

The U.S. Space Force: Mediating Factors for Performance

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Submitted: 2026, Jan 02; Accepted: 2025, Feb 04; Published: 2026, Feb 16

Citation: McGinnis, H. K. H. (2026). The U.S. Space Force: Mediating Factors for Performance. *Space Sci J*, 3(1), 01-13.

Abstract

There is currently little published literature because the Space Force is still in its preliminary stages, developing the elements that characterize an organization [1]. There are no quantitative performance studies; thus, the evidence is anecdotal. Currently, studies focus on technical integration rather than organizational or human integration. Many researchers believe that understanding the interdependent relationships among motivation, job performance, and job satisfaction is vital for addressing challenges and problems and is pertinent to organizations [2]. This research applied the mediation models of Hayes to survey data from the 2024 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey [3]. Six-factor scores were derived from the 2024 FEVS questions. They are Public Service Motivation, Employee Engagement, Commitment, Resilience, Job Satisfaction, Job Performance, and Leadership. Factor scores are derived from survey items that assess an employee's experience with the organization and its leaders. They are combined into a single factor score for interpretation and/or analysis. The PROCESS macro by Hayes in IBM SPSS Statistics version 30.0 estimates coefficients in mediation models and provides modern inferential methods for indirect effects, including bootstrap confidence intervals. In an intervening-variable model, variable X is posited to affect an outcome variable Y via one or more intervening variables, also called mediators [3]. Four mediation models were applied in this research: the relationship between resilience and job performance was mediated by job satisfaction and work engagement; whether work-life balance mediates the relationship between leadership and job satisfaction; if satisfaction and engagement were statistically significant mediators of the relationship between resilience and job performance, and whether public service motivation was a statistically significant mediator of the relationship between work engagement and job performance.

Keywords: U.S. Space Force, Mediation Analysis, FEVS Survey, Job Satisfaction, Job Performance, Resilience, Public Service Motivation, Commitment, Leadership, Work-Life Balance

1. Introduction to the U.S. Space Force

Rather than considering space solely from a scientific or exploratory standpoint, U.S. policymakers should adopt a strategic perspective that inspires a sense of purpose. There is a widely held belief in the U.S., the media, and the public that a human space race between China and the USA is either already underway or inevitable (p. 240). Then, what should be the structure of the U.S. defense establishment in space? The Commission to Assess United States National Security Space Management and Organization, also known as the "Space Commission," was established by Congress to answer this question. It consisted of 13 senior former military personnel, including several from the Air Force, as well

as former civilian defense officials [4]. A distinct military space profession was warranted by the space domain's heightened strategic relevance, which also influences organizational culture and enhances operational effectiveness, thereby justifying a separate military space service [5].

The U.S. Space Force (USSF), a new branch of the U.S. government, was founded on December 20, 2019. The Secretary of the Air Force oversees the new USSF, which is a division of the Department of the Air Force. Within the Department of Defense (DoD) are the USSF and the Air Force. "Guardians" is the term used to describe USSF members [4].

2. The Organizational Culture and Commitment of the Space Force

According to RAND researchers, the Space Force requires greater funding and a stronger warfighting culture to prepare for space warfare. However, it lacks the force structure, strategic clarity, and resources necessary to challenge China effectively.

In addition to the Air Force, which now has 16,000 personnel, the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, and civilians constitute a sizable share of the military workforce in occupations such as space operations, cyber intelligence, and engineering [1]. The Space Force manages ground systems, links (the area between ground systems and satellites), and space assets (like satellites) [1].

The Space Force is still developing its internal culture, standards, and identity as a new branch. Recruitment, retention, creativity, and preparedness are all affected by culture. The research now available shows mixed but improving involvement, motivated by strong values and identification with the mission, which can inspire confidence. According to RAND, the Force's strengths include a clear sense of identity and mission, strong motivation, and a desire to establish a future-focused culture. Culture will "affect outcomes," according to RAND, and the Space Force could intentionally create a high-performance workplace. The USSF's separation as a distinct military branch enabled the development of a new identity and set of values that represented unprecedented levels of empowerment and independence for the Guardian [6]. The Space Force needs skilled, ethical, and customer-focused space professionals who embody the hallmarks of the space profession to execute the strategic concept [5].

