

Motivating Factors for Pursuit of Volunteer Leadership in a National OT Association: A Mixed-Methods Study

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Leadership is a critical component to the success of a professional organization. Using a mixed-methods methodology, this study examines why occupational therapists choose the path of leadership. Data was collected through the completion of semi-structured interviews and a leadership questionnaire with 7 occupational therapy leaders in the United States. The collected data was transcribed and coded for themes by multiple coders. Results of a leadership questionnaire identify commonalities for leadership behaviors among the participants. Multiple themes emerged from the study, providing implications for occupational therapists who may seek participation in formal volunteer leadership roles.

PURPOSE: The objective of this study was to identify why occupational therapists choose the path of leadership within their national occupational therapy association. Leadership is integral to the success of any organization or profession (Heard, 2014). To date, analysis of leadership theory within the profession of occupational therapy has been limited in volume and focus. Identifying motivational factors for pursuing leadership in occupational therapy associations can be beneficial and even imperative for recruiting future leaders (Moore & Ginsburg, 2017). The results of this study inform future inquires and expand knowledge of strategies to recruit occupational therapists for leadership roles within their national occupational therapy association. Taking on volunteer leadership roles within the national occupational therapy association can benefit the profession by reinforcing best leadership practices, increasing leadership and management skills, and increasing the ability to advocate for appropriate treatment and reimbursement.

OBJECTIVE: The objective of this study was to identify reasons why occupational therapists chose the path of leadership within their national occupational therapy association.

DESIGN/METHOD: Participants engaged in a semi-structured interview and completed a leadership questionnaire. Various strategies were implemented to maximize trustworthiness. The collected and transcribed interview data was analyzed and coded for themes following the completion of all interviews. The coding process was completed using an editing style of analysis where each independent coder analyzed the text of each interview multiple times in order to identifying potential themes and meaningful components of the interviews. For the qualitative data collected from the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire. After each response was rated, the mean was taken for each item and logged. The total score/mean score was calculated for each item. Data was then put into a chart to compare means across participants. Calculation the mean was the most appropriate method for reporting data from the questionnaire as it was only given to the participants once.

RESULTS: The Questionnaires provided quantifiable data related to the leadership behaviors of each participant. The questionnaire results provide further insight related to the leadership behaviors as perceived by each respective participant, allowing for an understanding of characteristics of a leader that may be common across occupational therapy and formal volunteer leadership. The diverse results of the questionnaire provided an informative baseline related to the leadership behavior.

CONCLUSION: The findings of this study indicate that there are some feelings of regret by occupational therapy leaders in the sense that they wish they had gotten involved earlier in their careers or during the time they were occupational therapy students. In this study, all participants identified that future leaders might be best supported during the student experience.

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