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The Effectiveness of 360-Degree Feedback upon Supervision in Shenandoah Valley Social Services

This Research Paper
is Presented to
the Graduate Faculty of the Department of
Occupational and Technical Studies
Old Dominion University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Science in Occupational and Technical Studies
Community College Teaching Concentration

by

Brian Dotson August 2007

APPROVAL PAGE

This research paper was prepared by Brian Wayne Dotson under the direction of Dr. John M. Ritz in OTED 636, Problems in Occupation and Technical Studies. It was submitted to the Graduate Program Director as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science in Occupational and Technical Studies with a concentration in Community College Teaching.

APPROVAL BY:

Dr/John M. Ritz

Advisor and Graduate Program Director 8-21-07

Date

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Brian W. Dotson

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Upward feedback is another term used to describe the 360-degree evaluation process. This is a common human resources strategy used by many companies and organizations today. With this growing trend, Shenandoah Valley Social Services has become more interested in subordinates rating their supervisors' performance. According to Rogers and Metlay (2002):

Historically, employees received feedback only from their direct supervisor. With flattened structures and the need to respond quickly to customer demand, 360-degree feedback was introduced to equip employees with the information needed to deal with change and to leverage individual talent to meet organizational goals. Today, many companies fully customize the 360-degree feedback process to the specific competencies and values required to meet their goals, often creating multiple sets of competencies to ensure relevancy to the business. Some companies have gone further and linked the process to performance appraisal and succession planning (p. 44).

Shenandoah Valley Social Services' supervisors give annual and probationary reviews to their employees, but there is no current feedback tool in place for employees to judge supervisors. There has been a great lack of morale within the agency. This research should prove that the negative morale could be linked to poor supervision from upper and middle management. According to Wimer (2002):

During the past decade, 360-degree feedback has become one of the most popular human resource interventions. The power behind this process is that it's sometimes a rare opportunity for employees to receive honest feedback about how they're perceived by their peers. Most organizations use it for multi-source feedback as part of their management development or performance appraisal processes, or on an ad hoc basis with individuals. The idea is that if employees are armed with better self-awareness, they can make important changes in their work behavior (p. 37).

Many companies throughout the United States and the United Kingdom are now resorting to 360-degree feedback as a quality instrument for measuring employee satisfaction and success. Shenandoah Valley Social Services and the County of Augusta should resort to the 360-degree feedback approach.

Statement of the Problem

The problem of this study was to determine employees' attitudes toward supervision through 360-degree feedback within Shenandoah Valley Social Services.

Research Goals

The goals of this research were to provide answers to the following questions:

- 1. Will participation in 360-degree feedback within the organizational structure enhance supervisor and subordinate relationships?
- 2. Does the absence of 360-degree feedback or peer evaluations prove to be a negative or a positive indicator of employee performance?
- 3. When employees complete evaluations of their supervisors will it open future discussions between supervisor and subordinate?

Background and Significance

Shenandoah Valley Social Services' employees experience annual performance evaluations based on their performance and contributions throughout the year.

Shenandoah Valley Social Services is listed as 80 percent state funded and 20 percent locally funded. The agency falls under the local level being in the jurisdiction of Augusta County, Virginia.

Augusta County conducted performance reviews based on an employee's particular position within the organization annually in the month of September. For example, a clerical employee would be evaluated on the basis of timeliness of report submissions, whereas a Child Protective Services Worker would be evaluated on characteristics/skills such as flexibility and interactions with families. Supervisors would have a chance to rate, score and evaluate his/her employees, but the employees would never have a chance to evaluate his/her supervisor.

This research examined how each employee felt about his/her supervisor.

Employees were given an opportunity to complete a survey and rate the effectiveness and attitudes toward supervision at Shenandoah Valley Social Services. The use of 360-degree feedback has been utilized in many local Virginia Department of Social Services agencies in the Commonwealth of Virginia. For the most part, it has been proven to be effective. The results of this study will prove to be a very useful measurement and feedback tool that can be utilized within Shenandoah Valley Social Services and also in the County of Augusta as well. The current need for this study is to boost a low morale within the organization. Also, there has been some animosity between the two agencies where supervision is sometimes not provided timely or "on-site."

Limitations

The following limitations were established to facilitate this study:

- The research was limited to just one agency within the Shenandoah Valley in Commonwealth of Virginia's Social Services system.
- > The employees have had varied backgrounds within the human services field.
- > Feedback was given from surveys of employees within the local agency.
- The research period and time frame was limited to February 2007 to August 2007.
- > The research was a comparison of perspectives and it was objective in nature.

Assumptions

The following assumptions have been made to aid in the completion of this research study:

- Present employees of Shenandoah Valley Social Services feel that their work goes unnoticed and they do not receive appropriate positive reinforcement.
- > Supervisors are spread out to manage different program areas from different sites and it is felt that this causes some lack of communication.
- > The demand for supervision is greatly increasing and supervisors feel as though it is difficult to manage programs between two different sites.
- Employee attitudes have changed with the recent addition of a new Departmental Director who has a new approach and management style.
- Employees feel as though this type of feedback is needed within our organization to find the reason for job burnout and low morale.

Procedures

This research was constructed and developed to determine employees' attitudes toward upper and middle management supervision. The effectiveness was evaluated through responses given by employees. Surveys were given to employees to rate his/her supervisor on various levels of management to include, but not limited to, communication, team efforts, conducting meetings/conferences, etc.

The data collected were analyzed and compiled into statistical evaluations based on different dimensions, such as communication between employees, frequency of meetings, number of interactions with workers, and frequency of positive feedback to employees. These results were also used to determine the reliability and validity of implementing 360-degree feedback within the organization.