There is currently little published literature because the Space Force is still in its preliminary stages, developing the elements that characterize an organization (culture, values, and training requirements) [1]. There are no quantitative performance studies; thus, the evidence is anecdotal. This lack of data may cause uncertainty, highlighting the need for systematic empirical research. Currently, studies focus on technical integration rather than organizational or human integration. Deep empirical research is necessary, including systematic surveys of employee motivation, commitment, burnout, satisfaction, and perceived leadership styles, to foster trust and credibility with the audience.

Independence and mastery are enhanced in a culture that genuinely encourages experimentation and learning; if innovation rhetoric is not accompanied by a willingness to accept failure, motivational dissonance and dissatisfaction may result. In addition to avoiding the conflicts of interest that arise in other services that have long neglected space programs, the Space Force is required to cultivate a strong cadre of space experts capable of creating spacecentric strategy and doctrine [7]. Leaders will need to determine the qualities and abilities they wish to instill in their own leaders through space operations education as the Space Force grows at the organizational level [1]. According to Currie et al and Jacobson, the necessary abilities are "to effectively lead units, solve problems, be more adaptive, and be more autonomous in decision making" [8].

Strong internal values and high emotional intelligence are common traits of successful leaders, enabling them to inspire followers to act in the greater good and to communicate effectively. The transformational leadership concept has been taught by the USAF since 2011 [9]. According to Amit, "[e]xperiences impact self-perception as a leader, the development of self-efficacy in leadership, and the accumulation of psychological and behavioral knowledge related to the manifestation of leadership" (p. 308) [10].

Organizational culture is affected, and a lack of structure hampers effective and efficient management, shared standards, and managerial procedures [11]. The integration of information to counter increasing space threats is not enabled by organizational architecture, culture, leadership hierarchy, or customer-focused initiatives [12-16].

Meyer and Maltin define commitment as "a force that binds an individual to a target and to a course of action of relevance to that target" (p. 324). According to Alnıçık et al, there is a clear correlation between employees' organizational commitment and their motivation [17]. Recent research shows that employees' performance and commitment are directly correlated, underscoring the importance of the USSF hiring and keeping Guardians with a fervent desire to serve [18,19].

As custodians of the national space system, individual space professionals are highly dedicated, capable, and effective [20]. By uniting talent and effort under a single leadership structure with the same goal, the USSF transition fostered constructive interaction [20].

3. Factors in Public Organizations and Mediators

Many researchers believe that understanding the interdependent relationships among motivation, job performance, and job satisfaction is important for addressing challenges and problems and is pertinent to organizations [2].

3.1. Motivation for Public Service

According to the literature on public administration, individual performance is positively affected by public service motivation [21]. Perry & Hondeghem defined public service motivation (PSM) as "an individual's predisposition to respond to motives grounded primarily or uniquely in public institutions and organizations [22]." Perry and Perry & Wise define PSM as an individual's propensity to respond to motivations rooted in public institutions and organizations; this definition is used to explain the motivation of public employees. Research has shown that public service motivation enhances the performance of public-sector organizations [23-26].

The mechanisms by which PSM mediates specific organizational characteristics warrant further research [21]. According to the fundamental principle of public service motivation, workers with greater PSM levels outperform those with lower levels [27].

Studies have proved that additional financial incentives are less likely to encourage government personnel [21]. Instead, when their activity directly advances the organization's objective, they are motivated to serve the public [28]. Although there was no statistically significant moderating effect, Shahzad et al discovered a positive and significant mediating effect of public service motivation on employee engagement and job performance (p. 97) [29]. According to public service motivation theory, it is favorably associated with work attitudes and behaviors. Workers who are more motivated to serve the public exhibit higher levels of organizational commitment and job satisfaction [30]. In fact, the indirect effects of public-sector employees' public service motivation on their job satisfaction can be strengthened or weakened by mediating variables, such as person organization fit, organizational characteristics, and departmental variance, as other studies have shown [31].

Through job engagement and organizational commitment, public service motivation influences public-sector personnel's work attitudes both directly and indirectly assessed mediating and indirect effects using bootstrapping and SEM. Through work involvement, public service motivation had a statistically significant indirect impact on job satisfaction [30].

