
THE LEADERSHIP CHALLENGE

research

THE MOST TRUSTED SOURCE ON BECOMING A BETTER LEADER

TITLE	Burnout and Leadership in Community Mental Health Systems
RESEARCHER	Linda Webster and Rachelle Hackett Paper presented at the annual American Education Research Association Conference (Montreal), Spring 1999. Also appears in <i>Administration & Policy in Mental Health</i> 1999, Vol. 26 (6): 3-15
OBJECTIVE	This study investigated the nature of professional burnout, specifically whether aspects of burnout in clinical staff in community mental health agencies were systematically related to aspects of leadership behavior and quality of supervision of clinical supervisors.

METHODOLOGY

One hundred and fifty-one respondents from five community health systems in Northern California participated in the study by completing the Leadership Practices Inventory (Observer), Maslach Burnout Inventory (Maslach, Jackson & Leiter, 1996), and author constructed Clinical Supervisor Rating Scale (CSRS). Sixty-seven percent were women, with an average age of 44 years, mostly Caucasian (76%), with either a LCSW (27%) or MFCC (25%) license. Internal reliability for the LPI in this study ranged between .92 and .96.

KEY FINDINGS

All five of the leadership practices were found to be inversely related to Emotional Exhaustion and all of the leadership practices except for Encouraging were inversely related to Depersonalization.

On average, an ethnic minority grouping consisting of African Americans, Asian Americans, Native Americans, and Others rated their supervisors lower on the LPI and CSRS compared to groupings of Caucasians and Hispanics. Those clinicians primarily working with children rated their supervisors higher in regards to Encouraging and Enabling.

The authors conclude:

The results suggest that clinical supervisors can provide leadership which may contribute to the development of a positive working climate. This, in turn, may reduce an employee's sense of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization (p. 10).

They further suggest that "of interest to both trainers and practitioners alike are differences found amongst the differing ethnic groupings of this study. The results suggest that leadership style preferences in human service settings may be culturally determined (p. 10)...the implication is that administrations need to be sensitive to leadership styles when providing clinical supervision" (p. 11).