Definition of Terms

- ➤ <u>360-Degree Feedback</u>: Employee development feedback that comes from all around the employee. The feedback would come from subordinates, peers and managers in the organizational hierarchy, as well as a self-assessment, and in some cases external sources such as customers and suppliers or other interested stakeholders ("360" refers to the 360 degrees in a circle).
- Adult Protective Services: Referred to henceforth as (APS). Investigates reports of abuse, neglect, and exploitation of adults aged 60 and over and incapacitated adults over 18 years of age and provides services when persons are found to be in need of protective services. The goal of APS is to protect a vulnerable adult's life, health, and property without a loss of liberty. When this is not possible, APS attempts to provide assistance with the least disruption of life style and with full due process, protection, and restoration of the person's liberty in the shortest possible period of time. APS seeks to achieve simultaneously and in order of importance: freedom, safety, and minimal disruption of lifestyle and least-restrictive care.
- ➤ <u>Child Protective Services</u>: Referred to henceforth as (CPS). A unit within the VDSS Division of Family Services. Among the duties of this unit are the development of statewide public awareness and education programs; the

- administration of state and federal grants to prevent abuse and neglect; and to maintain a statewide database for child abuse and neglect.
- Virginia Department of Social Services: Referred to henceforth as (VDSS). The Virginia Department of Social Services provides assistance to citizens of Virginia to help them live their best lives. One child, one senior citizen, one person at a time, VDSS programs and services help people triumph over poverty, abuse and neglect, achieve self-sufficiency and shape strong futures for themselves, their families and their communities.

Overview of Chapters

Chapter I acquaints the reader with what 360-degree feedback is. It also gives its historical implications and emergence within the human resources field. Chapter I points out the relevance based upon research and also proposes the intentions of the future research.

Chapter II reviews, provides an overview, and synthesizes articles related to 360-degree feedback within organizations. The review of literature was limited to the human service field, so some literature was as closely related to the human service field as possible. Chapter III reviews the methods and procedures used in the research process. It explains the surveys that were used and how they will be utilized in providing results. Chapter IV shows the findings of the current research on the topic of 360-degree feedback. Chapter V summarizes the research, draws conclusions and makes recommendations for the future of 360-degree feedback and its possibility of implementation within the organization being studied.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The Review of Literature provides an overview of the proposed research study and the publications/research that has currently been done in this field. The relevant publications will examine the history and implications of 360-degree feedback within a business or organization, potential benefits, self-awareness for employee and supervisor, and feedback accomplishments. The positive and negative aspects of this human resource measurement will be discussed. Through new and improved ways of evaluation, supervisors are now able to give more reliable and positive feedback to their employees.

360-Degree Feedback

Historically speaking, negative feedback was, and still is, difficult for some supervisors to deliver to their employees. "As far back as the third century A.D., during the Wei Dynasty, an 'imperial rater' was installed to evaluate the performance of the official family members, causing much internal debate about the fairness of his decisions" (Rogers & Metlay, 2002, p. 46). During these times, it was safe to say the autocratic style reigned supreme when it came to judging or rating. An autocratic society gave little room for the people to make their own decisions and be given a chance to speak.

The rise of the industrial revolution in the late 1800s gave way to a new way of rating employees. The rating of employees was done primarily on the basis of the worker's output. After the Second World War, several forces brought additional

processes to the boss-subordinate relationship and the events of the war raised concerns about the negative effects of authoritarianism and provoked an interest in democracy and autonomy in the workplace (Rogers et al., 2002).

Three-hundred sixty degree feedback has been around for quite some time.

Although it may not have been publicly utilized as an effective human relations strategy, it began to sweep the nation's businesses – even worldwide. Supervisors were rating their subordinates and subordinates were rating management. This really increased the labor force's demeanor and work ethic. This increased more open lines of communication and boosted morale. It showed the transition from autocracy to democracy.

The 20th century would prove to show the most change within the workplace environment. The changes diminished a supervisor's ability to fully assess his or her participant's performance. For example, organizations have streamlined structures and hierarchies, becoming more competitive and creating bigger jobs for managers (Rogers et al., 2002). These changes have made the subordinate less of a priority within the scheme of the organization. Changing managerial behavior begins with a subordinate rating his/her supervisor. Research has demonstrated that the notion of subordinate feedback has revolutionized the feedback process and given more accurate results in the whole rating process.

Potential Benefits

The potential benefits of 360-degree feedback outweigh its negative consequences. Today's workplace is filled with low morale and job burnout.

Management accounts for most of these negative attributes. If management sees a potential problem, then it should address the problem early as to avoid potential "side-effects" from the behavior. Subordinates are being rated on the basis of their performance, but in turn, the supervisor can be accountable for the poor performance as well. If a supervisor is not empowering, inspiring or motivating, s/he is not fulfilling their job as a manager.

The benefits of 360-degree feedback are exponential in nature. According to Rogers et al. (2002), there are six critical factors or best practices that have arisen from using 360-degree feedback. These six factors are as follows:

- Use 360-degree feedback primarily for individual development. Linkage to performance appraisal, compensation and succession planning is risky unless the organization is ready and development culture exists.
- Link the process and align participants with strategic imperatives. Build
 focused competencies and customize to specific functions, levels and jobs.
 Involve the customer.
- Exert high administrative control over every aspect of the process.
 Choose the participants and manage the feedback process closely,
 approving the raters. Train everybody involved to advance.
- 4. Use senior management as role models. Invest time, money and resources.
- Use highly trained internal coaches to leverage your investment.
 Participants need help understanding the feedback and following through

- on an action plan. Sharing results with the supervisor and customer can create a team approach to development.
- 6. Evaluate the return on investment or effectiveness of the process as you would any business endeavor. Identify individual and organizational trends. Treat 360-degree feedback as a human resource system that adds value to the business (pp. 45-46).

The benefits of 360-degree feedback can be positive and they can be negative depending on the business or organization in which it is conducted. Many factors will need to be considered in deciding whether it is right for a particular company. Cost and time will need to be determined. Many financially-minded managers may consider this a waste of the company's time and financial resources.

There are other benefits with 360-degree feedback. Another benefit is the concept of multi-source feedback. In recent years, organizations have turned their attention toward gathering performance feedback from sources other than immediate supervisors. Three benefits of this multi-source approach are (1) better performance information, (2) more reliable ratings than those from a single supervisor, and (3) improved rating performances after receiving the feedback (Becton & Schraeder, 2004, p. 23). The potential benefits seem to outweigh the negative factors for 360-degree feedback.

Self-Awareness

Self-awareness is an important concept when it comes to 360-degree feedback.

Some factors that may contribute to the process are personality, job ability and cognitive ability. These are factors that need to be taken into consideration when subordinates are

evaluating management. The extent of the congruence of self with other ratings has been used as a measure of self-awareness and it has been found to be significantly related to performance outcomes (Fletcher & Baldry, 2000). Self-awareness is a variable that can influence the results dramatically. In the last few years researchers have recognized self-awareness as a factor in conducting and evaluating 360-degree feedback.

