



A national study on midlevel leaders in higher education: The unsung professionals in the academy*

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Abstract. A national study was conducted to examine the quality of midlevel leaders' worklife, satisfaction, morale and their intentions to leave. The study included 4,000 mid-level leaders who were randomly selected from a total national population of 11,300 from both public and private institutions within five Carnegie classifications (e.g., Doctoral/research-extensives and intensives, Baccalaureate generals and Liberal arts) across the United States. Three separate mailings yielded 2,000 responses for a 50 percent return rate and 1966 useable surveys. Midlevel leaders are defined as academic or non-academic support personnel within the structure of higher education organizations (e.g., directors and coordinators of admissions, institutional research, registrars, computing and technology, human resources, alumni affairs, student affairs, placement and counseling services, financial aid, development and planned giving). This national study proposes: (1) to examine those demographic characteristics and worklife issues that may have an impact on the perceptions of midlevel leaders' morale, satisfaction and intent to leave; and (2) to demonstrate the role satisfaction and morale has on midlevel leaders' intentions to stay or leave their current position or career. The findings indicate that individual perceptions of midlevel leaders' professional and institutional worklife are powerful variables that have an impact on their satisfaction, morale, and turnover intentions.

College and university midlevel leaders are the unsung professionals of the academy – unsung because their contributions to the academic enterprise are rarely recognized, and professionals because of their commitment, training, and adherence to high standards of performance and excellence in their areas of expertise (Rosser 2000). In addition to their loyalty and dedication, midlevel leaders have become a significant force in higher education across the United States, and they continue to be one of the largest areas of personnel growth within college and university systems (Grassmuck 1990, 1991; Montgomery and Lewis 1995; NEA 1997; Sagaria and Johnsrud 1992). Unfortunately, as their numbers and positions have grown, so has their turnover rate (Blum 1989; Mooney 1993; Ward 1995). When large proportions of staff members turn over, the institution experiences inefficiencies, instability and increased training time (Blum 1989). Despite their professionalism, their significant numbers and high turnover rate, midlevel leaders

lack the visibility throughout the academy and have been of little concern to educational researchers, particularly at the national level (Rosser 2000).

Previous examinations of midlevel administrative worklife issues include the attention given to their attitudes and behavior. For example, Johnsrud (1996) identified three major sources of concern to midlevel administrative staff members in higher education: the midlevel nature of their role, the lack of recognition for their contributions and competence, and their limited opportunity for career growth and advancement opportunities. Additional issues throughout the literature in higher education that have shown to be important to administrative worklife and behavior include involvement with institutional missions and goals (Scott 1978); participation in governance activities (Henkin and Persson 1992); institutional and career commitment and satisfaction (Austin 1985; Volkwein, Malik and Napierski-Prancl 1998); role clarity, decision-making and conflict (Amey 1990; Moore and Twombly 1990; Solomon and Tierney 1977); perceptions of discrimination (Johnsrud and Rosser 1999b; Moore 1983; Rosser and Javinar 2003); opportunities for promotion and career development (Moore 1983; Moore and Sagaria 1982; Sagaria and Johnsrud 1992); and teamwork and relationships with internal and external constituencies (Austin 1984; Bess and Lodahl 1969; Johnsrud and Edwards 2001; Kauffman 1990; Scott 1978; Volkwein et al. 1998; Volkwein and Parmley 2000).

Previous research has shown that responses to such worklife issues explain administrators' morale or satisfaction, and ultimately their intent to leave or stay in their career or institution (e.g., Johnsrud, Heck and Rosser 2000; Johnsrud and Rosser 1999a; Rosin and Korabik 1995; Rosser and Javinar 2003; Volkwein et al. 1998). Since the Moore (1983) study, *Leaders in Transition*, there has been no comprehensive national effort to understand the worklives of this formidable midlevel group of leaders throughout higher education in the United States. Therefore, the purpose of this national study is: (1) to examine those demographic characteristics and worklife issues that may have an impact on the perceptions of midlevel leaders' morale, satisfaction, and intent to leave; and (2) to demonstrate the role satisfaction and morale have on midlevel leaders' intentions to stay in or leave their current position or career.

The role of midlevel leaders in higher education

Midlevel leaders in the United States are an essential group of individuals whose administrative roles and functions support the goals and mission of the academic enterprise. These midlevel professionals interact and participate with students, faculty members, and the public, and they can reflect the institution's overall spirit and vitality. Clearly, they contribute significantly to

the academic organization by serving and supporting the primary functions of teaching, research, and service. Midlevel leaders are most often identified by the administrative units in which they coordinate or direct, and they play a key role within the four traditional service areas of higher education: academic support, business/administrative services, external affairs, and student affairs (Johnsrud and Rosser 2000). Although the administrative work units they oversee may vary by [Carnegie] institutional type and size, typically *Academic Support* includes media and library services, learning skills center and cooperative education; *Business/Administrative Services* includes fiscal management, accounting and human resources, operations and maintenance, information technology and planning and budgeting; *External Affairs* (or institutional advancement) includes public relations, alumni affairs, communication, and fund raising; *Student Services* includes admissions, registration, financial aid, counseling, advising, and other aspects of student life (e.g., Austin and Gamson 1983; Johnsrud and Rosser 1999b, 2000; Johnsrud, Sagaria and Heck 1992; Moore and Twombly 1990).

