
Leadership Styles of Superintendents in the Developmental Disability System in Ohio

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Introduction

Leadership is a complex topic that has been researched by many scholars (Pielstick, 1998; Bass, 1999; Stewart, 2006; Avolio, 2007; Bird & Wang, 2013; D’Souza & Gurin, 2016). Organizations of all types confront the need to improve leadership. Whether an entity is a for-profit business, educational system, or public agency, almost all experience issues with leadership and desire the best outcomes for their organization and the people utilizing their services. Specifically, the county boards of developmental disabilities in the state of Ohio have experienced massive structural and mandated change over the last 10 years. This change has necessitated a close inspection of the type of leadership needed in a changing, social-service public agency that serves the most vulnerable in our country (Butterworth, Hiersteiner, Engler, Berhadsky, & Bradley, 2015; Hall, Freeze, Butterworth, & Hoff, 2011; McClain & Walus, 2015).

The current investigation seeks to examine the leadership styles of superintendents of county boards of developmental disabilities in the state of Ohio. The review of literature explores the Full Range Leadership Model / Theory as well as the current structure and challenges of the county board of developmental disabilities system. The review of leadership styles of executives in the developmental disabilities field assists in understanding the leadership necessitated to, not only survive change, but, also, to continue to progress and thrive. The information reviewed provides a framework for the process of exploring leadership styles of the current superintendents in the county board of developmental disabilities in the state of Ohio.

County Board Superintendent Trends

The leadership needs of the superintendents of the county boards of developmental disabilities in the state of Ohio are vast. Within the last five years, over 50% of the superintendents are new to their position, providing an opportunity for all superintendents to discover a common

vision and goals. The sharing of superintendents between county boards has increased as resources in smaller counties are diminishing. For instance, in 2005, no county boards of developmental disabilities shared superintendents. In 2018, 12 county boards shared superintendents, as well as other administrative staff. Regarding gender of superintendents, in 2015, 44% of the superintendents were female and 55% of the superintendents were male. In 2018, the developmental disabilities field has seen modest growth in the number of female superintendents.

Due to the overwhelming changes in the field of developmental disabilities reflecting a significant shift in the role of the county boards of developmental disabilities, the leadership practices of the superintendents must be explored. The styles and practices that worked in the 1970s are far different than what is desired today. While early superintendents may have exhibited autocratic and direct styles of leadership, in order to implement the services needed by constituents, today's service delivery system may need a different leadership style in order to implement the changes demanded by, not only the field, but by people served. A need to research existing styles of leadership behavior among the superintendents of the county boards of developmental disabilities system in Ohio exists to ascertain the current styles and to assist in the development of successful leadership styles and behaviors that demonstrate vision, positive culture, and opportunity for optimum outcomes for people with disabilities and their communities.

Full Range Leadership Model/Theory

The Full Range Leadership Model/Theory was developed from the progression of leadership theory originated by Burns (1978), who initiated the transforming versus transactional leadership styles, furthered by Bass (1996), who deemed transactional leadership as necessary and furthered the transforming leadership style to transformational (Antonakis & House, 2015). The Full Range Leadership Model/Theory is described by Bass (1996), and Bass and Avolio (1997),

who asserted the universality in the leadership theory. The importance of universality of the Full Range Leadership Theory is in the applicability across settings and organizations.

Full Range Leadership Model/Theory references the three styles of leadership discussed in the work of Bass and Avolio (1997) and with associated behaviors of each style: transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire. This model is seen as integrative. For instance, the early work of Burns (1978) was seen in the transformational style, with Bass integrating the work of Burns (1978) with his own theory, adding the premise:

Transformational leaders act as agents of change by arousing and transforming followers' attitudes, beliefs, and motives from a lower to a higher level of arousal. They provide vision, develop emotional relationships with followers and make them aware of, and believe in, superordinate goals that go beyond self-interest. (Antonakis & House, 2016, p. 8)

This blend of Bass' (1999) and Burns' (1978) work developed the transformational aspect of the Full Range Leadership Model/Theory. In the transformational aspect of the Full Range Leadership Model/Theory, the four identified factors are idealized influence (attributed), idealized influence (behaviors), inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration (Antonakis & House, 2016).

