

The Application of Systemic Transformational and Health-Promoting Leadership to Increase Organizational Sustainability

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Abstract

A research study on the application of transformational, health-promoting, and sustainability leadership as a symphonic culmination of leadership theories to create a unified and sustainable organizational model by addressing issues related to organizational culture, role clarity, communication, staff training, and professional development, stress management, and retention of direct-care staff. Emphasis is placed on the importance of establishing a growth-minded culture for systemic whole system application.

Target Audience: Administrators, Managers, Teachers, Superintendents, Principals, and any organization that employs direct care staff (Schools, Residential Facilities, Hospitals)

Keywords: direct-care worker, retention, transformational leadership, health leadership, sustainability, organizational culture, stress.

Introduction

An ongoing and universal challenge in the service industry, the retention and turnover of direct care workers affect the quality of care for millions of older adults and people with disabilities as well as the culture of the organizations that serve them. Direct care workers provide between 70% and 80% of hands-on long-term care and personal assistance to individuals with disabilities, chronic conditions, and the elderly (PHI, 2011). It is reported that there are currently 4.5 million direct-care workers and within eight years it is estimated that 8.2 million direct care job openings will result from increased industry demand and staff turnover (PHI, 2021). Unfortunately, organizational efforts to increase recruitment, improve retention, and decrease turnover of direct care workers have limited short-term success (Stone, 2017). The culmination of a physically and emotionally demanding role, low status and social support (Vassos & Nankervis, 2012), low wages, lack of training, lack of decision-making, lack of control (Gray-Stanley & Muramatsu, 2011), limited career advancement (Stone, 2017; McKenzie, 2011), and statistically high rates of injury increase likelihood of burnout (Gray & Muramatsu, 2011; Outar & Rose, 2017) and staff turnover resulting in a consistently insufficient quality workforce and organizational instability.

Also referred to as paraprofessional workers, direct support professionals, or direct service workers (GAO, 2016), the direct care workforce is statistically 87% female (Scales & Lepore, 2020), 59% people of color, and 26% immigrants (Scales, 2020). Direct-care workers are employed in nursing homes, home health agencies, residential facilities, schools, and as independent providers working directly for families (GAO, 2016; PHI, 2011). Common job titles for direct care workers utilize terms such as associate, assistant, aid, technician, support, and auxiliary (PHI, 2011; GAO, 2016;

Harris, 2012; Watanabe-Gallowaya, Khanb, Baerentzenc, & Naveedd, 2020). Para-professionals (non-certified staff) are employed in over 90% of U.S. public elementary and secondary schools (Harris, 2012) and are essential to student success in accessing the curriculum. Paraprofessionals outnumber special education teachers (Reddy, Lekwa, & Glover, 2020) and are estimated to provide 76% of special education services (Reddy, Alperin, & Glover, 2019). They provide a "budget-friendly option" (Harris, 2012) to the support of students with disabilities such as Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), Intellectual or Developmental Disabilities (ID/DD), and Multiple Disabilities (MD) (Biggs, Gibson, & Carter, 2019).

Often "categorized as 'unskilled' or 'low skilled workers, 53% of direct-care workers have a high school education or less (Scales & Lepore, 2020). The job requirements and role demands of direct-care workers are diverse and include: assisting with activities of daily living, managing challenging behavior, facilitating educational and community access and inclusion, ensuring the quality of life, and administering medication (Outar & Rose, 2017; Scales & Lepore, 2020). These positions require a combination of caregiving, emotional intelligence, problem-solving, multi-tasking, and decision-making (Scales & Lepore, 2020). In addition, direct-care workers serve as the 'eyes and ears' (Scales and Lepore, 2020; Stone, 2017); tasked with communicating with individuals with cognitive impairments, serving as emotional supports (Stone, 2017), and recognizing and reporting changes in health status that may require interventions (Scales & Lepore, 2020). Despite rising demand and increasingly complex tasks (Scales, 2020), the development of this workforce remains stagnant, with little investment toward wages, education, and training (Stone, 2017).

Median wages for direct-care workers remain at \$12 to \$13 an hour with median earnings of \$20,300 per year (PHI, 2021); 45% of the workforce lives at or near the poverty level (Scales, 2020; Scales & Lepore, 2020) and 49% depend on some form of public assistance (Stone, 2017). Moreover, as many of the services provided by direct care workers are covered through Medicare and Medicaid, this complicates the ability of organizations to address salary (Keesler, 2019; Scales & Lepore, 2020).

Considered an entry-level position, direct-care workers are not required to receive formal training or hold any licenses (Banerjee, Chopra, & Di Palma, 2017; Stevens, et. al., 2017; Watanabe-Gallowaya, Khanb, Baerentzenc, & Naveedd, 2020). The Federal Government requires direct-care workers to have a high school diploma (or equivalent), a driver's license, and pass a criminal investigation (Friedman, 2020) with additional standards varying by state and agency. Most often, the type and amount of training a direct-care worker receives is at the discretion of the organization for whom they are employed. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act requires paraprofessionals to be trained and supervised. Training is typically preservice, on-the-job, and in-service training (Harris, 2012). Most training occurs on-the-job, provided by certified level supervisors such as teachers (Wiggs, et al., 2021). Teachers are required to provide ongoing direct guidance and supervision (Harris, 2012). In educational settings, teachers need to balance the education of their students and the supervision of one or more paraprofessionals. Teacher education programs address instruction and management of classrooms but often neglect to prepare teachers to provide leadership and supervision to support staff (Biggs, Gibson, & Carter, 2019). As a result, many paraprofessionals receive inadequate training, limited supervision and suffer from role ambiguity (Reddy, Alperin, & Glover, 2019; Wiggs, R et al., 2021).