Some factors, such as personality and management style play a crucial role in providing feedback. Different managers have different styles. This does not mean the individuals are necessarily "bad" managers/supervisors, it just means s/he has a different approach or style. Managers and subordinates need to be self-aware of characteristics, including style and personality. Every performance evaluation should take that bias into consideration and somehow "tweak" the questions to include the concept of self-awareness.

Other factors that managers and subordinates need to be aware of, especially within the workplace context, are friendships and relationships with external raters.

These factors will skew the data dramatically causing the performance evaluations to be ineffective and invalid. It has been suggested by Fletcher and Baldry (2000) that there are three influences upon an individual's self-assessment and the ratings they receive externally. The three influences are as follow:

- 1. Biographical Characteristics
- 2. Individual Characteristics
- 3. Cognitive Processes (p. 304).

Self-awareness is an evident and important factor in 360-degree feedback evaluations. There appears to be a strong correlation. This concept is difficult to discern in studies, but there are measurement instruments used to evaluate self-awareness within an organization.

Feedback Accomplishments

The accomplishment of each 360-degree evaluation is definitely organization-specific. Each organization has its own "needs" and its own set of policies which must be followed. Overall, most studies can be generalized to encompass the same evaluation instrument. For example, a vehicle-manufacturing company with 1,000 employees can replicate its study, add to and remove components, to correspond to the same study an insurance company with 120 employees used.

The overall accomplishment of the feedback is to be able to provide positive/negative feedback to produce a "positive" result. The feedback is directed toward the managers and management structure. Its intent is to improve management, in turn, improving subordinate performance. Some managers may feel as though they are being picked on and that the opinions of some immature people were given too much weight (Wimer, 2002). This sometimes can become a barrier to improving the feedback accomplishments. If the manager feels as though s/he is being "singled out," s/he will be more likely to oppose the process.

Receiving difficult and negative feedback can make a manager even less productive. Motivation, communication styles, and boosting of morale should be a priority. If a manager is taking the criticism the "wrong way" it can pose an even bigger

problem within the organization. Feedback is a way of maintaining a positive work environment between supervisors and subordinates.

Summary

The Review of Literature gives the reader a better understanding of the topic of 360-degree feedback within organizations. It explains its historical basis and how it originated and evolved into a positive way of measuring employees' attitudes toward supervision. The review explains the potential benefits of conducting these evaluations. It covers the aspect of self-awareness which plays a major role in the 360-degree feedback process. It explains the feedback accomplishments and why the evaluations are necessary to create a "positive" work environment. Chapter III includes the population, instrument used, and methods and procedures used to conduct the study of attitudes through 360-degree feedback.

CHAPTER III

METHODS AND PROCEDURES

This chapter explains and discusses the methods and procedures employed while conducting this study. It also explains the population, instrument design, methods of data collection, statistical analysis and summary.

Population

The population for this study included 125 full-time employees spanning different departments within VDSS to include APS, CPS, etc. The participants were in two separate locations. One location was Verona, Virginia, and the other office was located in Waynesboro, Virginia. Shenandoah Valley Social Services covers Staunton, Waynesboro and Augusta County as a whole out of two separate offices.

Instrument Design

The instrument design used to conduct this research was a self-made, 20-item, closed question survey. Some questions were taken from a previous study by Gillespie (2005) entitled "Internationalizing 360-degree Feedback: Are Subordinate Rating Comparable." This was a similar study completed in April 2005. The scale used to measure the attitudes was the five-point Likert scale. The scale ranged from 5 (strongly agree) to 1 (strongly disagree). This scale allowed for the researcher to gauge true feelings regarding management within Shenandoah Valley Social Services.

Methods of Data Collection

A letter asking permission from the administrative and department head was formally submitted for approval of the study. Once approved, a date was scheduled for the employees to participate in the study. The method of data collection used was passing out surveys (cover letter attached to each) to all employees with envelopes in which to put their surveys; a drop-box was used to maintain confidentiality.

All participants were informed beforehand that all responses would remain confidential. They were also informed that it was intended for a graduate research project for a co-worker. Also, participants were informed that there could be a potential use for this kind of evaluation and each employee would benefit from participating. Participants could drop their survey at any time throughout the day. All employees were given prior consent from the department head that participating in this study would be beneficial to the agency.

Statistical Analysis

The data were presented as percentile and mean scoring of survey responses. The responses were compared to the years each supervisor has been assigned to each program area (e.g., CPS, APS, etc.). Tables were used to represent the data found when reviewing the survey responses. The five-point Likert scale was used to rate the responses from participants 5 (strongly agree) to 1 (strongly disagree). The mean scoring values were described to gauge the years of supervisory experience to that of responses given. The mean scores were also evaluated based on the responses given and how effective management is within the agency.

Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to discuss and explain the methods and procedures employed and utilized for this study. The researcher's goal was to analyze employees' attitudes toward supervision within Shenandoah Valley Social Services. Covered in this chapter were the population being studied, data collecting methods, instrument used to conduct the study and statistical analysis. The findings of this study are reported in further detail in Chapter IV.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

The purpose of this chapter was to present the data obtained from the survey distributed to employees at Shenandoah Valley Social Services. The problem of this study was to determine employees' attitudes toward supervision through 360-degree feedback within Shenandoah Valley Social Services. This chapter looks at the responses and evaluates attitudes toward management within the agency. The survey contains responses from employees with 0 to 20 plus years of employment with the agency. The research goals in this study looked at the following:

- 1. Will participation in 360-degree feedback within the organizational structure enhance supervisor and subordinate relationships?
- 2. Does the absence of 360-degree feedback or peer evaluations prove to be a negative or a positive indicator of employee performance?
- 3. When employees complete evaluations of their supervisors will it open future discussions between supervisor and subordinate?

Employee Survey Response

Out of approximately 125 full-time employees, 56 percent of employees responded to the survey (n = 70). Of the 70 surveys received, three surveys were submitted by employees with 0-6 months of experience, which made up one percent of the survey population. Twenty-nine surveys were turned in by employees with 1-5 years of experience making up 41 percent of the survey population.