The leadership style of transactional in the Full Range Leadership Model/Theory describes the leadership behaviors of clarifying "role and tasks' requirements and provide followers positive and negative rewards contingent on successful performance" (Antonakis & House, 2016, p. 9). The necessity of the transactional leadership style is where Bass (1999) and Burns (1978) differ. Where Burns (1978) did not believe that the transactional style is effective, Bass (1999) did assert that it is necessary for leaders to display both the transactional and transformational style at times,

as appropriate. According to Khanin (2007), Bass (1985) asserted that, “various modes of transactional leadership can be more or less effective” (p. 11). In other words, there are times when rewards are motivating for followers. The factors of transactional leadership within the Full Range Leadership Model include contingent reward, management by exception (active), and management by exception (passive) (Antonakis & House, 2016).

The third style of leadership in the Full Range Leadership Model is known as the laissez-faire leadership. Leaders who are identified with laissez-faire behaviors are described as avoidant in decision-making, passive in their style, and, most significantly, having an absence of leadership (Antonakis & House, 2016). Mathieu and Babiak (2015) noted in their research, cross-referencing Full Range Leadership Model and personality pathology, that those leaders employing the laissez-faire leadership style strongly correlated with the factors of manipulative/unethical, callous/insensitive, unreliable/unfocused, and intimidating/aggressive. Additionally, Mathieu and Babiak (2015) noted that the strongest correlation in their study with the Full Range Leadership Model and employee satisfaction was, “Laissez-Faire leadership is a form of destructive leadership that has a negative impact on employees . . . our results support the contention that negative leadership has more impact on employee attitudes than positive leadership” (p. 11).

Determining a leader’s style using the Full Range Leadership Model occurs with the implementation of the MLQ Form 5X Survey. This survey is provided to employees for completion, by answering questions based on the behaviors exhibited by their immediate supervisor. With continued feedback and research, the MLQ Form 5X has been revised and is now known as the MLQ Form 5X survey (Avolio & Bass, 1999; Avolio, Bass, & Jung, 1999).

Methods

Introduction

This study investigates the leadership behaviors of superintendents of the county boards of developmental disabilities in the state of Ohio. The data used in the study were acquired from the MLQ Form 5X and analyzed using SPSS 25.0.

Research Questions

The methodology used investigated the following research questions:

1. What are leadership styles of superintendents in the county boards of developmental disabilities in the state of Ohio?
2. What is the relationship between leadership styles of superintendents in the county board of developmental disabilities and self-reported outcomes of leadership?
3. What is the relationship of gender and leadership style of superintendents in the county boards of developmental disabilities in the state of Ohio?
4. What is the relationship of leadership style and longevity in the position of superintendent for superintendents in the county boards of developmental disabilities?
5. What is the relationship of leadership style and longevity in the field of developmental disabilities for superintendents in the county boards of developmental disabilities?
6. What is the relationship between leadership style, longevity in the role of superintendent, longevity in the field of developmental disabilities, gender, and self-reported outcomes of leadership for superintendents in the county boards of developmental disabilities?

Participants

Participants in this study were superintendents of the county boards of developmental disabilities in the state of Ohio. While Ohio has 88 counties, the current arrangement of some

counties sharing superintendents caused the total number of potential participants for this survey research to be 77. All participants in the position of superintendents met and obtained the certification of superintendent of county boards of developmental disabilities in the state of Ohio, which is granted only by the Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities. Superintendents were required to not only have experience in the field of developmental disabilities but have administrative experience as well. The certification and experience requirements for superintendent of developmental disabilities in the state of Ohio are outlined in Ohio Administrative Code 5123:2-5-03.

