**Abstract**

Secondary traumatic stress and organizational contextual factors such as staff safety have been shown to impact staff turnover in human service agencies. Awareness of these factors has informed the development of trauma-informed organizational interventions that include the goal of reduction in staff turnover. As human services agencies work to implement trauma-informed change interventions, it is important to understand the role that executive leadership plays in trauma-informed efforts to reduce staff turnover. Empirical evidence indicates that the leadership style known as transformational leadership is related to change commitment within staff. However, little is known about the role transformational leadership plays in staff turnover. This study examines the role of staff perceptions of transformational leadership behaviors among executives in predicting risk of staff turnover, controlling for trauma-informed contextual factors including secondary traumatic stress and perceptions of staff safety.

**Methods**

As part of a baseline measurement in anticipation of implementing the Sanctuary Model®, a trauma-informed organizational intervention, staff of three substance abuse treatment and service navigation agencies (N=109) were invited to complete a battery of assessments through an online survey platform including measures of staff turnover risk, secondary traumatic stress, trauma-informed practice, and perceptions of executive leadership behaviors. Measurement tools included the: Intent to Leave Scale (ILS), Secondary Traumatic Stress Scale (STSS), Trauma-Informed Practice Survey (TIPS), and Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ).

Five linear regression models were tested as part of a post hoc analysis utilizing ILS scores as the dependent variable and MLQ subscales measuring transformational leadership behaviors as the independent variables, controlling for STSS scores and a staff safety subscale of the TIPS.

**Results**

When staff turnover risk was predicted it was found that the following transformational leadership constructs were predictive:

- **Individualized Consideration** (Beta = -0.285, p<0.01);
- **Inspirational Motivation** (Beta = -0.261, p<0.01);
- **Idealized Influence Attributed** (Beta = -0.334, p<0.001) and;
- **Intellectual Stimulation** (Beta = -0.209, p<0.05).

Idealized Influence Behavior (Beta = -0.072, n.s.) was not a significant predictor.

**Conclusions**

These findings indicate that greater staff perceptions of certain transformational leadership characteristics in their leaders predicts a decrease in staff turnover when controlling for measures of secondary traumatic stress and staff safety. Findings suggest that in implementing trauma-informed organizational change, certain transformational leadership behaviors can play a key role in these interventions when it comes to the goal of reducing staff turnover within an organization.

**References**

Results

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*p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001

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