

Florida Extension Agents' Perceived Level Of Trust With Their County Extension Director

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Need For Research

Introduction

- County agents implement the mission of the Cooperative Extension Service by providing practical and situational education to localized communities
- County Extension Directors (CEDs) are responsible for their own programming, and have local leadership and administrative responsibilities
- Trust was defined as “the willingness of a party (the trustor) to be vulnerable to the actions of another party (the trustee) based on the expectation that the trustee will perform a particular action important to the trustor, irrespective of the ability to monitor and control the other party”
- Trust has been listed as a necessary leadership competency in both the leadership and Extension literature

Purpose

- The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of trust antecedents between Florida extension agents and CEDs.

Methodology

The objectives of this study were to:

- describe the level of trust between Florida Extension agents and CEDs
- determine if significant differences existed between trust antecedents and participant characteristics
- determine if significant relationships existed between trust antecedents and participant characteristics

A quantitative study was used to meet the objectives.

The Trust in Leaders Scale (TLS) measures for trust between leaders and followers through four constructs: (a) competence, (b) integrity, (c) benevolence, and (d) predictability. Six demographic questions were added to the TLS and it was then distributed to the population of interest, County agents that report to a CED.

Findings and Recommendations

Findings

- Participants tended to feel moderately trusted by their CED across all four trust antecedents
- There were no statistically significant differences or correlations between the trust antecedents and participant demographic characteristics

Recommendations

- Include trust/trusting measurement in Extension leadership hiring practices
- Leadership development specialists should be encouraged to provide leadership trainings on the trust competency to both new and seasoned Extension leadership
- A qualitative study would benefit the Extension leadership literature by identifying how strong and weak trust relationships cultivate over time