By virtue of their “middleness” within academic organizations, midlevel leaders’ must find the balance between superiors’ directions and the needs of those who require their support and service. For example, they are the firing-line managers who have the responsibility to monitor policies and procedures, but rarely have the responsibility to change or develop the regulations they must enforce (Rosser 2000). Given their extensive role and the multitude of services they oversee and provide to various constituencies, midlevel leaders remain committed and loyal to the institutions in which they work. Therefore, understanding the essential role midlevel leaders play in higher educational organizations may illuminate those issues that may have an impact on their worklives and their intended turnover decisions.

Implications for midlevel leaders leaving

Previous research indicates that the “intent” to leave an organization has been shown to be the best predictor of actual turnover (e.g., Bluedorn 1982a, 1982b; Mobley 1982; Price 1977; Steers and Mowday 1981). Turnover, however, can be both a cost and a benefit to the academic organization. For example, costs to the institution can result in a less loyal and knowledgeable labor force, the loss of valuable institutional memory, an increase in training time and professional development activities, and a greater incidence of behavioral problems like absenteeism and tardiness. Some benefits to midlevel leaders’ turnover can result in institutions reexamining current reporting structures and position responsibilities, and replacing entry-level with experienced individuals can reduce salary expenses. While it is critical to maximize the use of resources and minimize costs in tough fiscal times,

those issues that continue to influence midlevel leaders' intentions to stay or leave, which previous research has shown to explain actual turnover, deserve further attention.

Conceptual frameworks

The primary goal of this study is to investigate those professional and institutional worklife issues that may have an impact on midlevel leaders' morale, satisfaction, and their subsequent intentions to stay in or leave their position or career. Previous empirical research on the frameworks of morale, satisfaction, and intent to leave will conceptually guide this study.

Morale. Though often difficult to define, Bany and Johnson (1975) describe morale as the feelings and emotions that arise as members in the organization interact with one another. They argue that morale is an affective state that develops when a group is not able to deal with internal and external problems. Similarly, morale concerns members' affective or emotive responses to the organization – their general sense of well-being and enthusiasm for collective endeavors (Zeitz 1983). Bayes (1976) defines morale as a quality of mind and spirit which combines courage, self-discipline, and endurance. More specifically, Doherty (1988) contends that high morale is manifested when an individual shows determination to do his or her best under any circumstance, and that low morale implies that the individual sees him- or her-self as one who is powerless or socially unimportant. The “state” of affairs can also be referred to as “solidarity” or “high morale” which is often a consequence of a stabilized group structure in which the various members meet the expectations defining their particular functions and positions (Sherif and Sherif 1956). Often understood as a mediating social psychological variable, Johnsrud (1996) describes administrative morale as the level of well-being that an individual or group is experiencing in reference to the quality of their worklife.

Although the literature in higher education on morale is limited, Madron, Craig, and Mendel (1976) define morale as a group's psychological state characterized by confidence, enthusiasm, discipline, willingness to work, and related attributes. They refer to [department] morale as a product of department-head performance, in addition to environmental and satisfaction issues. Madron et al. (1976) argue that morale may be seen as a potential symptomatic attribute which might be used in examining organizational difficulties. They contend that when department morale is low, there may be organizational problems that deserve immediate action.

In an effort to establish the construct validity of midlevel administrative morale, Johnsrud, Heck, and Rosser (2000) tested a model that encompassed three dimensions relevant to midlevel administrators: institutional regard, mutual loyalty, and quality of work. Institutional regard captures employees' sense that they are valued and being treated fairly. Loyalty to the organization gets at the belief that midlevel administrators' opinions matter to the organization, and the quality of work reflects the impact of satisfying, stimulating, and the purposeful work of employees. Their findings indicated that midlevel administrative morale can be defined and measured by these three dimensions and the concept is multidimensional. At the same time, however, they also caution that morale may be more encompassing than any one of the three dimensions. This study will build on the previous definitions of administrative morale and empirically examine the impact that these conceptualizations may have in the national arena.

Satisfaction. While often used interchangeably, morale and satisfaction have been defined by some researchers as separate and distinct constructs. For example, Benge and Hickey (1984) identify job satisfaction as the combination of various attitudes held by an individual employee at a given time. They define morale as the overall job satisfaction of a group of employees. Individual satisfaction is often perceived as the counterpart to the emergent collective trait of morale (Zeitz 1983). Gruenberg (1979) defines satisfaction as the individual's emotional reaction to a particular job. Examining the satisfaction of midlevel administrators, Johnsrud and Edwards (2001) contend that administrator satisfaction appears to be more related to an individual's feelings about the job, while morale is more related to how one views or feels about the organization.