3.2. Organizational Commitment

According to Bagis et al, "organizational commitment is a passionate desire to be a group member, a strong desire to work for the company, a particular conviction, and approval of the organization's principles and objectives" (p. 541). Since commitment is commonly regarded as a sign of a high-performing workforce, many studies have examined its antecedents, including organizational characteristics, leadership practices, and individual traits [32-35].

Positive work outcomes are mediated by work engagement, according to substantial evidence [36]. Commitment and work engagement are directly positively correlated, and work engagement mediates this link [37].

3.3. Job Satisfaction

Employee retention and long-term commitment are strongly influenced by job satisfaction [38]. Examples of workplace attitudes and cognitive constructs include low turnover intention and job satisfaction [39-41]. As a result of prior experiences and events, satisfaction serves as a gauge of "organizational and personal well-being" [42]. Low job satisfaction is associated with low employee engagement, and both are detrimental to job performance. Through the mediating effect of job satisfaction, Bagis found that organizational culture positively affected organizational commitment (p. 545) [32,43,44]. "Creating a climate that keeps employees' content is crucial, although they should not be expected to accomplish more than is necessary. They are therefore prepared to put in more work to assist the organization in achieving its objective" [45].

3.4. Employee Engagement

Employee engagement and job performance have been shown to positively correlate in other studies [46-50]. Employees who feel empowered are more likely to be proactive, creative, and/or innovative, and to be concerned about advancing and expanding their organizations [51]. Employee performance is influenced by job satisfaction and engagement, and many government agencies regard employee engagement as critical to organizational success [44,52]. Russell-Pringle provided empirical evidence on the relationships among employee engagement, public service motivation, trust in leadership, and perceptions of leadership communication and effectiveness (p. 107) [53]. She found significant correlations among federal employees between employee engagement and leadership communication and effectiveness; public service motivation and employee engagement; and trust in leadership and employee engagement [53].

3.5. Job Performance

Shahzad et al warn that it is crucial to investigate the extent to which public service motivation and employee engagement promote employee job performance through comparable processes [29]. Employee job performance is influenced by both intrinsic and extrinsic motivators, which significantly affect job satisfaction [54,55]. Achievement, acknowledgment, the task itself, accountability, progress, and the potential for development are the motivating elements [56,57]. By shaping employees' views of organizational performance and the purpose of their work, organizational leaders can influence employee performance. A leader's ability to adapt to different situations and their capacity to do so are necessary for employee success [45]. Shellow's study investigated the relationships among federal employees' job satisfaction, employee engagement, and performance [45]. Employee performance was not directly affected by job satisfaction. A Sobel test revealed that the relationship between job satisfaction and employee performance was mediated by employee involvement [45]. To improve employee performance, job satisfaction, and employee engagement are essential. According to federal agencies, effective organizational performance depends on employee involvement [52].

3.6. Leadership in Public Organizations

Effective leaders in the public sector foster an environment conducive to innovation, motivate their staff to identify new and more efficient ways to complete work, and take the necessary actions to implement organizational change successfully [58]. The 2013 FEVS, conducted by the U.S. Office of Personnel Management, provided the data used to evaluate the assumptions in Min et al. [29]. The authors found positive correlations between employees' creative tendencies and leadership in the public sector, and between an engaging organizational leadership style and employees' creative tendencies, with employee empowerment partially mediating these relationships. The findings show that the four different measures of empowerment mediated the relationship between leadership factors and creative tendency. This suggests that leaders can enhance employees' creative tendencies by employing empowerment mechanisms, such as power sharing, and

by investing in their work products.

According to the study's findings, workers are more satisfied with their jobs when they perceive that their supervisors are respected. Workers favor a leader who provides the information they need to understand how organizational performance affects their job satisfaction [38].

Further study is needed to elucidate the relationship between specific leadership qualities and employee engagement in the federal government, despite extensive research on these relationships in the private sector [53].

4. Research Design

4.1. Instrumentation: Federal Employment Viewpoint Survey

The purpose of the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS) is to provide agencies with employee input on aspects, including work satisfaction, employee engagement, effectiveness, and perceptions of leadership, that have a significant impact on organizational performance [21,59,60]. The 2024 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS) is the U.S. federal government's largest annual survey of its workforce, administered by the Office of Personnel Management (OPM). It measures how federal employees perceive their workplace, leadership, engagement, satisfaction, and organizational climate. The FEVS helps agencies understand whether conditions that support high performance, engagement, and retention are present.