Twenty-five surveys were submitted by employees with 10-15 years of experience which made up 36 percent of the survey population. Another 13 surveys were

submitted by employees with over 20 years of social service experience, which made up an additional 19 percent of the survey population. See Table 4.1.

Table 4.1 Responses of Employees Participating in 360-degree Feedback
Survey

Years of Social Services Experience	Percentage of Employees	Employee Mean by Years of Experience
0-6 Months	1%	n= 3
1-5 Years	41%	n=29
5-10 Years	36%	n=25
20 + Years	19%	n=13
Totals		n=70

The five-point Likert scale was used and rated each question from 1, strongly disagree, to 5, strongly agree, in this study. See Likert Scale Table 4.2. The explanations of the mean scoring values are shown and described in Table 4.3.

Table 4.2 Likert Scale

5	Strongly Agree
4	Agree
3	Neutral
2	Disagree
1	Strongly Disagree

Table 4.3 Mean Scoring Values

5.0 - 4.5	Strongly Agree
4.5 - 3.5	Agree
3.5 - 2.5	Neutral
2.5 - 1.5	Disagree
1.5 - 1.0	Strongly Disagree

360-Degree Feedback Survey Questions

Questions 1-20 were designed to answer Research Goals 1 through 3. The five-point Likert Scale was used to rate responses. The mean scoring values were shown for each group of employees within the agency according to his/her years of experience, as well as respective percentage values.

Report of Survey Findings

Question 1 was designed to answer Research Goal 1 and helped determine whether each employee's supervisor was positive and supportive. The findings of Question 1 showed an overall mean score of 3.89 for all employees who participated. This indicated that the employees who responded agreed that his/her supervisor was positive and supportive in relation to their current position. Those employees with 0-6 months experience had the highest mean score of 5.0. The other employees who agreed included the employees with 1-5 years of experience (3.68 mean score). Those employees with 10-15 years of experience showed a mean score of 3.62. The employees with 20 plus years of experience showed a high mean score of 4.31.

Overall, the responses to Question 1 showed that 40 percent of employees strongly agreed and 30 percent agreed that his/her supervisor was positive and supportive. See Table 4.4.

Table 4.4

Question 1, My supervisor is positive and supportive

Experience	Mean Score	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral
0-6 Months	5.0	100%	0%	0%
1-5 Years	3.68	43%	21%	1%
10-15 Years	3.62	15%	54%	15%
20 + Years	4.31	54%	31%	1%
All Employees	3.89	40%	30%	1%

Question 2 was designed to answer Research Goal 1 and determined what populations felt they were recognized by their supervisor for their success(es). The findings to this question showed a mean score of 3.91, which indicated that all employees agreed with this statement. The population of employees with 0-6 months of social services experience (4.66 mean score) strongly agreed with this statement. Overall, the reponses provided by all employees showed that 40 percent strongly agreed, 21 percent agreed and 14 percent remained neutral. See Table 4.5

Table 4.5

Question 2, S/he recognizes his/her staff for their success(es)

Experience	Mean Score	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral
0-6 Months	4.66	66%	33%	0%
1-5 Years	3.39	36%	11%	14%
10-15 Years	3.69	23%	38%	23%
20 + Years	4.31	62%	23%	1%
All Employees	3.91	40%	21%	14%

Question 3 was designed to answer Research Goal 1 and determined what population of employees was satisfied with their supervisor treating them fairly, with respect and without prejudice. The responses to this statement showed a mean score of 3.84 and indicated that all employees agreed that they were treated fairly, with respect and without prejudice. The population of employees with 0-6 months and 20 plus years experience showed the highest mean scores at 4.66 and 4.23, respectively. Employees with 1-5 years of experience and 10-15 years of experience yielded the lowest mean scores at 3.68 and 3.84. Overall, the responses to Question 3 indicated that 37 percent strongly agreed and 35 percent agreed that their supervisor treated them fairly, with respect and without prejudice. See Table 4.6.

Table 4.6

Question 3, S/he treats his/her staff fairly, with respect and without prejudice

Experience	Mean Score	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral
0-6 Months	4.66	66%	33%	0%
1-5 Years	3.68	39%	25%	1%
10-15 Years	3.84	23%	46%	23%
20 + Years	4.23	38%	46%	15%
All Employees	3.84	37%	35%	11%

Question 4 was designed to answer Research Goal 1 and determined what population of employees was satisfied with their supervisor's ability to appreciate and recognize the unique knowledge, skills and abilities they possess. The findings to this statement showed a mean score of 4.04 and indicated that all employees agreed that they were recognized and appreciated for their knowledge, skills and abilities. The population of employees with 0-6 months experience and 20 plus years of experience had the highest

mean scores at 5.0 and 4.31, respectively. Employees with 1-5 years of experience had the lowest mean score with 3.86. Overall, the responses to Question 4 showed that 46 percent strongly agreed, 23 percent agreed and 25 percent remained neutral regarding whether their supervisor recognized and appreciated their unique knowledge, skills and abilities. See Table 4.7.

Table 4.7

Question 4, S/he recognizes and appreciates the unique knowledge skills and abilities of his/her staff

Experience	Mean Score	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral
0-6 Months	5.0	100%	0%	0%
1-5 Years	3.86	39%	14%	39%
10-15 Years	4.08	38%	38%	15%
20 + Years	4.31	54%	31%	1%
All Employees	4.04	46%	23%	25%

Question 5 was designed to answer Research Goal 1 and determined what population of employees was satisfied with his/her supervisor leading by example. The findings to Question 5 indicated a mean score of 3.71 and indicated that all employees agreed with the fact that his/her supervisor led by example. The population of employees with 10-15 years indicated the lowest mean score of 3.39 falling into the neutral category. The highest mean score of 4.08 was exhibited by the employees with over 20 years of social services experience. Overall, 35 percent of all employees strongly agreed, 25 percent agreed and 21 percent strongly disagreed that his/her supervisor led by example. See Table 4.8.