Additional studies that examine administrative satisfaction in higher education often vary by definition and conceptualization. For example, administrative satisfaction can consist of such issues as salary, work environment, role clarity and responsibilities, task and workload issues, social and interpersonal relations with colleagues and superiors, department or unit climate, and autonomy and over-regulation (e.g., Amey 1990; Austin and Gamson 1983; Bensimon and Neumann 1993; Bruce and Blackburn 1992; Johnsrud and Edwards 2001; Moore and Twombly 1990; Rosser and Javinar 2003; Solomon and Tierney 1977; Volkwein et al. 1998). Given the ongoing debate and wide range of definitions, the differentiation between morale and satisfaction continues to warrant further empirical investigation within organizations. Therefore, extending the work of Johnsrud and Edwards (2001) to a national arena, this study will treat morale and satisfaction as distinct organizational experiences that can have an important

but separate influence on administrative behavior, such as administrative intentions to leave.

Intent to leave. Much of the research on turnover focuses on the intent to leave an organization, rather than actual turnover. The “intent” to stay or leave an organization has been shown to be the best predictor of actual turnover (Bluedorn 1982a 1982b; Lee and Mowday 1987; Mobley 1982; Price 1977; Steers and Mowday 1981). For example, Steers and Mowday (1981) found that job expectations and values (i.e., beliefs and nature of the job, rewards for performance, interpersonal contacts), and affective responses to the job (i.e., satisfaction, commitment, job involvement) were important worklife processes leading to voluntary leaving. Similarly, Mobley’s (1982) research indicated that individual values, job expectations, satisfaction, commitment, abilities to perform in the position, and leaving intentions explained turnover. In addition to demographic characteristics (i.e., age, education level, marital status, length of service), Bluedorn’s (1982b) study indicated that promotional opportunities, role performance and criteria, role conflict, and equity issues had an impact on members’ satisfaction and organizational commitment, which in turn explained their intentions to leave, and their actual turnover. Lee and Mowday (1987) further extended the Steers and Mowday (1981) model and found that job performance, job values, organizational characteristics, and organizational experiences explained a significant portion of the variance in affective responses, such as satisfaction. In turn, job satisfaction explained individuals’ intention to leave. These conceptual models provide a framework for researchers to identify those worklife issues that generate responses (i.e., satisfaction, morale), and thus influence individual behavior (i.e., intended turnover, actual turnover). While the issues within these conceptual frameworks are primarily focused on the quality of the individual’s professional and institutional worklife, there may be other influences such as geographic mobility, dual careers, and personal and family issues that may have an impact on their morale, satisfaction, and intentions to stay in or leave their position, career, or institution.

Prior research on midlevel administrators and managers has also indicated the power of affective responses to work, specifically the impact of commitment and satisfaction on turnover intentions (Johnsrud and Edwards 2001; Rosin and Korabik 1995). In their institutional study, Johnsrud and Edwards (2001) further delineated the intervening impact of morale and satisfaction on intent to leave. Their study suggests that the affective response to the job (satisfaction) has a different effect on turnover than the affective response to the organization (morale). Their findings support Bluedorn’s (1982a) concep-

tualization of turnover that results from a complex set of antecedents, or in this case midlevel leaders' administrative worklife issues.

Similarly, in a systemwide study consisting of ten campuses conducted on midlevel administrators, Johnsrud, Heck, and Rosser (2000) examined the impact of antecedents involving demographic characteristics and worklife processes on morale, and in turn, the impact of morale on intended turnover. Their findings suggest that morale plays a mediating influence on the impact of worklife perceptions on the intended behavior of interest, such as leaving a position or institution. For example, when administrators perceive high levels of career support, their morale tends to be higher, and they are less likely to "intend" to leave. Building upon these findings, this study extends previous institutional and systemwide research, and is conceptualized to examine, at a national level, those professional and institutional worklife issues that may have an impact on midlevel leaders' satisfaction and morale (affective responses to worklife), and their intent to stay or leave (subsequent behavior).

Proposed conceptual model

Despite the importance of midlevel leaders' retention, there is little understanding, particularly at a national level, on how demographic and worklife variables can have an impact on satisfaction and morale to explain administrative intentions to leave. In this study, a single level structural equation model is hypothesized to simultaneously test the direct effects of demographic characteristics and worklife variables have on satisfaction and morale. In addition, the effect of demographic characteristics and professional and institutional worklife variables are hypothesized to have a direct impact on midlevel leaders' intent to leave. Midlevel leaders' morale and satisfaction are also hypothesized to have a direct impact on their intent to leave. That is, midlevel leaders' perceptions of worklife, satisfaction, and morale are hypothesized to directly or indirectly influence their intentions to stay in or leave their position or career. Figure 1 represents this proposed conceptual model.

