

Leadership Behaviors of Athletic Training Leaders Compared With Leaders in Other Fields

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Timothy Laurent and Debbie Bradney conducted the cross-sectional study, "Leadership Behaviors of Athletic Training Leaders Compared with Leaders in Other Fields," to examine the self-reported leadership practices of head athletic trainers (HATCs) and program directors (PDs). The study draws its conclusions from responses to the Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI), a self-evaluation of an individual's leadership style, completed by 238 trainers. Due to their occupational responsibilities, athletic trainers hold positions of leadership. It is thereby important they exhibit strong leadership skills in order to increase productivity and also provide quality care to the athletes they treat.

When compared to the normative data of the LPI, athletic trainers self-reported higher scores for modeling and enabling behaviors and lower scores for inspiring and challenging. Additionally, the results of the program directors' scores were higher in the inspiring, challenging, enabling, and encouraging categories than were the results from the head athletic trainers. According to the LPI, the exhibition of transformational leadership skills is less amongst HATCs than PDs. The authors' attribute the differences between the HATCs and PDs to the varied responsibilities of the two roles: HATCs are responsible for serving patients, whereas PDs develop students into leaders. Transformational leadership, the style that fosters unity amongst followers by aligning the mission of the organization with the personal goals and needs of each individual follower, lends itself naturally to the tasks of a PD.

The academic consensus is that the LPI only measures transformational behaviors. Thus, the results of the survey of athletic trainers suggest not only that athletic trainers demonstrate similar leadership behaviors as the leaders in other fields, but that they are transformational leaders. Although PDs reported the more frequent use of transformational leadership behaviors, due to the overall strength of their scores on the LPI, both HATCs and PDs are proved to be transformational leaders. By inspiring, enabling, encouraging, and challenging both their colleagues and the athletes with whom they work, athletic trainers create a positive environment in which all are inspired to perform at the next level.

Similarities:

- Transformational leadership is prevalent and effective
 - Both studies found that transformational leadership exists at all levels of the Canadian military and athletic training. I believe this is because transformational is an effective leadership style that lends itself to any type of organization.

- Transformational leadership increases with rank
 - The higher one moves in rank, the more prevalent transformational leadership is. This is because higher-ranking officials have the duty to not only lead, but to inspire followers and instill leadership traits in others.

Differences:

- The size of the survey groups
 - Many more members of the Canadian military were surveyed. Since the military is a much larger organization, and there are many more ranked positions than amongst athletic trainers, this makes sense.
- The type of survey given
 - The survey given to the trainers is one that only measures transformational leadership; the one given to the military examines transactional leadership behavior as well. This is because the study of athletic trainers was more focused on seeing how the leadership style matches up with other organizations.