The 2024 core survey covered topics such as employee engagement, job satisfaction, leadership effectiveness, team environment, performance management, workload and resources, telework and work-life balance, and organizational culture. In 2024, the 112 organizational climate survey items, including demographics, were administered to all federal employees. The FEVS was organized into indices and dimensions to provide a more unified and thematic approach to interpreting the data. The 2024 sample size ensured a 99% chance that the population is within $\pm 1\%$ of the total federal workforce. The total survey population was 1,741,334 employees; after cleaning procedures, including removing individuals who were no longer employed by an agency prior to the survey administration period, the final survey population was 1,645,841 Federal employees.

A thorough evaluation of the empirical application of the FEVS and its usefulness has not yet been adequately addressed in the field of public administration, despite the explosion of published work based on FEVS data over the last ten or so years [61]. Using FEVS data, researchers have published several studies examining topics essential to public administration, including leadership in the public sector, organizational autonomy, creativity, job satisfaction, trust, performance management, and employee empowerment [61]. Resh et al provided the first comprehensive analysis of public management using research employing FEVS data, both for the procedures to follow when examining survey data and for its use in empirical investigations (p. 24). "Sophisticated and policy-relevant models that yield profitable insights into public management

theory and research are being produced (or contributed to) using FEVS data" [61].

The FEVS used a satisfaction index to gauge employee satisfaction. It measures workers' satisfaction with "their job, their pay, their organization, and if they would recommend their organization as a good place to work" [62]. The FEVS's independent variables include work satisfaction and employee engagement, as measured in the 2019 FEVS [45]. Consistent with earlier research, recent studies have used demographics as control variables [63-66].

4.2. Mediation Analysis Design

"Conditional process analysis is used when one's research goal is to describe the conditional nature of the mechanism or mechanisms by which a variable transmits its effect on another and testing hypotheses about such contingent effects" [3].

The PROCESS macro by Hayes in IBM SPSS Statistics version 30.0 estimates coefficients in mediation models and provides modern inferential methods for indirect effects, including bootstrap confidence intervals. In an intervening-variable model, variable X is posited to affect an outcome variable Y via one or more intervening variables, also called mediators. A series of regression models is estimated [3]. To assess for mediation, estimates from three multiple regression equations are used. These are regressing the mediator on the independent variable, regressing the dependent variable on the independent variable, and regressing the dependent variable on both the independent variable and the mediator. For a single- or parallel-mediation model, Hayes recommends using his Model 4 process [3].

There are several paths in a mediation model. Figures 1 through 4 display the direct effect of the independent variable (Path c), the effect of the mediator (Path b), and the path from the independent variable to the mediator (Path a). A variable function as a mediator when variations in the independent variable significantly account for variations in the presumed mediator (Path c), and variations in the mediator significantly account for variations in the dependent variable (Path b). When Paths a and b are controlled, a previously significant relation between independent and dependent variables is no longer significant, with the strongest demonstration of mediation occurring when Path c is zero. A test is to determine if (ab) or the (c path - c') path is statistically significant. The indirect or mediation effect is calculated as $(a*b) = c'$. If $(a*b)$ is significant, then mediation has occurred. When using bootstrapping, 5,000 additional samples are drawn to estimate the population. The distribution of these samples will be approximately normal under the Central Limit Theorem. Then, 95% of the statistics generated will fall between these numbers. If zero is not within the confidence interval (CI), the test is statistically significant at the 0.05 level. The percent mediation effect, PM, is $(ab)/c$, or the percent of the total effect accounted for by the indirect effect.