Method

Data source. In the spring of 2002, a national study was conducted to measure the quality of midlevel leaders' worklife, satisfaction, morale and their intentions to leave. The study included 4,000 midlevel leaders who were randomly selected from a total national population of 11,300 (Higher Education Directory 2002) from both public and private institutions within five Carnegie classifications (i.e., Doctoral/research-extensives and inten-

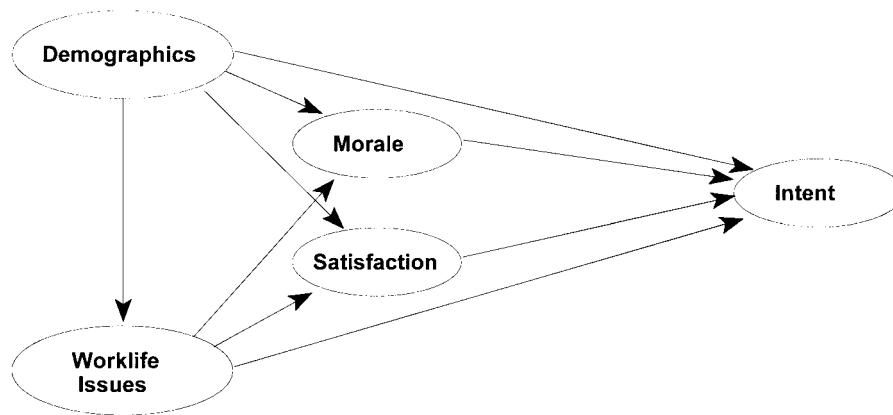


Figure 1. Proposed conceptual model.

sives, Master's I, Baccalaureate generals and Liberal arts) across the United States. Three separate mailings have yielded 2,000 responses for a 50 percent return rate and 1966 useable surveys.

For the purpose of this study, midlevel leaders included those academic or non-academic support personnel within the structure of higher education organizations (i.e., directors and coordinators of admissions, institutional research, registrars, business officers, computing and technology, human resources, communications, alumni affairs, student affairs, placement and counseling services, financial aid, student housing, development and planned giving). Usually they are not classified as faculty, but rather as a nonexempt, non-contract group of midlevel administrative staff (Twombly 1990; Johnsrud and Rosser 1999a). The midlevel leaders identified in this study often report to a senior-level administrator or dean, and they may be classified as administrators, professionals, technicians, or specialists, and their positions tend to be differentiated by functional specialization, skills, training and experiences (e.g., Johnsrud, Sagaria and Heck 1992; Twombly 1990).

Instrumentation and variables. The principal investigator adapted the instrument from a morale, satisfaction, and departure surveys that had been conducted on midlevel administrators within two university systems in two different states in the United States. Based on a current review of the literature and focus groups conducted in an additional university system, the instrument was revised to reflect the concerns of midlevel leaders who are affiliated with both public and private institutions within five specified institutional types (i.e., Carnegie Classifications). To better understand the perceptions of their *worklife*, midlevel leaders were asked to indicate their level of agreement or

disagreement with 48 statements regarding the quality of their professional and institutional worklives. Respondents indicated on five point Likert scales the degree of impact on each work related issue. The range was 1 to 5 with "1" indicating a negative response and "5" indicating a positive response.

In order to reduce the data and create more substantive measures of the quality of worklife, scales were constructed from the defined groups of worklife issues or statements. Seven variables were created (using principal components analysis): career support (e.g., professional activities; clearly defined promotional paths); recognition for competence (e.g., recognition for expertise, supervisor evaluation and communication, feedback on performance); intra-department relations (e.g., relations with supervisors and co-workers, communication processes, sense of teamwork); perceptions of discrimination (e.g., age, sex, and racial/ethnic stereotyping, harassment, discrimination); working conditions (e.g., salary, work environment, parking, resources for the unit); external relations (e.g., relationships between public, faculty and students outside the work unit); and review/intervention (e.g., federal government mandates and compliance, state policies and procedures affecting workload, program and budget reviews). The seven worklife variables were judged reliable and internally consistent (alpha coefficients are in parentheses), and used for further analysis: career support (0.80), recognition for competence (0.88), intra-department relations (0.76), perceptions of discrimination (0.87), working conditions (0.68), external relations (0.70), and review/intervention (0.67).

The intervening construct of *morale* has been defined by nine Likert-type items ($\alpha = 0.93$). The morale composite consisted of loyalty to the institution, a good place to work, commitment to the institution, employees being valued, a sense of common purpose, a caring and fair organization, pride in the institution, and an overall self-report of morale. The construct of *satisfaction*, also an intervening variable, was defined by eight Likert-type items ($\alpha = 0.85$). These items included variety in the job, enjoyment of the job, input in matters that affect job, freedom on the job, trust and confidence in colleagues, satisfaction with work responsibilities, salary compensation is fair, and an overall self-report of their level of satisfaction.

