

Public Abstract

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Title: Synergistic Supervision and the Student Affairs Mid-Level Manager: A Social Exchange Perspective

Little student affairs research exists examining the relationship between mid-level professionals and their supervisors. This study explored whether synergistic supervision (Winston & Creamer, 1997) received by mid-level student affairs professionals was related to such social exchange (Blau, 1964) factors as the supervisory relationship's quality and the professional's perceived level of supervisor and organizational support. Additionally, the study examined reliability of four subscales developed from the Synergistic Supervision Scale (Saunders, Cooper, Winston, & Chernow, 2000). A random sample of mid-level professionals completed three instruments: the Synergistic Supervision Scale (Saunders et al., 2000), the LMX-7 (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995), and the eight-item Survey of Perceived Organizational Support (Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison, & Sowa, 1986).

Data analysis revealed high reliability for the four synergistic supervision subscales. A statistically significant, positive relationship was found between synergistic supervision and leader-member exchange (LMX), perceived supervisor support (PSS), and perceived organizational support (POS).

Regression analyses found synergistic supervision predictive of LMX and PSS, with all four subscales as significant predictors. *Decision-making inclusiveness* and *exhibiting support for divisional work unit* were significant for predicting POS. Regression analyses revealed LMX and PSS as significant predictors of synergistic supervision. Additionally, LMX and PSS were significant predictors of *decision-making inclusiveness*, *exhibiting interest in personal/professional development*, and *fair and equitable treatment of others*. All three social exchange factors were significant for predicting *exhibiting support for divisional work unit*.

Findings highlight supervisors' need to better understand mid-level professionals' developmental needs and interests and for professionals to articulate needs and interests to supervisors.