Paraprofessionals are hired in support roles, but the job-specific roles and responsibilities of their day-to-day tasks are often not clearly defined (Harris, 2012; Wiggs, et al., 2021). Perception of responsibilities may vary among paraprofessionals within the same school or organization (Harris, 2012). Historically paraprofessionals assist with organizing materials and classroom setup, but many are increasingly tasked with academic instruction and behavior management (Wiggs, et al., 2021). In a study of 153 special education paraprofessionals, Harris reports that 70% were responsible for making curriculum decisions (Harris, 2021). Paraprofessionals and direct-care workers often feel that they bear the primary responsibility for the success of individual(s) to whom they are assigned (Harris, 2012) and yet often feel that their contributions are not recognized (Scales & Lepore, 2020) and that they do not have an active role in decision making (Gray & Muramatsu, 2013; Vassos & Nankervis, 2012). According to the traditional hierarchy, the locus of control remains with those furthest from the individual(s) being served (Porter, 2015). Locus of control is a psychological concept referring to "how strongly people believe that they have control over the situations and experiences that affect their lives," (<https://www.edglossary.org/locus-of-control/>). When staff feel that their suggestions are not considered, they are likely to feel devalued and unsupported and may "emotionally divest from the organization" (Gray and Muramatsu, 2013). This disengagement negatively affects work performance (Osborne & Hammoud, 2017) and increases rates of injury and the likelihood of burnout (Gray & Muramatsu, 2011; Outar & Rose, 2017).

Burnout is a condition of emotional exhaustion due to an overload in demands that occurs following a period of prolonged stress or a string of stressful occurrences without time for recovery (Gray & Muramatsu, 2011; Landrum, Knight, & Flynn, 2011; Outar & Rose, 2017). Burnout is a challenge for most caregivers due to a predisposition to care for others, often without taking adequate care of personal physical and mental health (Franza, Del Buono, & Pellegrino, 2015). Many caregivers, especially of individuals with challenging or dangerous behavior, are exposed to heightened stress and crises consistently, exasperating the likelihood of burnout (Kile, 2014; Ryan, Bergin, & Wells, 2021), depersonalization¹, reduced personal accomplishment², and negative work satisfaction³ affecting overall job performance. Job stress is the most significant factor impacting the retention of staff (Belete, 2018).

Turn-over of direct-care workers ranges from 30% to 86% and is associated with high organizational cost and low continuity of care (Gray & Muramatsu, 2013). On average, staff turnover costs companies 30% of the departed worker's annual salary in costs related to recruitment, training, productivity, and loss of knowledge gained on the job (Belete, 2018; Mahan et al., 2020). In addition, turnover negatively affects the motivation levels of remaining personnel who are faced with staff shortages and increased organizational stress as they struggle to meet the needs of these vulnerable populations (Belete, 2018; Harris, 2012; Wiggs, et al., 2021).

For individuals with limited communication skills, difficulty with social engagement, and more significant intellectual impairment, such as individuals with ASD, ID, DD, and MD, increases in organizational and environmental stress can negatively impact physical and emotional health and

¹ Depersonalization is an "indifferent and insensitive reaction to clients" (Outar & Rose, 2017)

² Reduced Personal accomplishment is a "reduction in feelings of self-efficacy in one's work" (Outar & Rose, 2017)

³ Work satisfaction is "the degree to which individuals feel positive or negative about their job" (Ineland & Starke, 2020)

increase the risk for the development of challenging behaviors (Hamlin, 2016). According to Hamlin, “Many individuals with ASD who are non-verbal and intellectually impaired are unable to effectively communicate their internal stress state, which may manifest as problem behavior during times of high stress” (Hamlin, Lantz, Ferguson, Villavicencio, Coles, & Beversdorf, 2019). This contagious stress cycle cumulates to create environments where people cannot function proactively and are more likely to react to the stressful stimuli around them, magnifying the stress cycle. The result is a perpetuation of stress and a negative organizational culture.

Intention

The retention of direct care staff is a universal, complex, and multifaceted issue that perpetuates due to societal, policy, and practice (Stone, 2017). This literature review intends to focus on how a symphonic culmination of various leadership theories can create a unified and sustainable organizational model that supports and retains direct-care staff.

Issues related to organizational culture, role clarity, communication, staff training, and professional development, stress management, and retention will be addressed through the lenses of transformational, health-promoting, and sustainability leadership theories. Emphasis will be placed on the importance of establishing a growth-minded culture for systemic whole system application.

