

# Three Pillars of Organizational Excellence

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## ABSTRACT

There is extensive research linking leadership to organizational effectiveness. In particular transformational leadership has received a great deal of support for it being very effective in producing desirable organizational outcomes across a variety of organizational settings. Recently Hendrix, Born, & Hopkins (2015) found that the character of a leader predicted organizational effectiveness measures above and beyond that of transformational leadership. Job enrichment has also been found to be predictive of organizational effectiveness; however, no research has been found that looks at job enrichment predicting organizational effectiveness in combination with transformational leadership and character. The purpose of this research was to investigate if character and job enrichment add in the prediction of organizational effectiveness above and beyond that of leadership alone. The sample for this research consisted of 279,100 active-duty military and civilian United States Air Force personnel. Data were collected using a survey that included measures of transformational leadership, character, job enrichment, and five organizational outcomes. Results indicated character and job enrichment add to the prediction of desirable organizational outcomes above and beyond that of leadership. Therefore, this research adds support for measuring leaders' character and job enrichment in combination with transformational leadership assessment.

Theoretical models of leadership have evolved greatly in the last century. Previous research has demonstrated that certain leadership behaviors result in successful organizational outcomes (Mann, 1959; Yammarino, Dionne, Schriesheim, & Dansereau, 2008; Horney, Pasmore, & O'Shea, 2010). Current models supplement prior research by examining the predictive nature of innate characteristics of effective leaders and existing job enrichment elements on the overall success of an organization (Kenny & Zaccaro, 1983; Smith, 2013). Mann (1959) originally argued that a person's leadership status evolves across various situations, thereby establishing leadership as a fluid trait that responds to the demands of a situation. However, in 1983 Kenny and Zaccaro published results reporting that 49 to 82% of the variance in leadership resulted from trait distinctions, leading them to surmise that leadership is more constant across situations than previously indicated. In a Harvard Business Review article, Rooke and Torbert outline seven types of leadership identities and their levels of effectiveness. Despite obvious distinctions, it was

possible to grow as a more successful leader (according to their criteria) through visualization, planning, and practice (Rooke & Torbert, 2015). While it is important to choose an effective method of leadership, recent studies have sustained the predictive nature of leaders' character traits with respect to organizational success (Hendrix, Born, & Hopkins, 2015; Barlow, Jordan, & Hendrix, 2003; Brown, Trevino, & Harrison, 2005). Walker and Pitts (1998) noted that contemporary moral psychology models have focused more on moral reasoning and have paid little attention to the construct of moral excellence. Moral excellence or moral character is broader conceptually than the construct of moral reasoning and deals with moral values individuals hold (e.g., honesty, integrity, selflessness) and is the focus of this study.

Organizations have benefited from enhanced individual productivity resulting from recent trends to seek out "meaningful" or "fulfilling" work (Smith, 2013). An organization's ability to create an enriching environment stems to the leader's motivational ability (Feintzeig, 2015).

Certain job enrichment characteristics (e.g., skill variety, task identity) produce psychological states that prompt motivation (Salau, Adeniji, & Oyewunmi, 2014). Across multiple industries, organizations become more effective when the overall employee population feels more enriched. Furthermore, job enrichment changes should be tailored to the industry itself which harkens back to the role of a leader (Paul, Robertson & Herzberg, 1969). The leader's job is to establish meaning for employees through a "point of reference" as well as to create an environment that stimulates motivation (Walumbwa et al., 2013). Shiva and Suar (2012) demonstrated that the existence of a transformational leader was not enough to drive successful outcomes, but by enhancing the culture for his employees, a transformational leader indirectly influences organizational effectiveness. By promoting productivity through purpose and culture, job enrichment adds to an organization's effectiveness more than good management skills alone.