Table 4.8

Question 5, S/he leads by example

Experience	Mean Score	Strongly Agree	Agree	Strongly Disagree
0-6 Months	4.0	33%	33%	0%
1-5 Years	3.54	36%	21%	18%
10-15 Years	3.39	23%	31%	23%
20 + Years	4.08	46%	23%	15%
All Employees	3.71	35%	25%	21%

Question 6 was designed to answer Research Goal 1 and determined what population of employees was satisfied with the fact that his/her supervisor was readily accessible to discuss problems and issues. The findings to this statement showed a mean score of 3.80 and indicated that all employees agreed that his/her supervisor was readily accessible to discuss problems and/or issues. The population of social services employees with 0-6 months experience showed the highest mean score of 4.66. The lowest mean score was from those employees with 1-5 years of experience and 10-15 years of experience with mean scores of 3.57 and 3.69, respectively. Overall, 33 percent of all employees strongly agreed and 37 percent agreed that his/her supervisor was readily accessible to discuss issues and/or problems that arise. See Table 4.9.

Table 4.9

Statement 6, S/he is readily accessible to discuss problems and/or issues

Experience	Mean Score	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral
0-6 Months	4.66	66%	33%	0%
1-5 Years	3.57	25%	39%	14%
10-15 Years	3.69	31%	38%	0%
20 + Years	4.0	46%	31%	0%
All Employees	3.8	33%	37%	1%

Question 7 was designed to answer research goal number 1 and determined what populations of employees was satisfied with his/her supervisor's demonstrated expertise in his/her functional areas of the agency. The findings to statement 7 showed a mean score of 3.97 and indicated that all employees agreed that his/her supervisor demonstrated expertise in his/her functional areas of the agency. The lowest mean score of 3.38 was from employees with 10-15 years of experience. Overall, 42 percent strongly agreed and 25 percent agreed that his/her supervisor demonstrated expertise in his/her functional area within the agency. See Table 4.10.

Table 4.10

Question 7, S/he demonstrates expertise in his/her functional areas of the agency

Experience	Mean Score	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral
0-6 Months	4.66	66%	33%	0%
1-5 Years	3.82	46%	14%	18%
10-15 Years	3.38	23%	23%	31%
20 + Years	4.38	38%	46%	1%
All Employees	3.97	42%	25%	18%

Question 8 was designed to answer Research Goal 1 and determined what population of employees was satisfied with the notion that his/her supervisor developed effective and realistic plans. The findings of this statement showed a mean score for all employees of 3.79 and agreed that supervisors developed effective and realistic plans for the agency. Employees with 0-6 months experience and 20 plus years experience has the highest mean scores with 4.66 and 4.15, respectively. The lowest mean scores were the responses from the employees with 1-5 years experience (3.5) and 10-15 years experience (3.54). Overall, 26 percent of all employees strongly agreed, 37 percent

agreed and 23 percent remained neutral when they responded to Question 8. See Table 4.11.

Table 4.11

Question 8, S/he develops effective and realistic plans

Experience	Mean Score	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral
0-6 Months	4.66	66%	33%	0%
1-5 Years	3.5	21%	36%	14%
10-15 Years	3.54	15%	31%	46%
20 + Years	4.15	38%	38%	23%
All Employees	3.79	26%	37%	23%

Question 9 was designed to answer Research Goals 1 and 2 and determined what population of employees was satisfied with how his/her supervisor adapted to new ideas and/or suggestions. The findings to this statement showed an overall mean score of 3.89 and indicated that all employees agreed that their supervisor easily adapted to new ideas and/or suggestions. The highest mean scores were from employees with 0-6 months experience (4.33) and those with 20 plus years experience (4.08). The lowest mean score of 3.62 was exhibited by those employees with 10-15 years experience. Overall, 33 percent of all employees strongly agreed, 33 percent agreed and 15 percent remained neutral in responding to how well his/her supervisor adapts to new ideas and/or suggestions. See Table 4.12.

Table 4.12

Question 9, S/he adapts easily to new ideas and/or suggestions

Experience	Mean Score	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral
0-6 Months	4,33	66%	0%	33%
1-5 Years	3.89	32%	36%	21%
10-15 Years	3.62	23%	31%	31%
20 + Years	4.08	38%	38%	15%
All Employees	3.89	33%	33%	15%

Question 10 was designed to answer Research Goal 2 and to determine what population of employees was satisfied with his/her supervisor's ability to be ethical and trustworthy. The findings to this statement showed a mean score of 4.1 for all employees and indicated that employees agreed that his/her supervisor was ethical and trustworthy. The highest mean scores were from employees with 0-6 months experience (5.0) and employees with over 20 years experience (4.62). Overall, 51 percent of all employees strongly agreed and 25 percent of all employees agreed that his/her supervisor is ethical and trustworthy. See Table 4.13.

Table 4.13

Question 10, S/he is ethical and trustworthy

Experience	Mean Score	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral
0-6 Months	5	100%	0%	0%
1-5 Years	3.71	43%	25%	11%
10-15 Years	4	46%	15%	31%
20 + Years	4.62	62%	38%	0%
All Employees	4.10	51%	25%	12%

Question 11 was designed to answer Research Goal 2 and to determine the population of employees was satisfied with whether his/her supervisor held staff accountable for their decisions and actions. The overall mean score for all employees was 4.02 and indicated that employees agreed that his/her supervisor held staff accountable for their decisions and actions. The populations of employees with the highest mean scores were those with 0-6 months experience (4.66) and 20 plus years of experience (4.15). Overall, 37 percent of all employees strongly agreed and 33 percent agreed supervisors held staff accountable for their decisions and actions. See Table 4.15.

Table 4.14

Question 11, S/he holds staff accountable for their decisions and actions

Experience	Mean Score	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral
0-6 Months	4.66	66%	33%	0%
1-5 Years	3.89	32%	32%	28%
10-15 Years	3.92	38%	31%	15%
20 + Years	4.15	38%	38%	23%
All Employees	4.02	37%	33%	23%

Question 12 was designed to answer Research Goal 2 and to determine which population of employees felt that his/her supervisor supported the efforts of his/her staff to innovate and take risks. The findings of this statement showed a mean scoring of 3.71 and indicated that employees agreed that his/her supervisor supports the efforts of his/her staff to innovate and take risks. The highest mean score of employees was 5.0 from employees with 0-6 months experience. The lowest mean score of 3.38 came from those with 10-15 years experience. Overall, 25 percent of all employees strongly agreed, 32

percent agreed and 14 percent strongly disagreed that his/her supervisor supported the efforts of his/her staff to innovate and take risks. See Table 4.15.