Central Questions

The central questions of this research composition are:

1. How can organizational leadership create a supportive culture?
2. How can organizational leadership support direct-care workers and reduce stress?
3. How can leadership translate to improvement within every level of the organization?
4. How can systemic leadership training promote organizational sustainability?

Literature Review

In an organization, there are individuals whom we recognize as leaders based on their position or role, "assigned leaders," and there are people who embody leadership qualities regardless of position, "emergent leaders," (Northouse, 2019). The leadership behaviors of immediate supervisors are determinants of employee motivation (Porter, 2015). In this paper, "leadership" references assigned leaders; anyone who holds an administrative position (director, chief, superintendent, principal) or who has supervision over other employees (supervisor, manager, teacher).

Leaders play an essential role in cultivating organizational culture, the motivation and productivity of employees, and the successful attainment of organizational goals (Tonich, 2021; Toprak, Bulent, & Colak, 2015). Leadership style influences job satisfaction, effectiveness, and achievement (Toprak, Bulent, & Colak, 2015). To address the retention of direct-care workers, promotion of organizational health, and organizational stability, this paper will focus on the role

of leadership through the lenses of three specific leadership styles, transformational leadership theory, health-promoting leadership, and sustainable leadership.

Transformational leadership theory

While traditional leadership (transactional) seeks to motivate followers through an exchange of extrinsic motivators (money, rules), transformational leadership inspires followers to rise above their self-interests and commit to a collective vision (Allen, Grigsby, & Peters, 2015; Caillier, 2014; Northouse, 2019). Transformational leadership can be identified through the following indicators; (1) idealized influence; (2) inspirational motivation; (3) intellectual stimulation; and (4) individual consideration (Mukhtar, et al., 2020; Northouse, 2019).

Idealized influence is the high standards of the moral and ethical obligation of transformational leaders. They serve as role models for followers, sharing a vision and a sense of the mission (Northouse, 2019).

Transformational leaders provide inspirational motivation by communicating high expectations and clear and concise goals (Allen, Grigsby, & Peters, 2015). In addition, they inspire followers to commit to a collective vision through mentoring, problem-solving and challenging assignments (Avolio, 2011; Caillier, 2014; Northouse, 2019).

Transformational leaders provide individualized consideration through a supportive climate and by listening to the needs of followers (Northouse, 2019). Transformational leadership coaches to support the learning and performance of followers, building a culture that leverages employee skills, increases enthusiasm, promotes positive change, and transforms people (Akdere & Egan, 2020; Allen, Grigsby, & Peters, 2015; Northouse, 2019). Transformational leadership seeks to create connections and build trust to heighten consciousness of collective interests, increase motivation, and unite followers toward a common goal or mission (Akdere & Egan, 2020; Northouse, 2019; Porter, 2015). This style of leadership has been shown to “cascade downward to other managerial, leader positions” (Porter, 2015), influencing a culture of growth and creativity that benefits the organization as a whole (Dunkl, Jiménez, Šarotar-Žižek, Milfelner, & Kallus, 2015; Northouse, 2019; Rizki, Parashakiti, & Saragih, 2019).

Intellectual stimulation describes leadership's desire to "stimulate followers to be creative and innovative" (Northouse, 2019). Transformational leaders act as mentors or coaches for followers (Avolio, Zhu, Koh, & Puja, 2004; Northouse, 2019) and help them utilize their skills and reach their full potential. When it is safe and relevant, opportunities for autonomy increase job satisfaction and good employee relationships (Ekosgen, 2013).

Transformational leader behaviors increase organizational commitment (Eliyana, Ma'arif, & Muzakki, 2019; Porter, 2015) and positively affect organizational health by promoting job satisfaction (Toprak, Bulent, & Colak, 2015). Defined as a "relative strength of an individual's identification with and involvement in a particular organization" (Avolio, Zhu, Koh, & Puja, 2004), organizational commitment motivates employees' work performance (Eliyana, Ma'arif, & Muzakki, 2019). Both health-promoting leadership and transformational leadership aim to enhance

positive work-related behaviors, reduce stress and reduce the risk of burnout Dunkl, Jiménez, Šarotar-Žižek, Milfelner, & Kallus, 2015).

Health-promoting leadership

Health-promoting leadership is defined as focusing on enhancing working conditions and promoting a healthy workplace (Bregenzer, Milfelner, Zizek, & Jimenez, 2020). The World Health Organization describes health as ‘a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being’ (WHO, 1948). Individuals are highly influenced by their time in the work environment; thus, it is a setting that addresses a wide range of health factors (Schön Persson, 2019). Health-promoting leadership improves organizational effectiveness by promoting employee health and safety through healthy cultures, climates, and practices (Di Fabio, 2017; Dunkl, Jiménez, Šarotar-Žižek, Milfelner, & Kallus, 2015). In addition, health-promoting leadership focuses on improving six areas of work-life: workload, control, reward, community, fairness, & value-fit (Dunkl, Jiménez, Šarotar-Žižek, Milfelner, & Kallus, 2015; Jimenez, Winkler, & Bregenzer, 2017).