Six-factor scores were derived from the 2024 FEVS questions. They are Public Service Motivation, Employee Engagement, Commitment, Resilience, Job Satisfaction, Job Performance, and

Leadership. Factor scores are derived from survey items that assess an employee's experience with the organization and its leaders. They are combined into a single factor score for interpretation and/or analysis. The factors and questions are:

Public Service Motivation = Q12 + Q19 + Q21 + Q22 + Q23 + Q26

Employee Engagement = Q2 + Q3 + Q4 + Q6 + Q7

Commitment = DLEAVING

Resilience = Q28 + Q31 + Q42 + Q65

Job Satisfaction = Q46 + Q70 + Q71 + Q72

Job Performance = Q9 + Q10 + Q29 + Q30

Leaders-Lead (Leadership) = Q57 + Q58 + Q59 + Q61 + Q62

4.3. Hypotheses

H₀1.1: Job Satisfaction does not mediate between resilience and job performance.

H_a1.1: Job Satisfaction mediates between resilience and job performance.

H₀1.2: Work engagement does not mediate between resilience and job performance.

H_a1.2: Work engagement mediates between resilience and job performance.

To test both hypotheses (1.1 and 1.2) requires a parallel mediation model. For a single- or parallel-mediation model, Hayes recommends using his Model 4 process [3]. In a parallel mediation model, you have two (or more) mediators, both of which are between the predictor and outcome. There will be two sets of indirect effects: the indirect effect going through the first mediator and the indirect effect going through the second mediator.

The model with two mediators (M1: job satisfaction; M2: work engagement) has two specific indirect effects on resilience to job performance: one through job satisfaction (M1) ($X \rightarrow M1 \rightarrow Y$) and another through work engagement (M2) ($X \rightarrow M2 \rightarrow Y$). In this model, the specific indirect effect of resilience on job performance X on Y through M1 is a_1b_1 , the specific indirect effect of resilience on job performance through M2 is a_2b_2 . The total indirect effect of X on Y is $a_1b_1 + a_2b_2$. As in the simple mediation model, the sum of the direct (c') and indirect effects ($a_1b_1 + a_2b_2$) is the total effect of X (c) [3]. The total effect is calculated as $c = c' + a_1b_1 + a_2b_2$. The total indirect effect of X (i.e., the sum of the specific indirect effects) is the difference between the total and direct effects of X ($c - c' = a_1b_1 + a_2b_2$).

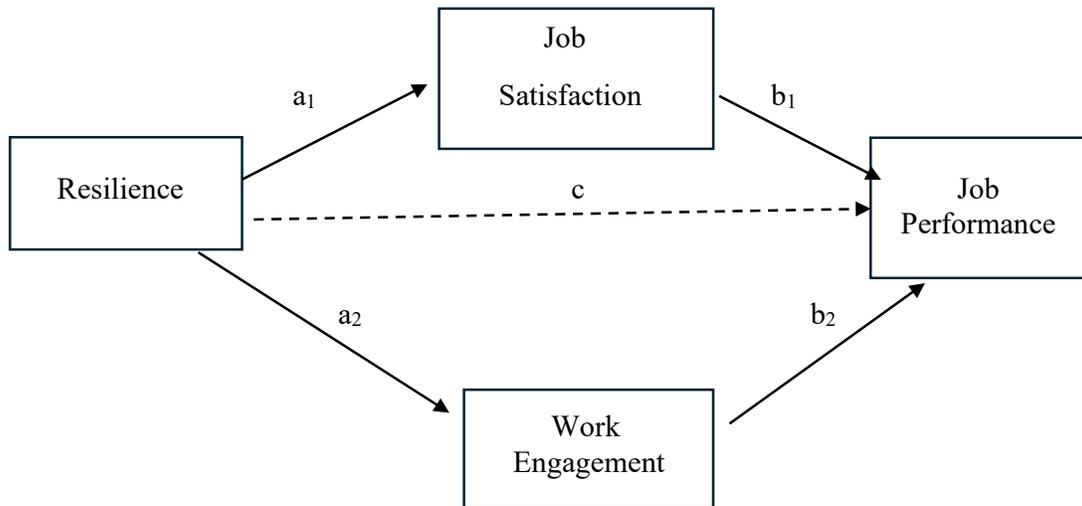


Figure 1: Mediation Model for Hypotheses 1.1 and 1.2

H₀2: Work-life balance does not mediate between leadership and job satisfaction.

H_a2: Work-life balance mediates between leadership and job satisfaction.