Instrumentation

The instrumentation utilized in the study was the MLQ Form 5X, developed by Bass and Avolio (1995). The MLQ Form 5X is a self-assessment survey instrument, designed to identify leadership behaviors. The revised tool used in this study confirmed validity and reliability. Kanste et al. (2006) noted that internal consistency was supported. Additionally, the factor structure of the MLQ Form 5X was examined by Kanste et al. and found to be stable and “mainly acceptable.” (p. 208). The Pearson product moment correlations were also tested by Kanste et al. and noted to be sufficient.

The MLQ Form 5X has 45 items measuring nine subscales of leadership as developed by Bass and Avolio (1995). The nine subscales are components of three leadership types: transformational, transactional, and laissez-fair. Five subscales reflecting transformational leadership behaviors are

- idealized influence (attributed);
- idealized influence (behavioral);
- inspirational motivation;

- intellectual stimulation; and
- individualized consideration

Three subscales reflect the transactional behavioral leadership style and are

- contingent reward;
- active management by exception; and
- passive management by exception

The final subscale measures laissez-faire leadership behaviors (Kanste et al., 2006).

The MLQ Form 5X uses a five-point Likert scale for each question, with the responses ranging from a scale of 1 (not at all) to 5 (frequently).

Procedures

This quantitative study utilized data exclusively from the responses of the MLQ Form 5X. The survey was disseminated to superintendents of county boards of developmental disabilities in the state of Ohio via Survey Monkey. The data were exported to SPSS for analysis. Research questions were examined using correlation, multiple regression, and MANOVA.

Results

The response rate of 67 participants represented 87% of the full population of superintendents employed by the county boards of developmental disabilities in the state of Ohio. Descriptive analysis of the participants revealed that $n = 33$ (50%) self-reported as female, while $n = 33$ (50%) self-reported as male. One respondent did not report his or her gender. Responses indicated that the average time working in the field of developmental disabilities was 25.46 years, while the average time working as a superintendent was 8.8 years. In order to analyze the data needed to address the research questions, factors were built to represent each of the leadership styles.

The MLQ Form 5X was the survey instrument used in this study. The survey questions, leadership styles and behaviors, scales, items, and factors were represented in the MLQ. The *Transformational Leadership* style was endorsed with the scale of Idealized Attributes, items 10, 18, 21, and 25; the scale of Idealized Behaviors, items 6, 14, 23, and 34; the scale of Inspirational Motivation, items 9, 13, 26, and 36; the scale of Intellectual Stimulation, items 2, 8, 30, and 32; and the scale of Individual Consideration, items 15, 19, 29, and 31. The *Transactional Leadership* style was endorsed with the scale of Contingent Reward, items 1, 11, 16, and 35; and Management by Exception (Active) items 4, 22, 24, and 27. The *Passive-Avoidant Leadership* style was endorsed with the scale of Management by Exception (Passive), items 3, 12, 17, and 20 and Laissez-Faire, items 5, 7, 28, and 33. These factors were analyzed for the reliability of the responses to the questions. Table 1 provides the reliability estimate for each leadership style included in the MLQ responses.

Table 1

Reliability Estimates of Leadership Styles

Factor	n	α
Transformational	20	0.878
Transactional	8	0.665
Passive-avoidant	8	0.540

As indicated in Table 1, all the leadership style factors demonstrated good to excellent reliability of responses (Field, 2018). The relationship between the leadership styles and the sub-factors supporting the respective leadership style is presented in Table 2.

Table 2

Pearson's Zero-Order Correlation between Leadership Styles and Sub-Factors

	Transformational	Transactional	Passive-avoidant
Transformational	-	.296*	-.255*
Transactional	.296*	-	.048
Passive Avoidant	-.255*	.048	-
Idealized Attributes	.738**	.241*	-.214
Idealized Behaviors	.839**	.317**	-.215
Inspiration Motivation	.852**	.159	-.226
Intellectual Stimulation	.783**	.301*	-.099
Individual Consideration	.806**	.161	-.285*
Contingent Reward	.505**	.682**	-.033
Management Exception Active	.038	.843**	.088
Management Exception Passive	-.166	.121	.817**
Laissez-faire	-.244*	-.057	.770**

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level;** at the 0.01 level.