Work-load is an essential aspect of health promotion as an increased workload is associated with emotional exhaustion and burnout (Dunkl, Jiménez, Šarotar-Žižek, Milfelner, & Kallus, 2015, 2015; Jimenez, Winkler, & Bregenzer, 2017). Leaders can combat work-load-related stress by providing resources and time for recovery. The job demands-resource model and recovery-stress balance model highlight the importance of balance between job demands (aspects that require sustained physical or psychological effort) and job resources (aspects that enable the achievement of goals, decreased demands, and simulation of personal growth) (Jimenez, Winkler, & Bregenzer, 2017).

Providing control through autonomy, involvement, and decision-making positively affects employee health (Dunkl, Jiménez, Šarotar-Žižek, Milfelner, & Kallus, 2015; Jimenez, Winkler, & Bregenzer, 2017). An individual's sense of control over the situation is important for occupational health as it can moderate stress and burnout (Landrum, Knight, & Flynn, 2011; Schön Persson, 2019). Staff who feel empowered report lower job-related stress, higher job satisfaction, and improved retention rates (Stevens, et al., 2019).

Providing rewards, extrinsic (financial) or intrinsic (praise or recognition of employee dedication and performance), increases job satisfaction and productivity and improves organizational commitment (Dunkl, Jiménez, Šarotar-Žižek, Milfelner, & Kallus, 2015; Jimenez, Winkler, & Bregenzer, 2017).

A culture or climate of a work environment that fosters community is an important aspect of health-promoting leadership (Dunkl, Jiménez, Šarotar-Žižek, Milfelner, & Kallus, 2015; Jimenez, Winkler, & Bregenzer, 2017). Organizational culture is an organization's shared philosophy or ideals (Tonich, 2021), the sum of employees' values, beliefs, ideologies, principles, interactions, behaviors, and attitudes. When employees share a common set of values, the culture becomes stronger, and the organizational efforts become unified (Neal, Justice, & Barron, 2019). Being part of a team increases well-being, job satisfaction, and retention, impacting individual, group, and organizational health (Schön Persson, 2019; Stevens, et al., 2019). On a team, everyone's contribution is important, creating a sense of responsibility (Hillen, 2020).

Organizational fairness is important to health-promoting leadership; unfairness has a negative effect on their well-being, making it crucial that employees be treated fairly regarding decisions

and procedures (Dunkl, Jiménez, Šarotar-Žižek, Milfelner, & Kallus, 2015, 2015; Jimenez, Winkler, & Bregenzer, 2017). Furthermore, employees who are treated with appreciation and respect have a positive connection, affecting job performance and satisfaction (Dunkl, Jiménez, Šarotar-Žižek, Milfelner, & Kallus, 2015; Jimenez, Winkler, & Bregenzer, 2017; Schön Persson, 2019).

Value-fit addresses the difference between a person's values (ideals and moral concepts) and organizational values; the more significant the difference, the more likelihood of burnout (Dunkl, Jiménez, Šarotar-Žižek, Milfelner, & Kallus, 2015). Communicating values are important to helping an employee understand and adopt an organization's mission (Neal, Justice, & Barron, 2019).

Sustainability leadership

Sustainability leadership seeks to understand the importance of addressing organizational and inter-organizational sustainability as a complex universal, interdisciplinary, interdependent, and integrated system rather than utilizing the traditional compartmentalized approach to addressing/assessing needs (Less & Uri, 2018; Metcalf & Benn, 2013). To address the complex challenges in our social systems and organizations, leadership needs to understand how the situations are connected rather than address each in isolation (Lees & Uri, 2018). Sustainability leaders need to know how to interact within and between overlapping networks.

Sustainability leadership contends that leadership is not a person but rather a shared social process (Bendel & Little, 2015). One person cannot address the complexities within a multi-disciplinary organization (Bendel & Little, 2015; Lees & Uri, 2018). Shifting from a top-down approach to one that is multidirectional and multi-disciplinary enables organizations to be multi-perspective, embracing new skills and knowledge to address unpredictable challenges and ongoing changes (Lees, & Uri, 2018). A 'shared leadership' model encourages leadership behavior throughout the organization (Metcalf & Benn, 2013) and provides what Lees & Uri describe as leadership that is "emergent, distributed and episodic, with different people contributing at different times" (Lees & Uri, 2018).

Organizational Culture

Every organization has a culture (Neal, Justice, & Barron, 2019). A system of shared actions, values, and beliefs, organizational culture shapes the attitudes and behavior of employees (Sitompul, Ambarwati, & Timotius, 2019; Tohidi & Jabbari, 2011; Tonich, 2021). Cultures that are characterized as open, transparent, communicative, and trusting are beneficial to the people working there, the individuals being served, and the organization as a whole (HR Insights Blog, 2019). An organization with a strong vision is correlated with improved organizational health (Toprak, Bulent, & Colak, 2015). The values of an organization help employees understand what is most important and meaningful (Tohidi & Jabbari, 2011; Kemney, & Mabry, 2017). Unified values and goals strengthen an organization's culture, and once they are communicated, adopted, and understood, they are resistant to change (Neal, Justice, & Barron, 2019).