This model assumes a simple mediation process in which two causal paths feed into the outcome variable: the direct effect

of leadership on job satisfaction (Path c) and the effect of the mediator, work-life balance, on job satisfaction (Path b). There is a path from the independent variable, leadership, to the mediator, work-life balance (Path a). We want to determine if (ab) or the ($c - c'$) path is statistically significant. The indirect or mediation effect is ($a*b = c'$). If ($a*b$) is significant, then work-life balance mediates the relationship between leadership and job satisfaction.

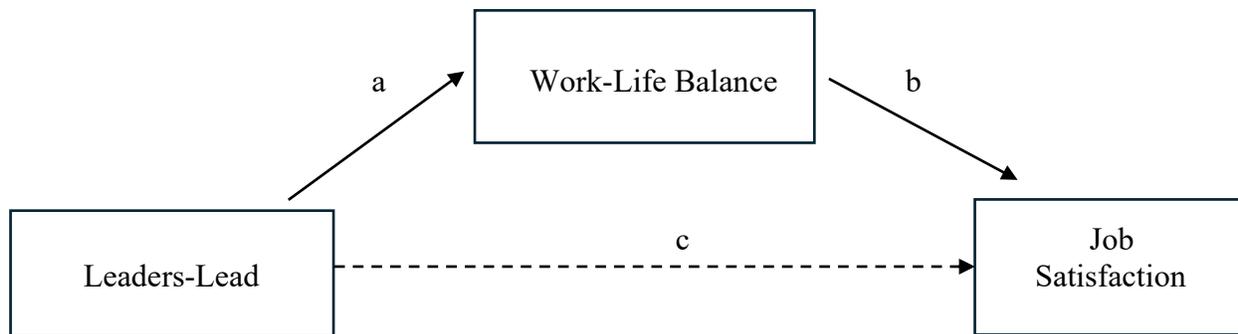


Figure 2: Mediation Model for Hypothesis 2

H₀3.1: Work Engagement does not mediate between public service motivation and job satisfaction.

H_a3.1: Work Engagement mediates between public service motivation and job satisfaction. H03.2: Employee commitment does not mediate between public service motivation and job satisfaction.

H_a3.2: Employee commitment mediates between public service motivation and job satisfaction.

Testing both hypotheses (3.1 and 3.2) requires a parallel mediation model. For a single- or parallel-mediation model, Hayes recommends using his Model 4 process [3]. In a parallel mediation model, there are two (or more) mediators, each linking the predictor (*public service motivation*) to the outcome (*job satisfaction*). There will be two sets of indirect effects: one through the first mediator, *work engagement*, and the other through the second mediator, *employee commitment*.

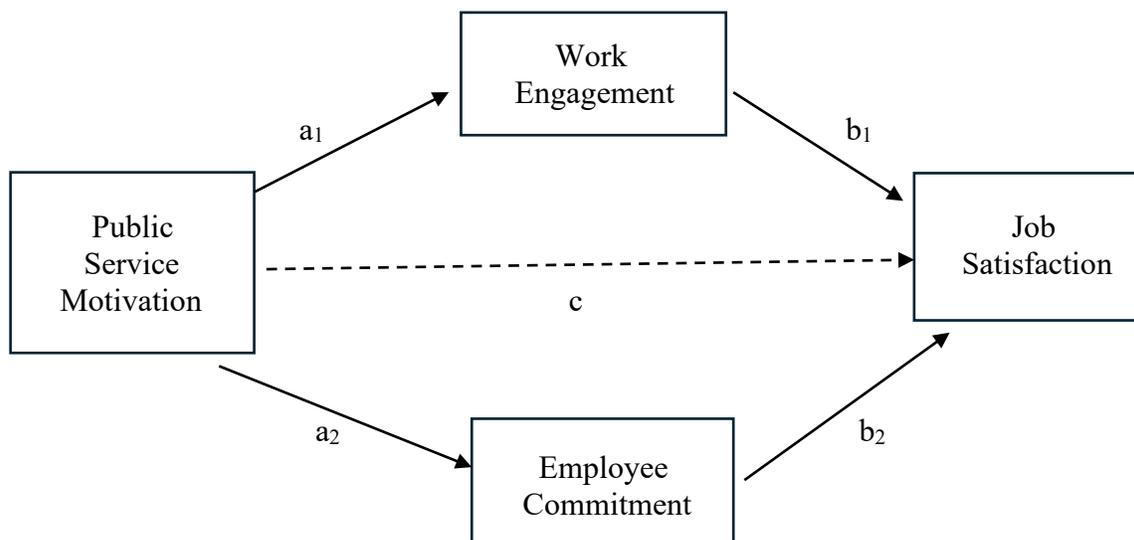


Figure 3: Mediation Model for Hypotheses 3.1 and 3.2

H₀4: Public service motivation does not mediate between employee engagement and job performance.