As indicated above, the transformation and transactional leadership styles present a moderate positive significant correlation ($r = .296$) while transformational and passive-avoidant reveal a moderate negative significant correlation ($r = -.255$). However, the correlation between transactional and passive-avoidant was not statistically significant. Additionally, Table 2 indicates that the responses provide evidence that each of the leadership styles has strong discriminant validity. Discriminant validity is supported when each sub-factor is most strongly correlated with its primary factor (transformational, transactional, and passive-avoidant).

Research Question #1

Research Question #1 asked, “What are the leadership styles of superintendents in the county boards of developmental disabilities in the State of Ohio?” The factors of each leadership

style were computed, using the items indicated above, by taking the average of the responses across those items. Table 3 provides the basic analysis for each of the leadership style factors.

Table 3

Leadership Style Descriptive Statistics

Factor	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
Transformational	4.29	0.39	-1.30	5.08
Transactional	3.16	0.51	0.05	-0.64
Passive-avoidant	1.72	0.43	0.44	-0.75

As indicated in Table 3, the greatest endorsement for the three leadership styles is for transformational, followed by transactional. The results of these analyses indicate that the responses follow a normal distribution, with skewness and kurtosis falling within acceptable ranges (Field, 2018).

Research Question #2

Research Question #2 asked, “What is the relationship between leadership styles of superintendents in the county board of developmental disabilities and self-reported outcomes of leadership?” The items supporting the *Outcomes of Leadership* factor Extra Effort are 39, 42, and 4. The items supporting the *Outcomes of Leadership* factor Effectiveness are 37, 40, 43, and 45. The items supporting the *Outcomes of Leadership* factor Satisfaction are 38 and 41. First, the reliability of the nine items was analyzed using Cronbach’s Alpha, and indicate a strong level of reliability, $\alpha = .869$. Pearson’s Zero-order correlations between the self-reported *Outcomes of Leadership* and the three leadership styles were conducted. These are presented in Table 4.

Table 4

Pearson's Zero Order Correlations of Leadership to Outcomes

Factor	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Outcome Leadership (1)	-	0.728**	0.16	-0.199*
Transformational (2)	-	-	0.30*	-0.256*
Transactional (3)	-	-	-	0.074
Passive-avoidant (4)	-	-	-	-

Note. * indicates significance at the $\alpha < .05$ level, or ** at the $\alpha < .01$ level

As indicated above, the *Outcomes of Leadership* factor has a strong, positive, significant correlation with transformational, while it has a small, negative, significant correlation with the passive-avoidant leadership style. The *Outcomes of Leadership* factor is not correlated with the transactional leadership style. A multiple regression analysis was used to evaluate the overall strength of the model of *Outcomes of Leadership* based on the three leadership styles. This was based on the following multiple regression model:

$$Y_{ij} = \beta_1(X_1) + \beta_2(X_2) + \beta_3(X_3) + \varepsilon$$

Where Y_{ij} represents the dependent variable of *Outcomes of Leadership*, and the independent variables are as indicated: β_1 represents transformational leadership, β_2 represents transactional leadership, and β_3 represents passive-avoidant leadership style.

Results of the regression analyses indicate that *Outcomes of Leadership* are significantly explained by the three leadership style responses, $F(3,63) = 24.1, p < .001, R^2 = .534$. This result indicates that the responses to the three leadership styles explain 53.4% of the reported *Outcome of Leadership*. The resulting model is written:

$$Y_{ij} = .794(X_1) + -.039(X_2) + .007(X_3) + \varepsilon$$

Research Question #3

Research Question #3 asked, “What is the relationship of gender and leadership style of superintendents in the county boards of developmental disabilities in the state of Ohio?” A multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was used to assess if gender differences existed on the three leadership styles and the reported leadership outcomes. Box’s Test of Equality of Covariance ($p = .204$) and Levene’s Test of Equality of Error Variance ($p <.05$) are tenable, indicating that the data are appropriate for this analysis. These results are presented in Table 5.