Leadership plays an important role in attaining organizational goals and the development of culture (Meador, 2020; Toprak, Bulent, & Colak, 2015). When leaders communicate organizational values, employees understand the mission (Neal, Justice, & Barron, 2019). In a given environment

it is important for leaders and followers to share a long-term vision, be invested in the same goals, and have similar expectations (Biggs, Gibson, & Carter, 2016). If leaders involve employees in creating organizational values, they are more likely to believe in the organization and its leadership (Neal, Justice, & Barron, 2019). According to Veschne, employee participation in the company's mission is essential to fostering positive emotions and a sense of belonging within an organization (Veschne, 2017).

Role Clarity

Role clarity remains crucial in reducing burnout among direct-care workers (Outar & Rose, 2017; Watanabe-Gallowaya, Khanb, Baerentzenc, & Naveedd, 2020; Wiggs, et al., 2021). Role ambiguity and limited decision-making increase stress, but studies have shown that active decision-making improves organization-based self-esteem, reduces emotional exhaustion, and decreases stress (Arshadi & Damiri, 2013; Ryan, Bergin, & Wells, 2021). Organization-based self-esteem is the degree to which an individual believes themselves to be capable, significant, and worthy in relation to an organization (Arshadi & Damiri, 2013). Followers value explicit communication of expectations and roles and consideration of their strengths and ideas (Bigs, et al., 2016). Staff look to managers for more than task assignments; they look for a defined purpose (Tohidi & Jabbari, 2011).

Transformational leaders provide inspirational motivation by communicating high expectations and clear and concise goals (Allen, Grigsby, & Peters, 2015). They inspire followers to commit to a collective vision through mentoring, problem-solving, and challenging assignments (Aviolo, 2011; Caillier, 2014; Northouse, 2019). Transformational leaders strengthen their organizations and develop an awareness that inspires enthusiasm and determination in followers (Toprak, Bulent, & Colak, 2015). A balance must be achieved between inclusion and respect of direct-care workers and maintenance of the responsibilities and authority inherent in supervisory positions. This distinction helps the environment feel stable and fair (Biggs, Gibson, & Carter, 2016). Leaders who provide role definition, safety, motivation, and autonomy engage staff, thus increasing productivity, effectiveness, and innovation (Veshne, 2017).

Providing a sense of control through autonomy, involvement, and decision-making is important for employee health (Dunkl, Jiménez, Šarotar-Žižek, Milfelner, & Kallus, 2015, 2015; Jimenez, Winkler, & Bregenzer, 2017; Landrum, Knight, & Flynn, 2011; Schön Persson, 2019). In addition, providing clear expectations and empowering staff with a sense of control lowers job-related stress, improves job satisfaction, and increases retention (Stevens, et al., 2019).

Communication

Research has shown that quality interpersonal interactions between supervisors and staff directly affect job satisfaction and performance; when supervisors' words and actions are aligned, they build trust and develop a sense of security that increases organizational commitment (Veshne, 2017). Supervisors need to be aware of how they use verbal and nonverbal communication to articulate expectations, responsibilities, share information and provide feedback (Biggs, Gibson, & Carter, 2019). Transformational leaders utilize active listening to understand followers and communicate clearly (Muktar, 2020). Interpersonal communication has a direct impact on addressing organizational conflict and increasing effectiveness (Muktar, 2020).

Direct care workers have expressed a desire to be heard and respected as a member of the team (Biggs, Gibson, & Carter, 2016). When staff feel that their suggestions are not considered, they feel devalued and unsupported (Gray & Muramatsu, 2013). When leaders utilize active listening, they promote a sense of acceptance, appreciation, and support for followers (Bregenzler, Milfelner, Zizek, & Jimenez, 2020). Transformational leaders provide individualized consideration through a supportive climate and by listening to the needs of followers (Northouse, 2019). A cohesive team builds trust, commitment, accountability and addresses conflict developing that is known as "vulnerability-based trust" (Lencioni, 2013). This level of trust allows team members to be honest about shortcomings, work together to address issues or challenges, and provide the opportunity to disagree (Lencioni, 2013). Although conflicts are often perceived as unfavorable, some conflicts can improve organizational effectiveness (Muktar, 2020). Health-promoting leadership emphasizes the importance of listening as it demonstrates a managerial openness that motivates followers (Bregenzler, Milfelner, Zizek, & Jimenez, 2020). Feedback from followers can help leaders identify how to better support employees and foster a sustainable workplace culture. Mindfulness regarding work conditions and staff feedback can help leaders promote a healthy work environment, reduce stress, and enhance resources for staff (Jimenez, Winkler, & Bregenzler, 2017).

Health-promoting leadership fosters a culture of community where everyone's contribution is important (Hillen, 2020). When employees recognize themselves as a member of a group, they are more loyal and willing to accept the values and goals of an organization (Eliyana, Ma'arif, & Muzakki, 2019; Stevens, et al., 2019). For followers to be accountable to a plan, they need to buy in, ask questions, provide input and understand (Lencioni, 2013). Paraprofessionals reported feeling valued and important when included in team discussions, fostering an increased sense of responsibility (Biggs, Gibson, & Carter, 2016; Hillen, 2020). Interpersonal relationship reciprocity between colleagues and between managers and staff helps support retention (Stevens, et al., 2019). Respectful communication and maintaining morale through verbal and practical gestures of thanks increase an employee's identification with the organization (Bregenzler, Milfelner, Zizek, & Jimenez, 2020; Stevens, et al., 2019). By building a sense of community, organizations foster a sense of unity that increases job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Schön Persson, 2019; Stevens, et al., 2019).