*Promoting productivity through purpose and culture, job enrichment adds to an organization's effectiveness more than good management skills alone.*

While excellent leadership behaviors and tactics certainly lead to impactful results, it depends on the character of the leader to ensure that these actions reflect the motivations of subordinates. The influx of media attention aimed at business scandals makes it clear that executives can excel at furthering personal agendas while failing to create an effective organization overall (Zimmerman, 2015). Cho and Ringquist (2010) found that levels of trustworthiness and managerial leadership strongly and positively correlated with perceived organizational outcomes. Furthermore, job enrichment behaviors (creating a shared organizational vision, identifying clear performance expectations) only enhanced employee culture when those employees trusted their superiors suggesting that character might add to

outcomes above leadership alone (Cho & Ringquist, 2010). Additionally, Colbert, Barrick, and Bradley (2014) found that top management teams and CEOs with task-oriented traits (conscientiousness, emotional stability, openness to experience) were more likely to accomplish goals and solve organizational issues. In a 2010 study, Hoffman et al. drew a distinction between the effectiveness of character and leadership skills in a meta-analysis of the qualities and skills relating to leader effectiveness. While not a substantial distinction, they did find that trait-like characteristics (motivation, energy, dominance, integrity, self-confidence, creativity, and charisma) were slightly more related to leader effectiveness than were state-like qualities (interpersonal skills, oral/written communication, administrative skills, problem-solving skills, decision making).

Past literature has shown that leadership, character, and job enrichment all predict organizational effectiveness independently. This study examines whether it is merely a leader's actions that drive results or if character and job enrichment play a role in predicting the success or failure of an organization above and beyond that of leadership alone. Hypotheses 1 and 2 were tested earlier in Hendrix, Born, & Hopkins (2015) and have been replicated in this study.

Research on transformational leadership, character, and job enrichment in predicting organizational effectiveness outcomes leads to the following hypotheses:

- Hypothesis 1: Transformational leadership will be positively related to organizational commitment, job satisfaction, work group performance, organizational citizenship behavior, and negatively related to intent to leave.
- Hypothesis 2: Character will be positively related to organizational commitment, job satisfaction, work group performance, organizational citizenship behavior, and negatively related to intent to leave.

- Hypothesis 3: Job enrichment will be positively related to organizational commitment, job satisfaction, work group performance, organizational citizenship behavior, and negatively related to intent to leave.
- Hypothesis 4: Character and Job enrichment add to the prediction of desirable organizational outcomes above and beyond that of leadership.

## Method

### Participants

The participants of this research consisted of 279,100 active-duty military and civilian United States Air Force personnel. The personnel composition was approximately: 62% enlisted, 16% officer, and 23% civilian, of these 76% were males and 24% females. Their highest educational level obtained was: (a) 0.2% some high school, (b) 13.7% high school, (c) 30.0% less than two years of college, (d) 4.1% associate's degree, (e) 13.6% less than four years of college, (f) 11.9% bachelor's degree, (g) 3.8% some graduate education but no graduate degree, (h) 11.1% master's degree, (i) 1.1% doctorate degree, (k) 10.5% listed their educational level as other or did not provide their educational level. The sample demographics approximate the Air Force population.

### Procedure

Annually the United States Air Force conducts an online organizational climate survey, the Chief of Staff Air Force (CSAF) Climate Survey. This survey was designed to identify strengths and opportunities for improving the organizational climate and organizational effectiveness of Air Force units. The survey included measures of transformational leadership, character, job enrichment, and five organization effectiveness measures. Individuals completed the survey by rating their supervisors on these measures.

## Measures

*Transformational Leadership.* This scale was based on the transformational components of the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ), and included 14 items on a six-point Likert agree-disagree scale with an option for *don't know or not applicable*. Items were designed to measure intellectual stimulation (e.g., communicating high expectations), inspiration (e.g., promotes problem solving), and individualized consideration (e.g., personal attention). Scale items are provided in the Appendix.

*Character.* The Character Assessment Rating Scale (Hendrix, Barlow, & Luedtke, 2004) was adapted for measuring individuals' character that can also be called moral excellence. Supervisors were rated on 11 dimensions of character using a five-point frequency scale (e.g., 1 = *Never*, 5 = *Always*). Scale items are provided in the Appendix.

