

**TITLE:** Socials Workers' Expectation and Perceptions of Leader Behavior and Their Relationship to Job Satisfaction

**RESEARCHER:** Kathy Elpers  
Graduate School of Education  
Spalding University (Kentucky)  
Doctoral Dissertation: December 2001

**OBJECTIVE:** The purpose of this study was to determine if there is a relationship between what a social worker employee expects from a leader, how a social worker actually perceives leadership behavior, and their job satisfaction.

**METHODOLOGY:** A stratified random sample of 2500 members of the National Association of Social Workers (1999) were asked to participate, and 732 returned usable surveys. The typical respondent was female (78%), in the 40-59 age range (71%), Caucasian (90%), held an MSW degree (92%) – which mirror national demographics – with an average of ten years in their field. Respondents completed the Job Satisfaction Scale (Koeske, Kirk, Koeske & Mauktis, 1994) and both an expected and actual version of the Leadership Practices Inventory Observer for their supervisor.

**KEY FINDINGS:** The expected leadership practices of supervisors were all significantly higher than their actual leadership practices as perceived by the respondents. Interestingly enough, the rank order within the two sets were identical, with Enabling the most frequently desired and observed, followed by Modeling, Encouraging, Challenging, and Inspiring.

The greater the difference between expected and actual leadership practices, the more dissatisfied the respondents were with their job. The LPI accounted for about 32 percent of the variance around job satisfaction, with Enabling accounting for the largest amount of this explained variance. Age, gender, type of agency, length of time in job, position, gender of supervisor, and academic degree were not intervening variables in the relationships between leadership and job satisfaction.