Stress Management

As a significant variable in the retention of direct-care workers, stress caused by co-workers, supervisors, and organizational culture can result in poor teamwork, increased conflict, and burnout (Watanabe-Gallowaya, Khanb, Baerentzenc, & Naveedd, 2020). In addition, employees with high-stress levels are more likely to be unhealthy, poorly motivated, less safe, and less productive (Arshadi & Damiri, 2013).

Transformational leadership lowers stress and decreases the risk of burnout by providing staff with a meaningful work environment, role clarity, and opportunities for development (Dunkl, Jiménez, Šarotar-Žižek, Milfelner, & Kallus, 2015, 2015). Programs where staff share knowledge, influence, and decision-making ability have lower organizational burnout, even in situations where stress levels were high (Landrum, et al., 2011). Role clarity and support from supervisors and

colleagues have been associated with decreased levels of burnout among direct care workers (Gray-Stanley, et. al., 2010; Ryan, Bergin, & Wells, 2021).

Health-promoting leadership decreases stress levels by enhancing healthy working conditions regarding workload, control, reward, community, fairness, and value-fit (Dunkl, Jiménez, Šarotar-Žižek, Milfelner, & Kallus, 2015). Providing resources and recovery time following a stressful event can decrease burnout, promoting organizational health and positive cultures (Jimenez, Winkler, & Bregenzer, 2017). Positive cultures attract talent, improve retention, promote enthusiastic and determined employees (Toprak, et al., 2015), and are associated with lower burnout among direct-care workers (Keesler, 2019).

Staff Training

Staff benefit from continuous and ongoing training and development, including coaching, mentoring, personal development, and on-the-job support (Friedman, 2020; Brock & Anderson, 2019). Providing training to staff indicates their value to the organization (Ekosgen, 2013; Stevens, et al., 2019). Regular meetings provide opportunities to share ideas and provide performance feedback and training to increase employee engagement (Brock & Anderson, 2019; Veshne, 2017). Staff benefit from shorter, more frequent training, including on-the-job and interactive methods such as dyads, as they are more effective in improving instructional practices (Kemeny & Mabry, 2016; Ledford, Zimmerman, Harbin, & Ward, 2017).

Coaching, mentoring, and providing feedback are effective tools in providing training and utilizing the strengths of direct-care workers and paraprofessionals (Ledford, Zimmerman, Harbin, & Ward, 2017; Walker, Douglas, & Chung, 2017). Through mentoring and coaching opportunities, transformational leaders can provide a supportive climate, build trust, and increase the engagement of followers (Northhouse, 2019; Veshne, 2017). Identifying goals and necessary resources is an important aspect of coaching as direct-care workers and supervisors may have different training priorities (Walker, Douglas, & Chung, 2017). Supportive interactions with supervisors have been indicated to increase employee's sense of control. It is associated with positive emotions, increased job engagement, organizational commitment, and decreased burnout (Gray & Muramatsu, 2011; Stevens, et al., 2019; Veshne, 2017).

Professional Development and Advancement

Opportunities for career advancement and empowerment positively affect employee engagement and job performance (Osborune & Hammoud, 2017). Lack of career opportunities is the number one reason an employee leaves a job (Coker, 2016). Opportunities for increased development and training are necessary to support direct-care workers and promote retention (Dunkl, Jiménez, Šarotar-Žižek, Milfelner, & Kallus, 2015). Direct-care workers need access to additional training and education essential for career advancement. This "up-skilling" requires more than entry-level training; organizations should develop roles allowing direct care workers to take on additional responsibilities and strengthen the organization (Scales, 2020).

Transformational leaders' emphasis on the empowerment of staff builds organizational commitment. Followers receive the tools and support to be successful and the recognition and appreciation of their efforts (Aviolo, 2011). Opportunities for high-quality professional

development and training are imperative to staff engagement, effectiveness, and safety across industries (Burke & Cocoman, 2020).

Retention and recruitment

To reduce turnover intention and increase retention of staff, organizations need to improve job satisfaction, increase organizational commitment, and motivate work performance through the promotion of positive social relationships, role clarification, increased autonomy, and increased responsibility (Avolio, Zhu, Koh, & Puja, 2004; Eliyana, Ma'arif, & Muzakki, 2019; Porter, 2015).

Health-promoting leadership promotes retention by establishing a safe work environment and a work balance that adheres to the recovery-stress model. Stress levels impact employees' overall health, safety, and job satisfaction (Arshadi & Damiri, 2013). The five principles of trauma-informed care (safety, trustworthiness, choice, collaboration, and empowerment) align with a health-promoting leadership model, positively impacting employee and organizational health (Keesler, 2019).