Intent to leave, the dependent variable in the study, was measured by a series of four items ($\alpha = 0.76$) including: the extent to which midlevel leaders would be likely to leave their current position, leave their institution, leave their career/profession, and the likelihood of seeking another job within the institution. Scaled responses in morale, satisfaction, and intent to leave ranged from "1" indicating low morale, low satisfaction or not at all likely to leave to "5" indicating a high morale, high satisfaction or high likelihood of leaving.

The *demographic* variables in this study represented the background and profile and characteristics of the respondents. The demographic characteristics included on the instrument were sex, race/ethnicity, minority by gender/race in their work unit, salary level, years in the position and institution, administrative unit (e.g., academic affairs, student affairs, administrative services, external affairs), institutional type (e.g., Doctoral research intensive/extensive, Master's I, Baccalaureate generals/liberal arts), and college or university control (i.e., public, private). The demographic variables were dummy coded (e.g., female = 1 and males = 0, Ethnic Minorities = 1 and Caucasians = 0) as needed for the final analysis.

Of those midlevel leaders who responded to the demographic characteristics, 45.6 percent or 896 were male and 54.2 percent or 1065 were female. Twenty-eight percent or 549 individuals said they were a minority by gender in their work unit, and 72 percent or 1389 said they were not a minority by gender in their unit. There were 8.6 percent or 160 individuals who were Ethnic Minorities¹ and 91.4 percent or 1701 individuals were Caucasian. Of the respondents who answered the demographic information, 7.5 percent or 144 individuals were a minority by race within their work unit, and 95.5 percent or 1787 were not a minority by race in their work unit. Once the demographic characteristics of the respondents and their worklife issues were identified, testing the proposed conceptual model to the actual data using a structural equation model will be examined.

The structural equation model

This study investigated the individual perceptions of midlevel leaders' work-life on satisfaction and morale, and subsequently on midlevel leaders' intent to leave. The validity of the proposed structural equation model (SEM) was examined with *Mplus* version 2.13 (Muthén and Muthén 2003) using a maximum likelihood fitting function. Structural equation modeling is a statistical methodology that provides researchers with a comprehensive method for the quantification and testing of theories (Raykov and Marcoulides 2000). SEM also takes into account the measurement error that is widespread in most disciplines and contains latent variables. In this case, for example, SEM allows for the simultaneous examination of those demographic characteristics and worklife factors that may have an impact (either directly or indirectly) on the latent variables such as morale, satisfaction, and the intent to leave.

The fit of the proposed final structural model was assessed by the chi-square coefficient for the model, root-mean-square error of approximation (RMSEA), standardized root mean square residual (SRMR), comparative fit index (CFI), and Tucker-Lewis index (TLI). The chi-square coefficient for the

model is 7.074 with 6 degrees of freedom and non-significant ($p = 0.314$). The RMSEA is another fit index that is widely used because it offers a “close” test of statistical fit for the model (as opposed to the “exact” fit of the chi-square statistic). The close test allows for a discrepancy of fit per degree of freedom. After making this adjustment for degrees of freedom, it has the desirable property of using a statistical test that provides a region for rejecting ill-fitting models. The index should be close to zero for a good fitting model. In this study the RMSEA value is 0.013, which is non-significant ($p = 0.976$), and the SRMR value for the model was 0.010. The CFI and TLI indices provide indications of the variances and covariances in the data accounted for by the proposed model. In general, values on the CFI and TLI above 0.90 indicate an acceptable fit of the model to the data (depending on the complexity of the data). The CFI of 0.99 and TLI of 1.00 provide indications of the amount of variances and covariances in the data accounted for by the proposed model. The results of these indices clearly suggest an “excellent fit” of the proposed model to the observed data.

The results of the structural equation model

After assessing the model’s fit, the parameter estimates or significant paths relating the observed variables (i.e., demographic characteristics, worklife factors) to the latent constructs of satisfaction, morale, and intent to leave are summarized. Figure 2 illustrates the strength and magnitude of several important relationships among the variables. Only those significant paths ($p < 0.05$) are shown, and the results are presented in the same order they are displayed in the final SEM model.

Demographic characteristics. As shown in the full structural model, being an Ethnic Minority midlevel leader had a significant and negative impact on their overall morale (-0.06), but not on satisfaction or intent to leave. Those midlevel leaders who were paid higher salaries also had a negative and significant impact on morale (-0.07), but not on satisfaction or intent to leave. Several other demographic characteristics (e.g., years in position, years in institution, sex, minority by sex in their work unit, minority by race in their work unit) were included in the preliminary analyses, but were dropped from the final structural model because they had no impact on the other variables in the model.

