

TITLE: A Case Study Exploration of Leadership, Communication, and Organizational Identification

RESEARCHER: Ashley J. Bennington
Graduate School
The University of Texas at Austin
Doctoral Dissertation: August 2000

OBJECTIVE: To investigate the relationship between leadership practices and organizational identification in a case study of the staff members of a large nonprofit organization.

METHODOLOGY: “AreaServe” is a nonprofit social service agency located in a Southwestern metropolitan community, with several service sites located throughout the city and surrounding communities and is the result of a four-agency merger that became official one year before the commencement of this study. Survey responses of 92 employees from a staff of 179 (51%) were collected for this analysis. Respondents completed the Leadership Practices Inventory (Individual Contributor version), as well as the Organizational Identification Questionnaire (Cheney, 1982), with subscales of solidarity, commitment, and loyalty, and Section F of the International Communication Association organizational communication survey (communication relationships measure); along with demographic information.

KEY FINDINGS: Each of the five leadership practices was significantly correlated (positive) with organizational identification (overall), as well as each of the three subscales of solidarity, commitment, and loyalty. Leadership practices were also positively correlated with communication relationships, and each of its subscales (coworker relationship, supervisor relationship, top management, and personal influence). These relationships held true with partial correlations, controlling for the third variable. Dividing the respondents into high and low categories for communication relationships and leadership practices revealed a significant main effect (ANOVA) of leadership practices. Respondents who perceived a high degree of leadership practices in the organization had significantly higher organizational identification than respondents who perceived a low level of leadership practices. There was no significant main effect of communication relationships. Leadership practices did vary as a function of AreaServe organizational divisions.

The results indicate, the author concludes, “that there is a positive relationship between the strength of AreaServe staff members’ organizational identification and their perception of the quality of the leadership practices throughout the organization. Thus, as their perceived quality of leadership practices increases, so does the strength of their organizational identification” (p. 78).