Organizational and Staff Characteristics Associated with Aspects of Innovative Leadership in Outpatient Treatment Programs

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Research Rationale and Aims

- In an effort to respond to economic and socio-political pressures and to ensure success, it is becoming increasingly important for leaders to search for and implement new and innovative approaches to clinical practice and management.
- Leaders should evaluate the environment for innovative possibilities, including constraints and opportunities within and outside the organization (Conger & Kanungo, 1998).
- Leaders also need to encourage followers to challenge their own traditional ways of completing tasks and to include followers in finding creative solutions to common organizational issues (Podsakoff et al., 1990).
- It is possible that followers’ personal characteristics and organizational circumstances could affect the degree to which staff members perceive their leaders as innovative.
- The current study is a first step toward understanding staff and program characteristics associated with two aspects of transformational leadership: demonstrating innovation and encouraging innovation.

Research Questions

- Are clinical directors in substance abuse treatment programs perceived by their staff as encouraging and demonstrating innovative practices?
- Are staff perceptions of encouragement of innovation and demonstration of innovation differentially influenced by program, staff, and leader characteristics?
- For instance, while perceptions of leaders as demonstrating innovation may be impacted by a staff members’ years of experience in the treatment field, perceptions of a leader’s encouragement of innovation may not be affected by that experience.

Method

- 171 staff members from 44 outpatient substance abuse treatment programs located in four US regions completed the TCU Survey of Transformational Leadership (STL); program directors completed the Survey of Structure and Operations (SSO).
- Staff members rated their clinical director on measures of perceived innovative leadership, both included in the STL Intellectual Stimulation domain.
- Univariate analyses identified staff, organizational, and leader characteristics related to innovative leadership.
- Four separate multiple regressions were conducted, 2 with encourages innovation and 2 with demonstrates innovation as DVs. Separate models were run with staff characteristics (measured at the individual level of analysis) as predictors and program/leader characteristics (aggregated at the program level of analysis) as predictors.

Instruments

- TCU Survey of Transformational Leadership (STL)
- STL Measures of Innovative Leadership

Results: Regression Analysis

- Findings indicate that leaders are perceived as demonstrating more innovation by minority staff members, by staff that have been employed within the substance abuse treatment field for more than 3 years, and within programs that serve a greater proportion of dual-diagnosed clients.
- Leaders are perceived as more encouraging of innovation by staff employed in programs offering a greater number of services onsite.

Applications

- Staff and organizational characteristics may influence perceptions of directors as innovators, particularly perceived demonstrations of innovation.
- Experienced staff members may be more aware of inherent organizational challenges and may more readily recognize directors’ attempts to respond through innovation and environmental sensitivity.
- Training or open communication that sensitizes staff to organizational challenges and opportunities might help less tenured staff understand the culture that treatment leaders face.
- Directors in specialized dual-diagnosis programs may be perceived as demonstrating innovation in seeking ways to meet the specific treatment needs of their clients (e.g., mental health services).

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