Transformational leadership motivates employees through a collective vision that inspires unity and team culture (Aviolo, 2011; Caillier, 2014; Northouse, 2019). Improving team functioning promotes role clarification, trust-building, communication, collaboration and reduces stress (Weir, 2018). In addition, the reduction of job stress and promotion of job satisfaction boosts job performance and effectively reduces turnover intention (Arshadi & Damiri, 2013).

Organizational Stability

Leadership is a driving force in organizational stability and efficacy. The relationship between an employee and manager is an influential factor for employee job satisfaction (Ekosgen, 2013). Porter's (1985) human resource development common value chain illustrates the connections: "managerial/executive leadership → support for employee learning and performance → employee experience of organizational human resource development culture and functions → employee satisfaction → key organizational performance outcomes" (Akdere & Egan, 2020). Leadership can transform an organization's culture, motivate and unify followers toward a mission/goal, and foster growth and improvement of individuals that result in the development and improvement of the organization (Akdere & Egan, 2020). The values promoted by the leader play a significant role in the organizational values that are exhibited (Northouse, 2019).

This research focused on the effectiveness of transformational and health-promoting leadership; however, there are a multitude of leadership theories that can be applied to address the specific needs of organizations in regard to the environment, challenges, and followers. The application of each leadership theory is supported by research. However, studies have also shown that a single leadership style cannot be generalized to all employees (Gregersen, Vincent-Hoper, & Nienhaus, 2014).

Transformational Leadership promotes a culture that fosters job satisfaction by supporting the learning and performance of followers (staff), recognizing potential, increasing enthusiasm, and supporting change (Akdere & Egan, 2020). However, like Moynihan, Pandey, and Wright (2014) state: "an organization's mission can only inspire those who are aware of its existence, and

understand its importance” (Jensen, Moynihan, & Salomonsen, 2018). Studies have identified a correlation between the effectiveness of transformational leadership and the physical distance between the leaders and followers (Avolio, Zhu, Koh, & Puja, 2004).

Health-promoting leadership theory reduces stress, increases job satisfaction, and decreases turnover by working to address the stress-recovery balance and provide a safe working environment (Jimenez, Winkler, & Bregenzer, 2017); however, research has shown it to be challenging for employers to effectively implement in an organization with various levels and departments (Motalebi, Mohammadi, Kuhn, Ramezankhani, & Azari, 2017). Leader-follower interactions influence each other in feedback loops (Jimenez, Winkler, & Bregenzer, 2017). When leadership is available and approachable to address the needs of staff, it creates a supportive working community (Jimenez, Winkler, & Bregenzer, 2017).

Application of systemic leadership

The effectiveness of an organization is an accumulation of the individual effectiveness of each person in the organization (Mukhtar, 2020); an organization is effective and sustainable when all of its employees are effective and productive. The Sustainability leadership theory addresses the interdependent connections of an organization and the shared leadership process necessary to address its complexity (Bendel & Little, 2015; Lees & Uri, 2018; Metcalf & Benn, 2013). Creating a network of involvement creates a common language and a shared understanding of the issues (Kaufman, Mitra, Anderson, Coartney, & Cash, 2020).

Opportunities for distributed leadership and staff involvement avoid the complexities associated with the transfer of information in a hierarchical organizational structure and promotes increased understanding of the complex systems (Kaufman, Mitra, Anderson, Coartney, & Cash, 2020; Lees & Uri, 2018). A ‘shared leadership’ model allows different people to contribute at different times and encourages leadership behavior throughout the organization (Lees & Uri, 2018; Metcalf & Benn, 2013). Distributed leadership is an investment that builds awareness, respect, and trust by removing barriers between silos, identifying challenges, and addressing them (Kaufman, Mitra, Anderson, Coartney, & Cash, 2020).

Health-promoting leadership is more effective when it promotes everyone a greater degree of self-determination to promote their health (Motalebi, Mohammadi, Kuhn, Ramezankhani, & Azari, 2017). Transformational leadership is more successful in communicating the organizational mission through face-to-face dialogue as it provides an opportunity to translate the mission into actions and address differences in interpretation (Jensen, Moynihan, & Salomonsen, 2018). To construct a transformational mindset, leaders should identify each employee's specific learning and performance needs and provide opportunities for greater responsibility and career development at all organizational levels (Akdere & Egan, 2020; Avolio, Zhu, Koh, & Puja, 2004; Porter, 2015). Although staff may adhere to the organization's mission, they may struggle to see the impact of their daily actions toward that mission (Paarlberg & Lavigna, 2010). Transformational leaders need to give meaning to daily activities (Paarlberg & Lavigna, 2010) and promote a learning and performance-oriented culture by providing feedback through performance outcomes and acting as coaches to support and guide followers (Akdere & Egan, 2020). Cultivating a culture where every employee is valued for their unique contribution encourages employees to reach their highest potential (Osborne & Hammoud, 2017).

Discussion

Analysis of themes

Turn-over of direct-care level staff is an issue across the service industry. It comes with a significant price associated with the rehiring and retraining of staff, loss of productivity, increased stress on remaining staff, and loss of trust built with consumers/clients. Despite efforts to address retention, challenges related to society, policy, and practice perpetuate the issue. The purpose of this research composition is to investigate how leadership theory can be applied systematically to improve organizational culture, address the multifaceted issue of retention, and improve sustainability.