Table 4.15

Question 12, S/he supports the efforts of his/her staff to innovate and take risks

Experience	Mean Score	Strongly Agree	Agree	Strongly Disagree
0-6 Months	5	100%	0%	0%
1-5 Years	3.54	25%	26%	14%
10-15 Years	3.38	1%	38%	15%
20 + Years	3.92	31%	38%	15%
All Employees	3.71	25%	32%	14%

Question 13 was designed to answer Research Goals 2 and 3 and to determine employees' attitudes toward their supervisor's effort to seek feedback from direct reports and peers. The findings of this statement showed a mean score of 3.97 and indicated that employees agreed that his/her supervisor sought feedback from direct reports and peers. The highest mean scores were among those employees with 0-6 months experience (5.0) and 20 plus years experience (4.38). Overall, 35 percent of all employees strongly agreed and 36 percent agreed that his/her supervisor made an effort to seek feedback from direct reports and peers. See Table 4.16.

Table 4.16

Question 13, S/he seeks feedback from direct reports and peers

Experience	Mean Score	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral
0-6 Months	5	100%	0%	0%
1-5 Years	3.93	32%	39%	18%
10-15 Years	3.54	15%	38%	31%
20 + Years	4.38	46%	46%	1%
All Employees	3.97	35%	36%	18%

Question 14 was designed to answer Research Goals 1 and 2 and to determine what population of employees was satisfied with his/her supervisor following through on commitments. The findings to this statement showed a mean score of 3.97 and indicated that employees agreed with their supervisor's ability to follow through on commitments. The highest mean scores were from those with 0-6 months experience (5.0) and 20 plus years experience (4.34). The lowest mean scores were from employees with 10-15 years experience. Overall, 37 percent of all employees strongly agreed and 35 percent agreed that his/her supervisor followed through on commitments. See Table 4.17

Table 4.17

Question 14, S/he follows through on commitments

Experience	Mean Score	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral
0-6 Months	5	100%	0%	0%
1-5 Years	3.75	36%	32%	11%
10-15 Years	3.54	15%	38%	38%
20 + Years	4.34	46%	46%	1%
All Employees	3.97	37%	35%	16%

Question 15 was designed to answer Research Goals 2 and 3 and to determine what population of employees was satisfied with his/her supervisor standing firm when

needed. The findings of this statement showed a mean score of 3.75 and indicated that employees agreed with their supervisor's ability to stand firm when needed. The highest mean scores were from employees with 0-6 months experience (5.0) and 20 plus years experience (4.33). The lowest mean score was shown by employees with 10-15 years social services experience (3.5). Overall, 39 percent of all employees strongly agreed, 25 percent agreed and an additional 23 percent remained neutral in regards to their supervisor's ability to stand firm when needed. See Table 4.18.

Table 4.18

Question 15, S/he stands firm when needed

Experience	Mean Score	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral
0-6 Months	5	100%	0%	0%
1-5 Years	3.79	39%	18%	29%
10-15 Years	3.5	15%	38%	23%
20 + Years	4.33	38%	31%	15%
All Employees	3.75	39%	25%	23%

Question 16 was designed to answer Research Goal 3 and to determine what population of employees was satisfied with their supervisor's ability to tell the truth. The findings of this statement showed a mean score of 4.14 and indicated that employees agreed his/her supervisor told the truth. The highest mean score was from employees with 0-6 months experience (5.0) and those with 20 plus years experience (4.58). The mean score was even at 3.83 for those with 1-5 years and 10-15 years experience. Overall, 49 percent strongly agreed and 23 percent agreed that his his/her supervisor told the truth. See Table 4.19.

Table 4.19

Question 16, S/he tells the truth

Experience	Mean Score	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral
0-6 Months	5	100%	0%	0%
1-5 Years	3.83	48%	18%	11%
10-15 Years	3.83	38%	23%	15%
20 + Years	4.58	54%	28%	0%
All Employees	4.14	49%	23%	1%

Question 17 was designed to answer Research Goal 3 and to determine what population of employees was satisfied with his/her supervisor maintaining his/her personal energy and drive, even during times of stress and anxiety. The mean score for employees was 3.79 and indicated that employees agreed with the fact that their supervisor maintained personal energy and drive, even during times of stress and anxiety. The highest mean score was those employees with over 20 years experience (4.15). The lowest mean score was 3.38 from employees with 10-15 years experience and indicated neutral feelings. Overall, 35 percent of all employees strongly agreed, 33 percent agreed and 14 percent strongly disagreed that his/her supervisor maintained personal energy and drive, even during times of stress and anxiety. See Table 4.20.

Table 4.20

Question 17, S/he maintains personal energy and drive, even during times of stress and anxiety

Experience	Mean Score	Strongly Agree	Agree	Strongly Disagree
0-6 Months	4.0	66%	0%	33%
1-5 Years	3.86	38%	34%	17%
10-15 Years	3.38	23%	23%	23%
20 + Years	4.15	38%	46%	15%
All Employees	3.79	35%	33%	14%

Question 18 was designed to answer Research Goal 3 and to determine if employees felt that their supervisor provided employees opportunities for development through training and on-the-job experiences. The findings of this statement showed a mean score of 4.14 and indicated that employees agreed they received opportunities for development through training or on-the-job experiences. The highest mean score was from employees with 0-6 months experience (5.0) and those with 20 plus years experience (4.38). The lowest mean score was 3.69 from employees with 10-15 years experience. Overall, 46 percent strongly agreed and 26 percent agreed that their supervisor provided opportunities for development through training and/or on-the-job experiences. See Table 4.21.

Table 4.21

Question 18, S/he provides opportunities for development through training
or on-the-job experiences

Experience	Mean Score	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral
0-6 Months	5	100%	0%	0%
1-5 Years	4.04	50%	18%	18%
10-15 Years	3.69	31%	31%	2%
20 + Years	4.38	46%	46%	1%
All Employees	4.14	46%	26%	16%

Question 19 was designed to answer Research Goal 3 and to determine what population of employees was satisfied with his/her supervisor showing interest in and concern for his/her staff. The mean score of employees' responses was 4.29 and indicated that employees agreed that his/her supervisor showed interest and concern for his/her staff. The highest mean scores were from those employees with 0-6 months experience (5.0) and 20 plus years experience (4.69). Overall, 58 percent of all employees strongly agreed and 31 percent agreed that his/her supervisor showed interest in and concern for his/her staff. See Table 4.22.