Midlevel leaders’ worklife issues. As for the quality of worklife factors, those midlevel leaders who experienced discrimination (*discrim*) had a direct and significant impact on intentions to leave (0.06), but not on their morale or satisfaction. Midlevel leaders’ perceptions of their career support (*carsupp*)

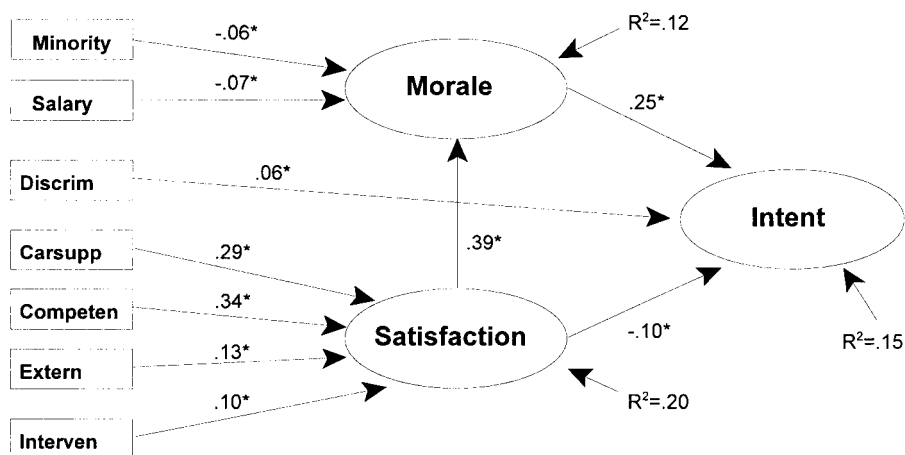


Figure 2. The final structural equation model (*Mplus* standardized estimates). Note: *Estimate is significant at $p < 0.05$.

had a significant impact on their satisfaction (0.29), but not on their morale or intent to leave. Recognition for competence (*competen*), external relations (*extern*), and review and intervention (*interven*) also had a significant impact on midlevel leaders' satisfaction (0.34, 0.13, 0.10, respectively), but not on their morale or intentions to leave. However, midlevel leaders' perceptions of their working conditions and intra-department relations had no significant impact on their level of satisfaction, morale, or their intent to leave, and thus were dropped from the final model.

Morale and satisfaction. The latent constructs such as midlevel leaders' morale had a direct effect on intent to leave (0.25), but not on satisfaction. Midlevel leaders' satisfaction had a significant effect on their morale (0.39), and on their intent to leave (−0.10). The model explains 20 percent of the variance (R^2) in satisfaction, 12 percent in morale, and 15 percent in intent to leave.

Discussion and conclusions

In this national study a structural equation model was proposed and tested to ascertain the impact of midlevel leaders' worklife factors on morale, satisfaction, and their intentions to stay or leave (controlling for demographic variables). The results and findings of the final model will be presented and discussed. The primary goal of this discussion is to examine both the positive and negative effects that demographic characteristics, worklife

factors, morale, and satisfaction have on midlevel leaders' intentions to stay in, or leave their position or career.

Demographic characteristics

In this national study on midlevel leaders in the United States, Ethnic Minorities tend to have a lower overall level of morale than Caucasians. There was, however, no relationship with Ethnic Minority satisfaction or in the likelihood of them leaving their position or career. In this case, a lower level of morale suggests that Ethnic Minorities perceive themselves as less valued within an institutional environment that is less fair and caring. As a result, Ethnic Minorities see themselves as being less able to contribute to the organization's overall *common purpose*, and they may ultimately become less loyal and committed to their institutions. The results indicate that Ethnic Minorities have a lower level of morale, and therefore they would be more likely to leave their position or career.

Ethnic Minority morale, however, is clearly differentiated from their level of satisfaction. For example, Ethnic Minorities enjoy working in their positions and the variety of work they encounter. They also have input in deciding matters that affect their individual work and have a great deal of freedom on the job. When compared to their peers, Ethnic Minorities feel their salary compensation is fair and representative of their experience and skills. Overall, Ethnic Minorities in this study are satisfied with their individual work and job responsibilities. As shown in this study, Ethnic Minority morale and satisfaction are clearly different. This finding supports the previous work of Johnsrud and Edwards (2001) that morale and satisfaction are perceived by individuals as separate and distinct experiences.

Another interesting finding is that those midlevel leaders who were paid higher salaries had a lower level of morale. There was no direct relationship, however, in their level of satisfaction or in the likelihood of them leaving their position or career. Again, these findings suggest that morale may be perceived as a campus or institutional quality that has an impact on the quality of their worklives, and satisfaction may be perceived as an individual quality of worklife they experience within their work units. Midlevel leaders who are paid well perceive those institutional experiences pertaining to their level of morale as less positive, but are satisfied within the organizational units they work. Higher pay can reflect a higher level of commitment and time individuals have invested in the institution, and therefore they are less likely to "directly" leave their position or career. Moreover, higher paid midlevel leaders do not emerge as those individuals who are more likely to "directly" leave the institution, but rather the affective response is "indirect" through their overall morale. Conceptually, this perspective suggests that having a

higher salary level or being an Ethnic Minority does not necessarily mean that midlevel leaders are more likely to leave, it does indicate, however, that what goes on within individuals' level of morale (or satisfaction) can ultimately influence their behavior and the decision for them to stay or leave.