*Job Enrichment.* Hackman, Oldham, Janson, and Purdy (1975) proposed that job enrichment could be better demonstrated using their Job Characteristics Model (JCM). The JCM was based on the concepts of three states: core job dimensions (CJDs), critical psychological states (CPSs), and affective outcomes (AOs). These states were measured using an instrument they called the Job Diagnostic Survey (JDS) that consists of five items: Skill variety (the degree to which a job requires a variety of different skills), Task identity (the degree to which a job requires completion of a whole and identifiable piece of work), Task significance (the degree to which a job has a significant impact on other work or lives), Autonomy (the degree to which a job provides freedom, independence, and discretion in scheduling their work and procedures), Feedback (the degree when carrying out work tasks provides the individual with clear and direct information on their performance effectiveness). These five components were combined in a formula they called the Motivation Potential Score (MPS). The MPS was computed as follows:  $MPS = ((Skill\ Variety + Task\ Identity + Task\ Significance) / 3) \times (Autonomy) \times (Feedback)$ . The job enrichment scale used in this research was based on the

MPS and included the five items on a six-point Likert agree-disagree scale with an option for *don't know or not applicable*. This measure of job enrichment had a mean of 128.76 with a range of 1 to 216. Scale items are provided in the Appendix.

*Outcome Variables.* The five outcome variables used to measure the effects of transformational leadership, character, and job enrichment were organizational commitment, job satisfaction, work group performance, organizational citizenship behavior, and intent to leave the organization. Organizational commitment, job satisfaction, work group performance, and organizational citizenship behavior, were assessed using a six-point Likert scale. Intent to leave the organization, utilized a six-point likelihood scale (e.g., 1 = *Highly Unlikely*, 6 = *Highly Likely*). Scale items are provided in the Appendix.

## Results

The means, standard deviations, correlations, and coefficient alpha scale reliability indices for transformational leadership, character, job enrichment and each organizational outcome are provided in Table 1. Hypotheses one, two, and three, *transformational leadership (H1), character (H2), and job enrichment (H3) will be positively related to organizational commitment, job satisfaction, work group performance, and organizational citizenship behavior and negatively related to intent to leave*, were tested using correlational analysis. Transformational leadership, character, and job enrichment were found to be significant ( $p < .001$ ) in predicting each of the five outcome variables as hypothesized. Table 1 also

*Transformational leadership, character, and job enrichment were found to be significant ( $p < .001$ ) in predicting each of the five outcome variables as hypothesized.*

shows that while transformational leadership and character were highly correlated ( $r=.83$ ), job enrichment was not

nearly as highly correlated with transformational leadership (.38) or with character (.32).

The fourth hypothesis (H4), *character and job enrichment add to the prediction of desirable organizational outcomes above and beyond that of leadership*, was tested using multiple regression analyses. Table 2 contains raw score and standardized regression coefficients, raw score standard error, and each equation's  $R^2$ . The hypothesis was supported with both character and job enrichment adding significantly ( $p < .001$ ) to the variance accounted for by transformational leadership in predicting each outcome variable. However, with the exception of organizational commitment and intent to leave, character added little in predicting the five organizational outcomes above that of leadership and job enrichment.

## Discussion

There is always concern of common method variance (CMV) when measures come from a single source. Lindell and Whitney (2001) proposed the extent of common method variance could be estimated by including as a covariate a marker variable that is theoretically unrelated with the variables under investigation. Should there be an observed relationship between the marker variable and those under investigation it could be assumed that it was due to CMV. Hendrix, Born, & Hopkins (2015) investigated the extent CMV influenced the responses in the database used in this research by performing Lindell and Whitney's CMV detection approach. The results indicated

little presence of common method variance. The  $R^2$  values of the regression analyses with the covariate included were the same as the regression analyses without the covariate. In addition, the beta weights for transformational leadership and character for the five outcomes were also the same. The beta weights for the covariate showed little CMV effect (commitment .075, satisfaction .066, performance .013, OCB .035, intent to leave -.020).