Table 4.22

Question 19, S/he shows interest in and concern for his/her staff

Experience	Mean Score	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral
0-6 Months	5	100%	0%	0%
1-5 Years	4.07	54%	14%	21%
10-15 Years	4.07	21%	31%	1%
20 + Years	4.69	69%	31%	0%
All Employees	4.29	58%	21%	11%

Question 20 was designed to answer Research Goal 3 and to determine what population of employees was satisfied with their supervisor's vision for the agency. The mean score for employees was 3.71 and indicated that employees agreed with their supervisor's vision for the agency. The highest mean score was from those employees with 0-6 months experience (4.33). The lowest mean score of 3.53 came from those employees with 1-5 years experience. Overall, 32 percent of all employees strongly agreed and 32 percent agreed that his/her supervisor has a vision for the agency. See Table 4.23.

Table 4.23

Question 20, S/he has a vision for the future of the agency

Experience	Mean Score	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral
0-6 Months	4.33	66%	0%	33%
1-5 Years	3.53	25%	21%	43%
10-15 Years	3.69	23%	54%	1%
20 + Years	4.15	38%	38%	1%
All Employees	3.71	32%	32%	23%

Summary

This chapter presented the responses provided on the survey regarding the effectiveness of 360-degree feedback within Shenandoah Valley Social Services. The mean scoring values described each employee's response based on the number of months or years the person has been employed at the agency; the mean scoring values also were used to determine the three research goals of the study. Chapter V provides information on the conclusions and future recommendations in further detail for this study.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The problem of this research study was to understand and evaluate employees' attitudes toward supervision through a 360-degree feedback exercise within Shenandoah Valley Social Services. A summary of this study is explained in this section along with conclusions and recommendations for conducting this study. The purpose of conducting this study was to show employees feelings toward management and how employees honestly felt about the way in which they were supervised.

Summary

This research described the importance of employees rating his/her supervisor. Within organizations many employees are never given the opportunity to evaluate the way in which they are managed. Oftentimes, it is the supervisors doing the evaluating. This type of feedback gave employees a chance to express their feelings and attitudes toward their supervisors. There seemed to be a great need to conduct this study since it was noted the agency suffered from a low morale. It was noted in the assumptions section that a shift in management may have resulted in different attitudes toward supervision. This research study aimed to answer three very important research goals. They were as follow:

1. Will participation in 360-degree feedback within the organizational structure enhance supervisor and subordinate relationships?

- 2. Does the absence of 360-degree feedback or peer evaluations prove to be a negative or a positive indicator of employee performance?
- 3. When employees complete evaluations of their supervisors will it open future discussions between supervisor and subordinate?

This study noted that it was limited by the fact that the research was restricted to just one agency within the Shenandoah Valley in Commonwealth of Virginia's Social Services system. Also, the employees have had varied backgrounds within the human services field. Other limitations included the fact that the research period and time frame was limited to June 2007 to August 2007. The research was a comparison of perspectives and it was objective in nature, limiting its results.

It was the researcher's goal to determine whether employees were satisfied with his/her supervisor. The participants selected for this study included 125 full-time employees at Shenandoah Valley Social Services during June 2007. The participants were categorized by their years of employment within the agency. The categories included those with 0-6 months experience, 1-5 years experience, 10-15 years of experience and 20 plus years of experience. The participants had varied backgrounds and also worked in different areas of VDSS (e.g., APS, CPS, Foster Care, Administration, etc.).

The researcher received 70, completed surveys. Three surveys were submitted from those employees with 0-6 months experience for one percent of total surveys received. Those employees with 1-5 years of social services experience accounted for 41 percent of surveys received. Employees with 10-15 years of experience added 36 percent. Lastly, 19 percent of surveys were submitted by employees with over 20 years

of social services experience. The overall return rate for surveys was 56 percent for all employees who choose to participate. The data were used to determine employees' attitudes toward his/her supervision within the agency.

The 5-point Likert scale ratings for each of the statements provided ranged from 1, strongly disagree, to 5, strongly agree. The mean scoring values were shown according to each employee's years of service with the agency. The mean scoring values were shown for each statement as well as the percentage values for each statement. An analysis of each research goal is explained in the conclusions.

Conclusion

The researcher aimed to analyze three research goals in this study. Research Goal 1 of this study asked, "Will participation in 360-degree feedback within the organizational structure enhance supervisor and subordinate relationships?" The results of this study determined that 37 percent of employees strongly agreed with the statements. Twenty-nine percent of employees agreed. Another 14 percent of total employees remained neutral. The mean scoring value for all employees was 3.87. Judging by the results, it can be concluded that employees' participation in 360-degree improved supervisor and subordinate relationships; furthermore, it appears that employees already felt strongly that relationships are "good."

Research Goal 2 asked, "Does the absence of 360-degree feedback or peer evaluations prove to be a negative or a positive indicator of employee performance?"

From the responses, 35 percent of employees agreed with the statements provided.

Thirty-three percent of employees agreed with the statements. The remaining 17 percent

remained neutral in response to the statements. The mean scoring value was 3.92. The results show that this instrument was a positive indicator of employee performance.

Research Goal 3 asked, "When employees complete evaluations of their supervisors, will it open future discussions between supervisor and subordinate?" The results of these statements showed that 42 percent of employees strongly agreed with the statements. Twenty-eight percent of employees agreed with the statements. Another 15 percent remained neutral. The mean scoring value for these statements was 3.97.

Research Goal 3 yielded the highest mean scoring value indicating that this form of feedback will open future discussions between supervisor and subordinate. The absence of this type of feedback was obviously not a major issue, but it showed that employees were satisfied with the type of feedback they currently give and receive.

It was found that most employees at least agreed with the statements which were provided. Those employees with 0-6 months experience and 20 plus years of experience showed the most favorable responses to the statements. Employees with 1-5 years of social services experience showed the most variance in their responses. Employees with 10-15 years of experience remained consistent with their responses.

