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Faculty Perceptions of Occupational Therapy

Jennifer Cosgrove

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Academic Leadership Journal

Introduction

Occupational therapy education programs are changing because of the many challenges facing them. Education program directors in occupational therapy confront a range of obstacles in their attempt to graduate future leaders for the profession. According to Reiss (2000), some of the challenges program directors face include: declining enrollments, faculty shortages, increased demands for faculty productivity in research and service delivery, and revised standards for accreditation. Along with program directors, faculty in occupational therapy programs are charged with the mission of preparing students for careers in occupational therapy. As Rozier, Gilkeson, and Hamilton (1991) observed, information about faculty job satisfaction can help leaders, such as programs directors, create a work environment that promotes faculty retention and that ultimately influences students' attitudes toward the profession. Faculty job satisfaction has other important implications. Dissatisfied occupational therapy faculty may be more likely to demonstrate high turnover, provide substandard instruction, and convey a negative attitude toward the profession. Dissatisfied faculty, therefore, may lead to occupational therapy graduates who are not as well prepared for the profession as are those trained under the guidance of faculty who are satisfied with their jobs. Faculty job satisfaction may be influenced by the performance of a program director. "The role of the department chair is one of the most important roles in the academic setting. In occupational therapy, the chair has a pervasive effect on the preparation of student therapists" (Sieg 1986, 89).

Rider (1989) noted that it often takes as long as 3 years to fill a program director position and that inexperienced program directors "must spend most of their time learning the job and struggling to cope rather than pursuing creative and political activities requisite to strong academic leadership" (p. 132). Because the program director is a leadership position, whoever fills that role in a given institution will have a significant impact on the occupational therapy program's organizational health (Dudek-Shriber 1997) and staff job satisfaction (Brollier 1985). Occupational therapy program directors need to understand how their leadership behaviors affect faculty job satisfaction. Research suggests that the more effective subordinates perceive their leaders to be, the more satisfied they are with their jobs (Song 1991; Xu 1993). Research in occupational therapy has focused either on the job satisfaction of occupational therapy faculty (Rozier et al. 1991) or on the leadership qualities of program directors and the organizational health of their departments (Dudek-Shriber 1997). To date, no studies have explored the relationship between faculty perceptions of occupational therapy program director leadership behaviors and occupational therapy faculty job satisfaction. Information about faculty job satisfaction can help leaders such as program directors create a work environment that promotes retention and positively influences students' attitudes toward the profession (Rozier 1991). A lack of information limits an understanding of the extent to which program directors' leadership behaviors affect faculty job satisfaction.

The purpose of this research study was to investigate faculty perceptions of occupational therapy program director leader behavior and the impact of that behavior upon the job satisfaction of occupational therapy faculty. Specifically, this study sought to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the perceived leadership behaviors of occupational therapy program directors as reported by occupational therapy faculty?
2. What is the overall job satisfaction of occupational therapy faculty?
3. What is the relationship between faculty perceptions of occupational therapy program director leader behaviors and overall faculty job satisfaction?

Methods

Subjects

This study included full-time faculty from the 106 professional graduate occupational therapy programs in colleges and universities across the country, accredited by the Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education (ACOTE) of the American Occupational Therapy Association, Inc. as of September 2002. Occupational therapy program directors for each of the 106 graduate occupational therapy programs were contacted in writing. The program directors were informed about the study and were asked to provide the names of faculty members in their programs that met the following criteria: occupational therapist, full-time faculty in a graduate program (entry-level, advanced or doctoral), and Academic Fieldwork Coordinators who were involved in teaching at the graduate level. The program directors did not complete any survey instruments. Of the 106 program directors contacted, 40 responded (38%). Thirty-nine of the 40 responding programs/program directors provided the names of their faculty that met the research criteria for a total of, 194 faculty names. The respondents were representative of all geographic areas in the United States. The invited sample included all occupational therapy faculty members (N=194) whose names were provided by each of the 106 program directors. The responding sample was 122 (63%) and the data-generating sample was 112 (58%). Ten survey instruments were eliminated due to missing or incomplete responses.

