.php>
- Branham, L. (2005). *The 7 hidden reasons employees leave*. New York, NY: AMACOM.
- Castillo, J. X., & Cano, J. (2004). Factors explaining job satisfaction among faculty. *Journal of Agricultural Education*, 45(3), 65–74. doi:10.5032/jae.2004.03065
- Chandler, G. D. (2004). *Organizational and individual factors related to retention of county Extension agents employed by Texas Cooperative Extension*. Dissertation Abstracts International, 65(12), 4432A. (UMI No. 3157047)
- Chen, G., Ployhart, R. E., Thomas, H. C., Anderson, N., & Bliese, P. D. (2011). The power of momentum: A new model of dynamic relationships between job satisfaction change and turnover intentions. *Academy of Management Journal*, 54(1), 159–181. doi:10.5465/amj.2011.59215089
- Coomber, B., & Barriball, K. L. (2007). Impact of job satisfaction components on intent to leave and turnover for hospital-based nurses: A review of the recent literature. *International Journal of Nursing Studies*, 44(2), 297–314. doi:10.1016/j.ijnurstu.2006.02.004

- Cronbach, L. J. (1951). Coefficient alpha and the internal structure of tests. *Psychometrika*, *16*(3), 297–334. doi:10.1007/BF02310555
- Dillman, D. A., Smyth, J. D., & Christian, L. M. (2009). *Internet, mail, and mixed-mode surveys: The tailored design method* (3rd ed.). Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.
- Elizer, A. H. (2011). Are transformational directors required for satisfied agents? *Journal of Extension*, *49*(2), Article 2RIB1. Retrieved from <http://www.joe.org/joe/2011april/rb1.php>
- Enslie, K. M. (2005). Burnout: How does Extension balance job and family? *Journal of Extension*, *43*(3), Article 3FEA5. Retrieved from <http://www.joe.org/joe/2005june/a5.php>
- Harder, A., Gouldthorpe, J., & Goodwin, J. (2014). Why work for Extension? An examination of job satisfaction and motivation in a statewide employee retention study. *Journal of Extension*, *52*(3), Article 3FEA5. Retrieved from <https://www.joe.org/joe/2014june/a5.php>
- Herzberg, F. (1974). *Work and the nature of man*. London, UK: Crosby Lockwood.
- Hodous, B., Young, R. B., Borr, M. L., & Vetter, R. (2014). Job satisfaction in the North Dakota State University Extension Service. *Journal of Extension*, *52*(5), Article 5RIB3. Retrieved from <http://www.joe.org/joe/2014october/rb3.php>
- IBM SPSS Statistics for Windows* (Version 24.0) [Computer software]. Armonk, NY.
- Kutilek, L. M. (2000). Learning from those who leave. *Journal of Extension*, *38*(3), Article 3IAW2. Retrieved from <http://joe.org/joe/2000june/iw2.html>
- Lindner, J. R., Murphy, T. H., & Briers, G. E. (2001). Handling nonresponse in social science research. *Journal of Agricultural Education*, *42*(4), 43–53. doi:10.5032/jae.2001.04043
- Owen, M. B. (2004). Defining key sub-competencies for administrative county leaders. *Journal of Extension*, *42*(2), Article 2RIB3. Retrieved from <http://www.joe.org/joe/2004april/rb3.php>
- Qualtrics* [Computer software]. Provo, UT.
- Radhakrishna, R., Yoder, E. P., & Baggett, C. D. (1994). Leadership effectiveness of county Extension directors. *Journal of Extension*, *32*(2), Article 2RIB2. Retrieved from <http://www.joe.org/joe/1994august/rb2.php>
- Riggs, K., & Beus, K. M. (1993). Job satisfaction in Extension. *Journal of Extension*, *31*(2), Article 2FEA5. Retrieved from <http://www.joe.org/joe/1993summer/a5.html>
- Safrit, R. D., & Owen, M. B. (2010). A conceptual model for retaining county Extension program professionals. *Journal of Extension*, *48*(2), Article 2FEA2. Retrieved from <http://www.joe.org/joe/2010april/a2.php>
- Shavelson, R. J. (1996). *Statistical reasoning for the behavioral sciences* (3rd ed.). Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.
- Smerek, R. E., & Peterson, M. (2007). Examining Herzberg's theory: Improving job satisfaction among non-academic employees at a university. *Research in Higher Education*, *48*(2), 229–250. doi:10.1007/s11162-006-9042-3



- Strong, R., & Harder, A. (2009). Implications of maintenance and motivation factors on Extension agent turnover. *Journal of Extension*, 47(1), Article 1FEA2. Retrieved from <http://www.joe.org/joe/2009february/a2.php>
- Tan, T. H., & Waheed, A. (2011). Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory and job satisfaction in the Malaysian retail sector: The mediating effect of love and money. *Asian Academy of Management Journal*, 16(1), 73–94.
- University of Florida. (2013). *Shaping solutions for Florida's future: The Florida Extension roadmap 2013-2023*. Retrieved from <https://extadmin.ifas.ufl.edu/media/extadminifasufledu/agentx2fspecialist/docs/lrp2.pdf>

*Dr. Matt Bengé* is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Agricultural Education and Communication at the University of Florida. Dr. Bengé also serves as a faculty member in the UF/IFAS Extension Program Development and Evaluation Center.

*Dr. Amy Harder* is a Professor in the Department of Agricultural Education and Communication and the Director for the UF/IFAS Extension Program Development and Evaluation Center at the University of Florida.