With the large sample size in this study one would expect low p-values. The importance is not so much on relationships being statistically significant as is the practical implications of these relationships. The results of this research support the hypotheses of leadership, character, and job enrichment directly relating to the five outcome variables. It also supported the hypothesis that *character and job enrichment add to the prediction of desirable organizational outcomes above and beyond that of leadership*. Still, with the exception of organizational commitment and intent to leave, character added little in predicting the five organizational outcomes above that of leadership with job enrichment included in the regression analyses. This shouldn't be unexpected since leadership and character were highly correlated (.83) while job enrichment and leadership (.32) wasn't.

This research does not attempt to establish causation. It only investigates the extent that measures of leadership, character, and job enrichment are predictive of the five desirable outcomes of this study. Future research investigating causal relationships between the leader, organizational outcomes, and the organizational environment would add to our understanding of the interrelationships among these.

There are a number of opportunities for future research. This research was limited to analysis within organizational units. The data for job enrichment showed a wide range of scores (mean = 128.76, SD = 61.09) between these units.

The objectives and design of some jobs result in less job enrichment compared to most other job types. Nevertheless, this is an opportunity for future research to identify these jobs and see what aspects might be modified to improve their enrichment. Testing the effects of these modifications on organizational effectiveness measures could be determined using a pretest-posttest design.

Since this research was limited to units there was no investigation of unit interaction with other units, laterally or vertically. Future research might investigate the processes of these interactions and the impact on unit and system performance. For example, it might be required for an analysis report to go from a research unit through another review unit before being presented to the requesting office. It would be a constraint on the system resulting in a less efficient and timely process if the reviewing office slows down the process significantly due to repeated requests of the originating office to modify the results or the way it is presented. Therefore, the requesting office would be a constraint or bottleneck on an overall system process making it less efficient and decreasing the job enrichment (i.e., autonomy component) of the research unit.

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## Appendix

### *Transformational Leadership, Character, Job Enrichment & Organizational Outcome measures*

#### *Transformational Leadership*

1. My unit commander (or commander equivalent) *sets challenging unit goals.*
2. My unit commander (or commander equivalent) *provides a clear unit vision.*
3. My unit commander (or commander equivalent) *makes us proud to be associated with him/her.*
4. My unit commander (or commander equivalent) *is consistent in his/her words and actions.*
5. My unit commander (or commander equivalent) *is inspirational (promotes esprit de corps).*
6. My unit commander (or commander equivalent) *motivates us to achieve our goals.*
7. My unit commander (or commander equivalent) *is passionate about our mission.*
8. My unit commander (or commander equivalent) *challenges us to solve problems on our own.*
9. My unit commander (or commander equivalent) *encourages us to find new ways of doing business.*
10. My unit commander (or commander equivalent) *asks us to think through problems before we act.*
11. My unit commander (or commander equivalent) *encourages us to find innovative approaches to problems.*
12. My unit commander (or commander equivalent) *listens to our ideas.*
13. My unit commander (or commander equivalent) *treats us with respect.*
14. My unit commander (or commander equivalent) *is concerned about our personal welfare.*

#### *Character*

1. Integrity. Consistently adhering to a moral or ethical code or standard. A person who considers the “right thing” when faced with alternate choices.
2. Organizational Loyalty. Being devoted and committed to one’s organization.
3. Employee Loyalty. Being devoted and committed to one’s coworkers and subordinates.
4. Selflessness. Genuinely concerned about the welfare of others and willing to sacrifice one’s personal interest for others and their organization.
5. Compassion. Concern for the suffering or welfare of others and provides aid or shows mercy for others.
6. Competency. Capable of executing responsibilities assigned in a superior fashion and excels in all task assignments. Is effective and efficient.
7. Respectfulness. Shows esteem for, and consideration and appreciation of other people.
8. Fairness. Treats people in an equitable, impartial, and just manner.

9. Self-Discipline. Can be depended upon to make rational and logical decisions (in the interest of the unit).
10. Spiritual Diversity Appreciation. Values the spiritual diversity among individuals with different backgrounds and cultures and respects all individuals’ rights to differ from others in their beliefs.
11. Cooperativeness. Willingness to work or act together with others in accomplishing a task or some common end or purpose.