H_a4: Public service motivation mediates between employee engagement and job performance.

As in hypothesis 2, Hayes Model 4 assumes a simple mediation process in which *employee engagement* links to the mediator, *public service motivation*, and the mediator in turn feeds into the outcome variable, *job performance*.

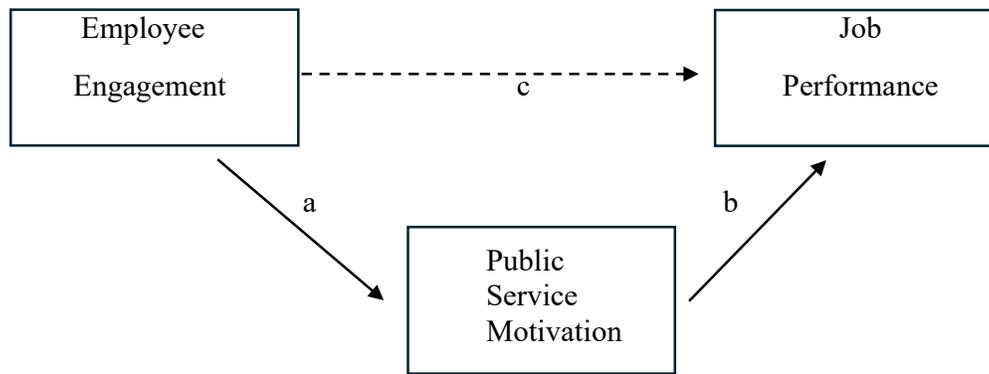


Figure 4: Mediation Model for Hypothesis 4

4.4. Descriptive Statistics

The USSF FEVS data were analyzed using SPSS Version 30.0 software. Nonresponse and system-missing data were excluded from the analysis. The demographics of responding USSF employees included 85.4% White, 8.8% Black, 6.9% Hispanic, 30.2% female, 26.9% with a disability, and over eight in ten (81.9%) employees aged 40 or older. Over one in four (27.8%) were supervisors or managers; 38.4% had never served in the

military; and just over one-fifth had more than 20 years of non-military federal service.

Descriptive statistics for the six factor scores are shown in Table 30.0. Reliability for the factor scores was calculated using Cronbach's alpha. All reliability measures were acceptable ($\alpha=0.946$).

Factor	N	Mean	Median	Standard Deviation	Skewness
Public Service					
Motivation	1445	56.32	57.00	9.62	-0.75
Engagement	1620	23.27	24.00	5.08	-0.73
Commitment	1591	1.83	1.0	0.99	0.68
Resilience	1472	14.65	15.00	3.55	-0.58
Satisfaction	1626	14.55	15.00	3.81	-0.59
Performance	1629	16.93	17.00	2.80	-0.86
Leadership	1493	18.67	20.00	5.12	-0.77
Work-Balance	1522	15.41	16.00	3.45	-0.82

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics and Reliability for Factor Scores

Hypotheses	IV	DV	Mediator(s)	a	b	Total Effect c'	Direct Effect c
H1.1	Resilience	Performance	Satisfaction	0.354*	0.729*	0.832*	0.408*
H1.2	Resilience	Performance	Engagement	0.176*	0.942*	0.832*	0.408*
H2	Leadership	Satisfaction	Work-Life Balance	0.444*	0.425*	0.384*	0.572*
H3.1	PSM	Satisfaction	Engagement	0.430*	0.233*	0.199*	0.323*
H3.2	PSM	Satisfaction	Commitment	-0.038*	-0.631*	0.199*	0.323*
H4	Engagement	Performance	PSM	0.444*	0.425*	0.384*	0.572*