Summary and discussion of the research questions

Research has shown that organizational leadership is a highly influential factor in developing organizational culture, a crucial element in the relative engagement and job satisfaction of staff. The values, actions, and attitudes of leadership are an expression of organizational values and goals. Employees understand the mission of the organization and their role through the messages and communication of leadership. Therefore, leadership needs to be effective and clear in communicating verbally and non-verbally (through action, lack of action, and expression). Through the communication and promotion of unified values, leadership can promote a supportive organizational culture that increases job satisfaction and thus staff retention.

Organizational leadership can support direct-care workers and reduce stress by providing staff with role clarity, autonomy, team building, stress-recovery and reduction, increased training, and opportunities for advancement. In addition, the application of health-promoting and transformational leadership styles is impactful in addressing these issues, increasing job satisfaction, and reducing stress.

Inspiring a cohesive mission and organizational efficiency requires staff at every level of the organization to “speak the same language.” Moynihan, Pandey, and Wright (2014) state: “an organization’s mission can only inspire those who are aware of its existence, and understand its importance” (Jensen, Moynihan, & Salomonsen, 2018). Transformational leadership relies on a leader's ability to convey the values and mission to employees. A successful organization can communicate a message that inspires unity and motivates each department, position, and individual. To increase organizational effectiveness, employees need to speak the same language, but it is not always possible for organizational leadership to penetrate the interconnected complexities of organizational hierarchy. Like a game of telephone, the more people who translate the values and goals of an organization, the more likely it is to be muted or altered. According to Jensen, Moynihan, & Salomonsen, communicating an organizational vision through face-to-face dialogue “amplifies the effect of transformational leadership on employee mission valence” (Jensen, Moynihan, & Salomonsen, 2018). By encouraging a network of leadership behavior throughout the organization, systemic leadership provides a way to effectively communicate messages to employees, address challenges, and improve organizational sustainability.

A systemic focus on transformational leadership works to identify the potential in followers and transform them into future leaders, increasing sustainability within an organization. This systemic symphony allows for greater transmission of a unified message and develops a multi-level, multi-discipline team of experts, ensuring the organization's sustainability. In addition, by creating a strategic management development plan, organizations can focus on training inter-organizational leaders to develop high-value relationships, improve job satisfaction (Gregersen, Vincent-Hoper, & Nienhaus, 2014), increase retention, and promote organizational sustainability.

Limitations of literature review

This study provides a general overview of the challenges related to the direct-care position. While many of the issues addressed are universal in the service industry, they may be impacted differently by factors such as organizational structure, location, and state or organization-specific regulations.

The analysis and conclusions presented in this paper are a compilation of research and theory derived from existing journals that relate to one or more aspects of the topic. Sources address topics relating to one or more of the following: transformational leadership theory, health-promoting leadership theory, sustainability leadership, direct-care workers, organizational culture, stress, and burnout. Although previous studies have demonstrated one or more aspects of this research, the literature review did not reveal a previous study that addressed the multifaceted and systemic leadership approach that was the focus of this review.

The scope of this research was limited in date and scale. This paper does not address the entire body of research relating to these issues and only includes research from the past ten years. As this issue has perpetuated for significantly longer, a historical review of the issues and research could demonstrate practices, patterns, or limitations outside the scope of the research analyzed.

A longitudinal limitation relevant to the period between topic approval and assigned submission date impacted the depth and time available to research this topic.

Suggestions for future research

Several future research study recommendations can be derived as a result of and in relation to this study.

This study's research aims and objectives give broad examples of how leadership can address the challenges of retention and organizational sustainability. Additional research could provide a more in-depth understanding of these issues and how organizations can effectively address them. For example, organizations understand the importance of staff training but struggle to improve training opportunities due to funding and staff scheduling.

The effectiveness of leadership theory application is not universal and can be impacted by the situation as well as various traits relating to the followers. For example, transformational leadership has been shown to be less effective with millennials due to a focus on work-life balance that alters their willingness to collaborate toward achieving common goals (Northouse, 2019). Therefore, additional research on the traits most common in direct-care workers and analysis of

the effectiveness of various leadership theories as they relate to those traits could inform the application of leadership theory that is more specific to addressing the needs of this population.

The focus of this paper was on leadership's role in the retention of direct-care staff utilizing health-promoting, transformational, and sustainable leadership theory to create a supportive culture. Future research could examine the role of followership in this equation. Followership refers to the process "whereby an individual or individuals accept the influence of others to accomplish a common goal" (Northouse, 2019). Followers play a crucial role in the accomplishment of tasks; followers provide additional perspective on the mission; followers give validity to the leader; their commitment to a mission over an individual helps protect organizations from abuse of power; and the process of followership promotes the development of leaders (Northouse, 2019).

This paper defined leadership as anyone in a supervisory position, but direct-care workers provide leadership for the clients/students/customers they serve in many situations. Future research could focus on understanding the unique follower traits of the various populations served by direct-care workers and determining if leadership training for direct-care workers improves effectiveness, autonomy, and job satisfaction.

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