Recommendations

Based on the results of this study, the researcher believed the some recommendations should be considered when doing this research in the future.

Supervisors should give direct feedback to employees. This would allow the supervisor the opportunity to communicate openly with the employee and share new ideas, concepts and any issues the employee may be facing. The feedback exercise should be given once

new management has been in place at least a year or longer. The researcher believed that if the survey was given at a later time, the responses would have been more varied. The feedback exercise should be given to upper management and also evaluated from the bottom up. This would allow for management to respond to their employees more efficiently. Also, the director would have more of a chance to see what his/her middle managers are doing and provide a chance for middle managers to rate the director more effectively.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A. Sample of the Survey Questionnaire

APPENDIX B. Sample of the Cover Letter

APPENDIX C. Sample of the Participant Letter

APPENDIX A

Sample of Survey Questionnaire

Survey of the Effectiveness of 360-degree Feedback within Shenandoah Valley Social Services

<u>Purpose</u>: This purpose of this research survey is to study and evaluate employees' attitudes toward supervision through 360-degree feedback exercise within Shenandoah Valley Social Services.

<u>Directions:</u> For Questions one (1) and two (2), please check the answer that corresponds to your current position within the agency by checking "Yes" or "No." For Question three (3) (where applicable) please provide a numerical percentage between 0-100 percent. For question four (4), please check the block that corresponds to your current time of employment with the agency.

All Responses will Remain Confidential

1. Are you a current supervisor within Shenandoah Valley Social Services?
Yes No No
If you answered "No" to the previous question, please skip ahead to Question Numbe 4.
2. If you answered "Yes" to the previous question, is your position, for the most part, considered on-site? Check N/A if not applicable to your position.
Yes No No N/A
3. What percentage of your position (if a current supervisor) would you say is "on-site?" (Please feel free to <i>estimate</i> if appropriate) (0-100%)
4. How long have you been employed with Shenandoah Valley Social Services?
0-6 months

<u>Additional Directions:</u> For the following 20 statements, please circle the most appropriate answer. The scale ranges from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree).

Please be completely honest when rating your current supervisor. It is important that this survey measures what it is intended to measure. Without honest answers, it will not be valid or effective in creating positive change within the agency.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree		
1	2	3	4	5		
1. My supervisor	is positive and sup	portive.		1 2 3 4 5		
2. S/he recognizes	s his/her staff for th	neir success(es).		1 2 3 4 5		
3. S/he treats his/l	1 2 3 4 5					
4. S/he recognizes skills and abilities		recognizes the uniq	ue knowledge,	1 2 3 4 5		
5. S/he leads by e	xample.			1 2 3 4 5		
6. S/he is readily	accessible to discus	ss problems and/or	issues.	1 2 3 4 5		
7. S/he demonstra	ites expertise in his	her functional area	as of the agency.	1 2 3 4 5		
8. S/he develops e	effective and realist	tic plans.		1 2 3 4 5		
9. S/he adapts eas	ily to new ideas an	d/or suggestions.		1 2 3 4 5		
10. S/he is ethical	1 2 3 4 5					
11. S/he holds his	1 2 3 4 5					
12. S/he supports	1 2 3 4 5					
13. S/he seeks fee	1 2 3 4 5					
14. S/he follows t	1 2 3 4 5					
15. S/he stands fir	rm when needed.			1 2 3 4 5		
16. S/he tells the	16. S/he tells the truth.					
17. S/he maintain stress and anxiety		and drive, even duri	ing times of	1 2 3 4 5		
18. S/he gives em training or on-the		ties for developmen	t through	1 2 3 4 5		
19. S/he shows in	terest in and conce	rn for his/her staff.	····	1 2 3 4 5		
20. S/he has a vis	ion for the future o	f the agency.		1 2 3 4 5		

Please place completed survey in envelope provided and place in appropriate drop box within the agency.

Thank you for your participation in this survey.

APPENDIX B

Sample of Cover Letter

April 22, 2007

Ms. Elizabeth Middleton Department Director Shenandoah Valley Social Services 1200 Shenandoah Avenue Waynesboro, Virginia 22980

Dear Ms. Middleton:

I am currently a graduate student at Old Dominion University studying Occupational and Technical Studies. I am writing to request permission from this agency to conduct a survey to aid in the completion of my research/problems paper as a requirement for my major.

I need your permission to conduct a survey on the attitudes of employees toward supervision within the agency. Surveys will be distributed to all employees and confidentiality will be of the utmost importance in obtaining the results needed.

I feel this project will not only be beneficial in helping me obtain my needed research materials, but it could also be beneficial to the agency as a whole. The use of 360-degree feedback (or upward feedback) is an emerging instrument in the field of human resources to gauge overall feelings from employees regarding such as issues as availability of supervisors, lack of communication within the agency, etc.

I would appreciate your approval of this survey to be distributed within the agency. The tentative dates for distribution and collection of surveys will be June 4, 2007 through June 8, 2007.

Your consideration is greatly appreciated.

Respectfully submitted,

Brian Dotson Graduate Student Old Dominion University

APPENDIX C

Sample of Survey Participant Letter

June 4, 2007

Shenandoah Valley Social Services 68 Dick Huff Lane/1200 Shenandoah Avenue Verona, Virginia 24482/Waynesboro, Virginia 22980

Dear Fellow Co-Workers:

The following attached survey is a research project being conducted by a graduate student at Old Dominion University and a fellow co-worker at Shenandoah Valley Social Services. The purpose of this research survey is to study and evaluate employees' attitudes toward their supervision through 360-degree feedback exercise within Shenandoah Valley Social Services.

To be able to participate in this survey, you need to be a current, full-time employee of Shenandoah Valley Social Services as of June 4, 2007. Your participation is very important in gauging the feelings of employees toward management within the agency; it will be very beneficial to not only the organization, but to *you* as an employee as well.

All responses provided on this survey will be held in the strictest of confidence and will not be shared with anyone. Please answer the questions as accurately as possible. It is important to realize that your honest opinions are crucial in helping us to improve supervision within the agency and to me as the researcher conducting the study.

Please place your completed survey in the envelope provided and place in the appropriate drop box within the agency. Thanks so much for participating in this research study!

Thanks.

Brian Dotson Graduate Student Old Dominion University

Enc: Survey