#### *Job Enrichment*

1. My job requires me to use a variety of skills.
2. My job allows me to see the finished products of my work.
3. Doing my job well affects others in some important way.
4. My job is designed so that I know when I have performed well.
5. My job allows me freedom to work with minimum supervision.

#### *Organizational Commitment*

1. I am really willing to exert considerable effort on the job for my organization.<sup>88</sup>
2. The goals and values of my organization are very compatible with my goals and values.

#### *Job Satisfaction*

1. In general, I am satisfied with my job.
2. I have a sense of fulfillment at the end of the day.
3. The tasks I perform provide me with a sense of accomplishment.
4. I am a valued member of my unit.
5. I would recommend an assignment in my unit to a friend.
6. Morale is high in my unit.

#### *Work Group Performance*

1. The quality of work in my unit is high.
2. The quantity of work in my unit is high.
3. My unit is known as one that gets the job done well.
4. My unit is successfully accomplishing its mission.

#### *Organizational Citizenship Behavior*

1. In my unit, people help each other out when they have heavy workloads.
2. In my unit, people make innovative suggestions for improvement.
3. In my unit, people willingly give of their time to help members who have work-related problems.
4. In my unit, people willingly share their expertise with each other.

#### *Intent to Leave*

1. If you were released from all of your service obligations and you could separate from the Air Force within the year, what is the likelihood that you would leave the Air Force?

**Table 1**

Variable Means, Standard Deviations, Correlations, & Scale Reliabilities

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Leadership <sup>a</sup>	4.75	1.06	(.98)							
2. Character <sup>b</sup>	4.33	.81	.83	(.97)						
3. Job Enrichment <sup>c</sup>	128.76	61.09	.38	.32	-					
4. Commitment <sup>d</sup>	5.05	.93	.47	.44	.45	(.69)				
5. Satisfaction <sup>e</sup>	4.27	1.23	.53	.46	.60	.62	(.92)			
6. Performance <sup>f</sup>	4.97	.88	.48	.42	.46	.48	.57	(.89)		
7. OCB <sup>g</sup>	4.54	1.03	.46	.41	.46	.48	.61	.58	(.89)	
8. Intent to Leave <sup>h</sup>	3.32	2.04	-.25	-.24	-.27	-.34	-.40	-.23	-.25	-

Note: Coefficient Alpha Reliabilities in Parenthesis

<sup>a</sup>N = 244,544, <sup>b</sup>N = 245,937, <sup>c</sup>N = 206,981 (formula), <sup>d</sup>N = 251,434, <sup>e</sup>N = 261,943, <sup>f</sup>N = 265,062, <sup>g</sup>N = 365,545, 252,653 (single item).

**Table 2**

Organizational Outcomes, Leadership, Character, and Job Enrichment

	B	SE B	$\beta$	R <sup>2</sup>
Commitment <sup>a</sup>				.31**
Transformational Leadership	.20	.003	.22	
Character	.18	.003	.15	
Job Enrichment	.01	.001	.32	
Satisfaction <sup>b</sup>				.47**
Transformational Leadership	.34	.003	.29	
Character	.10	.004	.07	
Job Enrichment	.01	.001	.47	
Performance <sup>c</sup>				.31**
Transformational Leadership	.26	.003	.32	
Character	.07	.003	.06	
Job Enrichment	.01	.001	.29	
OCB <sup>d</sup>				.30**
Transformational Leadership	.27	.003	.28	
Character	.11	.004	.08	
Job Enrichment	.01	.001	.30	
Intent to Leave <sup>e</sup>				.09**
Transformational Leadership	-.19	.007	-.10	
Character	-.25	.009	-.10	
Job Enrichment	-.01	.001	-.18	

<sup>a</sup>N = 239,828. <sup>b</sup>N = 245,231. <sup>c</sup>N = 244,544. <sup>d</sup>N = 244,682. <sup>e</sup>N = 240,530.

\*\*p &lt; .001