* Significance level < 0.05

Table 2: Mediation Model Results

For the first set of hypotheses, the relationship between *resilience* and *job performance* was mediated by *job satisfaction* and *work engagement*. As Table 2 illustrates, the standardized regression coefficients were statistically significant ($p<0.05$). The total effect

of resilience on job performance was 0.408. The significance of the indirect effect was assessed using bootstrapping. Unstandardized indirect effects were computed for each of 5,000 bootstrapped samples, and the 95% confidence interval was computed. There

was a statistically significant indirect effect of *resilience* to *job performance* through the mediator's *satisfaction* and *engagement* ($a_1b_1 + a_2b_2 = 0.424$). The direct effect $c = 0.408$ was also significant ($p = 0.024$). The total effect $c' = 0.832$ ($p < 0.05$) was statistically significant. The null hypotheses were rejected, and the alternatives were accepted, indicating that *satisfaction* and *engagement* were statistically significant mediators of the relationship between *resilience* and *job performance*.

The second set of hypotheses tested whether work-life balance mediates the relationship between leadership and job satisfaction, underscoring its importance in supporting personnel well-being and morale. Table 2 shows that all the standardized regression coefficients were statistically significant ($p < 0.05$). Bootstrapping was employed. There was a statistically significant indirect effect of *leadership* and *job satisfaction* through the mediator *work-life balance* ($ab = 0.189$). The direct effect $c = 0.384$ was also significant ($p = 0.015$). The total effect $c' = 0.572$ ($p = 0.013$) was statistically significant. The null hypothesis was rejected, indicating that work-life balance was a statistically significant mediator between *leadership* and *job satisfaction*. The percent mediation effect P_M was $0.189/0.572$, or one-third of the total effect can be accounted for by the indirect effect of the mediator work-life balance.

The third set of hypotheses was tested for the relationship between *public service motivation* and *job satisfaction*, highlighting its role in fostering a sense of purpose and pride. As Table 2 illustrates, the standardized regression coefficients were statistically significant ($p < 0.01$). The total effect of *public service motivation* and *job satisfaction* was 0.199. The significance of the indirect effect was assessed using bootstrapping. There was a statistically significant indirect effect of *public service motivation* and *job satisfaction*, mediated by *commitment* and *engagement* ($a_1b_1 + a_2b_2 = 0.124$). The direct effect $c = 0.323$ was also significant ($p < 0.01$). The total effect $c' = 0.199$ ($p < 0.01$) was statistically significant. The null hypotheses were rejected, and the alternatives were accepted, indicating that *satisfaction* and *engagement* were statistically significant mediators between *resilience* and *job performance*.

The last set of hypotheses tested whether *public service motivation* mediates the relationship between *work engagement* and *job performance*. Table 2 shows that all the standardized regression coefficients were statistically significant ($p < 0.02$). Bootstrapping was employed. There was a statistically significant indirect effect of *work engagement* and *job performance* through the mediator, *public service motivation* ($ab = 0.388$). The direct effect $c = 0.1003$ was also significant ($p = 0.02$). The total effect $c' = 0.288$ ($p = 0.013$) was statistically significant. The null hypothesis was rejected, indicating that *public service motivation* was a statistically significant mediator of the relationship between *work engagement* and *job performance*.

5. Conclusion

The FEVS survey results reveal a workforce deeply committed to the Space Force mission while navigating the realities of a young, rapidly evolving service. Guardians consistently expressed

pride in their work, a keen sense of purpose, and confidence in the strategic importance of their roles. At the same time, the findings highlight areas where organizational maturation will be essential—particularly in communication, workload balance, leadership consistency, and the development of stable career pathways, fostering a sense of progress and stability.

Across units and career fields, employees emphasized the importance of public service motivation, work engagement, and job satisfaction, as well as a culture that supports resilience and enhances job performance without overextending personnel. These themes suggest that the Space Force's ongoing efforts are aligned with employee needs but require sustained attention.

Overall, the FEVS survey reflects a force that is motivated and mission-driven, yet eager for clearer structures, stronger support systems, and continued investment in people. As the Space Force continues to define its identity and refine its organizational practices, the insights from this survey offer a valuable roadmap for strengthening morale, enhancing performance, and building a resilient, future-ready service [67-158].

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