Materials

Data for this study were gathered by means of three survey instruments: The Leadership Practices Inventory-Observer, the Job Descriptive Index, and the Job In General Scales. All of the questionnaires were administered to occupational therapy faculty by mail. The Leadership Practices Inventory – Observer was used to measure leadership behaviors of occupational therapy program directors as perceived by occupational therapy faculty. The Leadership Practices Inventory – Observer, developed by Kouzes and Posner, identifies five fundamental practices of exemplary leadership behavior. Their research revealed that when people were at their personal leadership best, they demonstrated the behaviors of Challenging the Process, Inspiring a Shared Vision, Enabling Others to Act, Modeling the Way, and Encouraging the Heart. Kouzes and Posner's definitions of the leadership practices are discussed at the following Web site: <http://www.leadershipchallenge.com/WileyCDA/Section/id-131055.html>.

The Job Descriptive Index (JDI) and the Job in General (JIG) Scales were used to measure job satisfaction of occupational therapy faculty. The JDI and JIG, developed by a group of researchers led by Patricia Cain Smith at Bowling Green State University in Ohio, measured five principle facets of job satisfaction: Work on Present Job, Present Pay, Opportunities for Promotion, Supervision, and People

at Work. The JIG scale measured the general feelings individuals have towards their jobs. The JDI was first developed in 1975 and has been revised twice, 1985 and 1997. The JIG Scales were first developed in 1982 and were then revised in 1985. The 1997 version of the JDI and the 1985 version of the JIG Scales were used in this study.

Although the five scales were designed to reveal specific information regarding the job satisfaction of respondents, the JDI was not enough to determine the overall job satisfaction. It was determined that the overall job satisfaction could not simply be determined by adding the five scales together. Doing so would have given equal weight to each facet while some facets of the job may have been more important to some than others, and it excluded the inclusion of other significant factors to the respondents which may not have been measured by the individual scales. Therefore, the JIG scale supplemented the information obtained by the five scales of the JDI. The JIG scale was designed to be administered in conjunction with the other scales (Balzer et al. 2000). Interpretation of the scores received on the survey was completed by following the scoring procedures. With a score of 27 as the midpoint, “scores well above 27 (i.e., 32 or above) indicated satisfaction, while those well below 27 (i.e., 22 or below) indicated dissatisfaction” (Balzer et al. 2000, 24). Respondents who received scores higher than 32 were considered to be satisfied with the specific facet of the job measured while those scoring lower than 22 were considered to be dissatisfied.

Procedure

Subjects were asked to complete the three instruments and the demographic questionnaire provided and return them to the researcher by mail within 1 week. A follow-up post card, to increase the rate of return, was sent 10 days later to all subjects. Reminders were again sent via electronic mail 2 weeks later to subjects whose electronic mail address was available on the college/university web site. Responses received by January 2003 were included in the responding sample (N=122). Ten survey instruments were eliminated due to missing or incomplete responses thus resulting in a data-generating sample of 112.

Results

The mean scores for the leadership behaviors ranged from 38 for Challenging the Process to 41 for Enabling Others to Act (Table 1). The leadership practice most frequently reported being used was Enabling Others to Act, second Modeling the Way, third Inspiring a Shared Vision and last Encouraging the Heart and Challenging the Process. Kouzes and Posner (2002) indicate that a “high” score is one at the 70th percentile or higher. A “low” score is one at the 30th percentile or below. A score that falls between those ranges is considered a “moderate” score (Table 2).

Table 1

Faculties’ Perceived Leadership Behaviors of Program Directors

Leadership Behaviors	M	SD
Challenging the Process	38	13.9

Inspiring a Shared Vision	39	14.5
Enabling Others to Act	41	14.2
Modeling the Way	40	14.5
Encouraging the Heart	38	14.5

N=112

Leadership Behaviors Possible Range 6-60

Table 2

Faculties' Perceived Leadership Behaviors and Leadership Practice Inventory-Observer Percentile Rankings

Leadership Behaviors	Percentile	Score
Challenging the Process	22 nd	Low
Inspiring a Shared Vision	35 th	Moderate
Enabling Others to Act	17 th	Low
Modeling the Way	18 th	Low
Encouraging the Heart	25 th	Low

The JDI measured job satisfaction along six scales: Work on Present Job, Present Pay, Opportunities for Promotion, Supervision, People at Work, and the Job in General. "Scores well above 27 (i.e., 32 or above) indicated satisfaction, while those well below 27 (i.e., 22 or below) indicated dissatisfaction" (Balzer et al. 2000, 24). The Opportunities for Promotion scale represented the variable with which the faculty expressed the least satisfaction. The Pay scale was the next least satisfying aspect of the job reported by respondents. Work on the Present Job scale appeared to be the most highly satisfying aspect of the job, with the People at Work scale a close second. None of the mean scores fell below 22 (dissatisfied), while four of the mean scores were above 32 (satisfied) (Table 3). The percent dissatisfied, neutral, and satisfied for each scale is presented in Table 4.