Midlevel leaders' worklife issues

The results in this study also indicate that perceptions midlevel leaders have of their professional and institutional worklife have a direct and powerful impact on their level of satisfaction. The quality of midlevel leaders' worklife (i.e., career support, recognition for competence, external relations, review/intervention, discrimination experiences) is important to midlevel leaders across the United States, and thus has a direct effect on their level of satisfaction and their subsequent intentions to stay or leave their position or career.

Career support. Career support has been shown to be a powerful predictor in the worklives of midlevel administrators (e.g., Moore 1983; Moore and Twombly 1990; Sagaria and Johnsrud 1992; Scott 1978), and this national study on midlevel leaders is no different. Midlevel leaders are interested in both improving their ability to perform well, and acquire skills and experience necessary to take on new and more challenging positions. More specifically, this finding clearly suggests that to participate and engage in professional activities and career development are important aspects of midlevel leaders' professional and institutional worklife. These midlevel leaders desire to have clear performance criteria outlined for their position, and that their workload responsibilities are equally distributed. Moreover, that institutional and unit hiring practices and processes for both internal and external candidates are fair and equitable – ensuring opportunities for promotion and mobility (i.e., upward, lateral). In essence, this study indicates that the more positive midlevel leaders perceive the support for their career and developmental activities, the more satisfied they become and less likely to leave their institution.

Recognition for competence. Midlevel administrators are a well-educated group who are asked to work hard in demanding areas, but their efforts do not seem to translate into recognition for a job well done (Johnsrud 1996). Recognizing midlevel leaders for their competence is another powerful worklife indicator. Midlevel leaders want to be recognized and respected for their contribution and expertise within the institution and in their work units. This study indicates that midlevel leaders enjoy the trust, guidance, and constructive feedback on their performance from senior administrators,

and they respond well to positive mentoring relationships. Though midlevel leaders often feel the pressure to perform, particularly in fiscally austere times, they see the importance of providing effective leadership in their units. By virtue of their mid-level placement within the organizational structure, midlevel leaders are often placed between institutional decision-making and policy implementation. Previous research has also shown that midlevel leaders want to be involved with mission and goal development, and share in the decision-making and governance processes in their institution and work unit (Henkin and Persson 1992; Scott 1978). As shown in this study, the more positive midlevel leaders perceive they have been recognized and respected for their contributions to the institution, the more satisfied they become and are less likely to leave the institution.

External relationships. Fostering [external] relationships with faculty, students, senior administrators, and the public are very important to the professional worklives of midlevel leaders. This area continues to emerge as a positive and powerful indicator of midlevel satisfaction (e.g., Austin 1984; Kauffman 1990; Volkwein et al. 1998; Johnsrud and Edwards 2001) and their morale (e.g., Johnsrud and Rosser 1999b). Very often students and their parents come into first contact with a midlevel leader on campus, and building positive relations and a first good impression is critical to the “good will” that institutions want to convey to their constituents. Moreover, developing good relations with senior administrators and faculty members continues to be paramount in the perceptions of midlevel leaders. This finding supports previous research in that perceptions of institutional teamwork and positive workplace relations explain administrative satisfaction (Bensimon and Neumann 1993; Volkwein et al. 1998; Volkwein and Parmley 2000). In this study, the more positive midlevel leaders perceive their relationships with faculty members, students, senior administrators, and the public, the more likely they are satisfied with their work experiences, and less likely to leave.

Review/intervention. There are few responsibilities more frustrating to midlevel leaders than the influence of bureaucratic red tape and intervention from federal and state mandates and institutional policies. While these mandates and policies have been the primary reason for increasing the numbers and positions of midlevel administrators throughout higher education, they also generate an increased workload that is perceived to hamper effectiveness and support services. In addition to these broad reaching policies, evaluation and assessment reporting and budget reviews has increased program accountability. While these measures of accountability

can reflect the productive good of the unit, they can also be perceived as a burden to an already burgeoning workload. The most interesting finding regarding these worklife variables (i.e., career support, recognition for competence, external relations, review/intervention) is that review and intervention had a positive impact on midlevel leaders' satisfaction. As a result, midlevel leaders would be less likely to leave. This may suggest that midlevel leaders understand their administrative role in the review and reporting of state and federal demands. Other words, midlevel leaders may have "no choice" but to positively accept these reporting measures of accountability that is required within most academic institutions across the United States.

Thus, midlevel leaders' perceptions of their career support, recognition for competence, external relations, and review/intervention was indirect through their level of satisfaction. In this national study, the more positive midlevel leaders perceive their worklife issues, the more satisfied they become, and they are less likely to "intend" to leave. This result seems to be consistent with previous research that affective responses to administrative worklife are mediated by satisfaction and morale (Johnsrud and Edwards 2001; Johnsrud et al. 2000; Rosin and Korabik 1995; Rosser and Javinar 2003).

