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Transformational Leadership of Athletic Trainers in a Division I Setting

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Context: Within athletic training it has been reported that transformational leadership behaviors increase efficiency, help to improve the work environment, aid in reduction of burnout, and help in the increase of employee satisfaction.

Objective: To determine transformational leadership behaviors of athletic trainers in the Division I collegiate setting.

Method: Data was collected through an online survey (Qualtrics) which was distributed to 1000 Division athletic trainers by the National Athletic Trainers' Association (NATA) and blinded to the investigators. Transformational leadership was measured by using the 18-item Transformational Leadership Survey (TLS). Paired sample t-tests and one-way analyses of variance (ANOVAs) were used to explore differences in the six sub-types and total scores of Transformational Leadership across different demographic characteristics.

Results: Of our 98 participants (9.8% response rate) the majority were female (66.3%), Caucasian (85.7%), between the ages of 25-27 years old (67.3%). Most were employed as assistant athletic trainers (65.3%), having a master's degree (83.7%), and serving primarily in a clinical role (88.8%).

There were no significant differences in overall Transformational Leadership scores ($F(2, 92) = 2.17, p = .121$) between respondent groups; however, examining the subtypes of Transformational Leadership, a significant difference was found in the self-reported levels of Execution ($F(2, 92) = 3.91, p = .023$).

A Bonferroni post-hoc analysis indicated that Assistant Athletic Trainers ($M = 9.92, SD = 1.37$) reported significantly higher levels of Execution than other respondents ($M = 8.95, SD = 1.50$). Further, Execution was the most highly rated subtype of transformational leadership ($M=9.72, SD=1.45$) for all respondents and is defined by delegating the max amount of tasks but also following up with those tasks in order to see they are completed correctly. The lowest rated subtype was Vision ($M=8.16; SD=1.64$), and was defined by providing challenging visions to help people understand so they are motivated to join in. **Conclusion:** Execution is essential for athletic trainers and an important aspect of their leadership behavior as it looks at delegation of as many tasks as possible, good use of organizational resources, and following up and ensuring things go as planned without wasting time.

Key words: transformational, leadership, athletic training