Table 3

Faculties' Job Satisfaction

Job Satisfaction	M	SD
Work on Present Job	47**	8.6
Present Pay	31*	14.2
Opportunities for Promotion	24*	15.8
Supervision	38**	15.4
People at Work	45**	10.2
Job In General	44**	10.4

N=112

Job Descriptive Index and Job in General Scales Range 0-54

*Indicates Neutrality

**Indicates Job Satisfaction

Table 4

JDI and JIG Percent Dissatisfied, Neutral, and Satisfied

Job Satisfaction	% Dissatisfied	% Neutral	% Satisfied
Work on Present Job	2	7	91
Present Pay	27	24	49
Opportunities for Promotion	57	11	32
Supervision	24	8	68
People at Work	5	9	87

Job In General	5	5	89
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N=112, * Because rounding was used, values may not total 100%

Positive and significant correlations were found between all five scales of the Leadership Practices Inventory – Observer (Leadership Behaviors) and overall faculty job satisfaction (Job In General Scale). In each of the five categories of the Leadership Practices Inventory-Observer, there were significant correlations ($p < .001$) with overall job satisfaction (Table 5). Multiple regression analyses were also conducted to predict overall job satisfaction. The independent variables included the five Leadership Practices Inventory-Observer scales. Collectively, these five measures of leadership accounted for 26% of the variance in overall job satisfaction ($R^2 = .255$, $F(5,106) = 7.2$, $p < .001$). Johnson’s relative weight analysis was conducted to determine the relative importance of each of the predictors (Johnson, 2000). Relative weight estimates the proportionate contribution each predictor makes to the overall R^2 while considering both its unique contribution and its contribution when combined with other variables (Johnson, 2000). Of the individual Leadership Practices Inventory – Observer behaviors, Encouraging the Heart accounts for the greatest amount of variance (7%) in overall job satisfaction. Enabling Others to Act and Inspiring a Shared Vision each account for 5% of variance, with Challenging the Process and Modeling the Way both accounting for 4% (Table 6).

Table 5

Job In General Pearson Product Correlations

Leadership Behavior	Job In General r
Challenging the Process	.45*
Inspiring a Shared Vision	.46*
Enabling Others to Act	.47*
Modeling the Way	.43*
Encouraging the Heart	.49*

Table 6

Relative Weight Analysis

Leadership Behavior	Relative Weight Percent

Challenging the Process	4
Inspiring a Shared Vision	5
Enabling Others to Act	5
Modeling the Way	4
Encouraging the Heart	7

$R^2 = .26$, *Because rounding was used, total does not equal 26%

Discussion

Determining the relationship between program director leader behavior and faculty job satisfaction was the primary focus of this research study, therefore the discovery that most faculty perceived their program director's leadership behavior to be low was felt to be important. Enabling Others to Act received the highest mean score despite its rating of "low" when compared to Kouzes and Posner's percentile database. This research study found that most of the scores for leader behavior were low when compared to a percentile database. Since this database consists of leaders from various disciplines in various working arenas, it would be unfair to assume that the low ratings received by occupational therapy program directors were a negative finding. Since demographic data was not collected on occupational therapy program directors, conclusions about prior leadership experience as well as prior academic leadership experience cannot be drawn. Thus, we must rely on previous research that suggests that program directors often receive little to no training before assuming the position (Tucker 1985). Therefore, low ratings may not be the fault of the program directors but the fault of the process that appoints individuals as program directors without the proper training and development. The low ranking leadership scores should be taken seriously and further investigation is necessary.

Regarding the job satisfaction of occupational therapy faculty, the results of this study have indicated that faculties are satisfied with their jobs. One of the most important findings of this study was the confirmation that relationships exist between leadership and job satisfaction. No other studies in occupational therapy have been conducted that examine the relationship between faculty perceptions of occupational therapy program director leader behavior and the impact of that behavior upon the job satisfaction of occupational therapy faculty. It is important for the occupational therapy profession, specifically occupational therapy program directors, to realize that a relationship between leadership behaviors and job satisfaction exist. Program directors can have a significant impact on the satisfaction their faculties possess based on the leadership behaviors they display. Although few program directors receive leadership training before accepting the position, it may be necessary once in the role.

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