Perceptions of discrimination. Perceptions of age, racial/ethnic, and sex discrimination, however, was the only worklife variable that had a direct and powerful effect on the intentions of midlevel leaders to leave their position or career. The results clearly indicate that the more likely midlevel leaders experienced discrimination, the more likely they were to leave. As with the other worklife variables, there was no intervening effect of satisfaction and morale on these discrimination experiences, but rather the response was direct and powerful on their intentions to leave. This makes sense – the behavioral response would most likely be immediate and direct, and there is no subtle change or cumulative effect over time from these discrimination experiences. A lower level of morale or satisfaction would be an affective response prior to the leaving behavior.

Working conditions. Midlevel leaders' perceptions of their working conditions had no relationship to their level of satisfaction, morale, or their intentions to stay or leave. Although the amount of resources allocated to their unit is perceived to be less than adequate, they do believe that access to parking, and benefits and retirement plans are quite good. Within this group of worklife issues these midlevel professionals strongly agree that the reputation of their institution is clearly an asset to them. These midlevel administrators also perceive that their salary levels are adequate and

they enjoy their academic work environment. This is contrary to previous work on midlevel administrators in general (e.g., Johnsrud and Rosser 1999a; Johnsrud et al. 1992), and student affairs leaders more specifically (e.g., Evans 1988; Lorden 1998; Hancock 1988) that suggest reasons for departure are low pay, few opportunities for advancement, and poor working conditions. At the same time, the findings in this study may support the common notion that midlevel leaders in higher education across the United States expect these worklife deficiencies and are more motivated by intrinsic rewards. In this case, working conditions had no impact on midlevel leaders' morale, satisfaction, or their intentions to stay or leave their position or career.

Intra-department relations. The relationships that midlevel leaders develop within and between their work units are very important worklife issues to this group of professionals. They enjoy building positive relationships with colleagues within and between work units. For example, previous research on midlevel administrators suggests that intra-departmental relationships have a positive impact on their overall satisfaction (e.g., Austin 1984; Kauffman 1990; Volkwein et al. 1998; Johnsrud and Edwards 2001) and morale (e.g., Johnsrud and Edwards 2001; Rosser and Javinar 2003). Midlevel leaders in this study have a strong sense of teamwork and communication, and they perceive the performance and workload of their co-workers as fair and effective. When examining more closely those issues relating to diversity, these midlevel leaders believe that the gender among staff members is fairly balanced, however, they also indicate that there is much less racial and ethnic diversity within their units. These midlevel leaders also agree that staff turnover continues to be a problem within their work units. While intra-department relations, as a concept, had no significant relationship on midlevel leaders' morale, satisfaction, or their intentions to leave, the individual issues that consist of intra-department relations continue to be important to the quality of their worklife and should continued to be monitored and evaluated.

Morale and satisfaction

As for the intervening variables of morale and satisfaction, satisfaction had an impact on morale and intent to leave, but morale did not have an impact on satisfaction. The higher midlevel leaders' satisfaction, the less likelihood of them leaving. However, if their satisfaction is high and their morale is low, they would be more likely to leave. For example, this study suggests that only through morale Ethnic Minorities and higher paid midlevel leaders would intend to leave their position or career. Perceptions of midlevel leaders' worklife also had an indirect impact through satisfaction on their intentions to leave. In other words, for midlevel leaders to leave their position or career

their affective response (i.e., satisfaction, morale) to their worklife must first influence their behavior (i.e., intentions to stay or leave). While the perceived quality of worklife matters most to the satisfaction of midlevel leaders, it is the combination of demographic characteristics, worklife issues, morale, and satisfaction that determines their intentions to stay or leave. The perceived quality of these professional and institutional worklife issues on midlevel satisfaction and morale have been a consistent predictor of turnover intention in the various examinations (e.g., case studies, institutional studies, system-wide studies) of administrative work, and this national study on midlevel leaders across the United States is no exception.

Turnover may reflect the perceptions held by employees regarding the quality of their worklife (Rosser 2000). This study has shown that the quality of worklife has an impact on midlevel leaders' satisfaction, morale, and intent to leave. In order to retain this essential group of midlevel leaders throughout higher education, institutions need to: provide support for their professional activities and career development; recognize their skills, competence and expertise; emphasize the importance of fostering positive relationships with faculty members, students, senior administrators, and the public; and minimize the effects of bureaucratic and political intervention. The primary goal is to support those professional and institutional issues that can enhance the quality of midlevel leaders' worklife across the United States, which in turn will positively affect their levels of satisfaction and morale, and influence their decisions to stay or leave their positions or career.

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Notes

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1. The respondents were asked to self determine their racial/ethnic identity. The Ethnic Minorities in this sample consisted of 85 African Americans, 28 Hispanics, 22 Biracial/Mixed, 15 Asians (Chinese, Korean, Japanese, Vietnamese), 8 Native Americans, and 2 Pacific Islanders.

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