Table 5

Results of the MANOVA Analyses

Dependent Variable	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Transformational	0.002	1	0.002	0.01	0.910
Transactional	0.727	1	0.727	2.90	0.094
Passive-Avoidant	0.302	1	0.302	1.68	0.200
Outcome Leadership	0.061	1	0.061	0.35	0.558

The results of this analysis indicate that there are no statistically significant mean differences in the responses for any of the leadership styles and reported *Outcomes of Leadership*, based on the gender of the respondent (Wilk’s Lambda = .936, $F(3, 62)=1.422$, $p=.245$). A graphical image of the association between gender and each leadership style, as well as the *Outcomes of Leadership*, are presented in Table 6.

Table 6

Gender on Leadership and Outcomes

Dependent Variable	Male	Female
Transformational	4.29	4.28
Transactional	3.25	3.04
Passive-Avoidant	1.8	1.66
Outcome Leadership	4.23	4.29

As seen in Table 6, the average response for male participants is slightly higher for each of the leadership styles. However, the average reported *Outcomes of Leadership* is higher for female participants.

Research Question #4

Research Question #4 asked, “What is the relationship of leadership style and longevity in the position of superintendent for superintendents in the county boards of developmental disabilities?” The three leadership styles (transformational, transactional, and passive-avoidant) were regressed on the reported length of time as a superintendent. Results indicate that there is no statistically significant association between the leadership styles and time as a superintendent, $F(3, 63) = .877, p = .458, R^2 = .04$.

Research Question #5

Research Question #5 asked, “What is the relationship of leadership style and longevity in the field of developmental disabilities for superintendents in the county boards of developmental disabilities?” The three leadership styles (transformational, transactional, and passive-avoidant) were regressed on the reported length of time in the field of developmental disabilities. Results

indicate that there is no statistically significant association between the leadership styles and time in the field of developmental disabilities, $F(3, 63) = .033$, $p = .992$, $R^2 = .02$.

Research Question #6

Research Question #6 asked, “What is the relationship between leadership style, longevity in the role of superintendent, longevity in the field of developmental disabilities, gender, and self-reported outcomes of leadership for superintendents in the county boards of developmental disabilities?” A Pearson’s Zero-order correlation was conducted to examine the association between the seven variables. These results are presented in Table 7.

Table 7

Pearson’s Zero-Order Correlations between Variables

Variable	2	3	4	5	6	7
Transformational (1)	.296*	.255*	.728**	0.02	0.034	-0.014
Transactional (2)	-	0.05	0.156	0.18	-0.01	-0.208
Passive-Avoidant (3)	-	-	-0.2	0.07	-0.02	-0.16
Outcome Leadership (4)	-	-	-	0.18	0.128	0.073
Length of time as a superintendent (5)	-	-	-	-	.628**	.412**
Length of time in the field of developmental disabilities (6)	-	-	-	-	-	-.279*
Gender (7)	-	-	-	-	-	-

Note. * indicates significance at the $\alpha < .05$ level, or ** at the $\alpha < .01$ level

As indicated above, results reveal that there is a strong negative significant correlation between gender and length of time as superintendent ($r = -.412$). Similarly, there is a moderate negative significant correlation between gender and length of time in the field of developmental disabilities ($r = -.279$). This indicates that as reported longevity in the field of developmental

disabilities and longevity in the role of superintendent increases, the more likely the participants are male respondents.

Discussion & Conclusion

The purpose of this research was to explore leadership styles and behaviors of superintendents in the county boards of developmental disabilities in the state of Ohio. The findings of this investigation demonstrate the most commonly endorsed leadership style and behavior of superintendents in the county boards of developmental disabilities is transformational leadership. The outcomes likewise reveal that superintendents who endorse leadership styles and behaviors as transformational also report higher outcomes of leadership. Another significant and unexpected result is the lack of difference in self-reported leadership style with superintendents, in relationship to gender, longevity as a superintendent, and longevity in the developmental disabilities' field. An unanticipated outcome is the prevalence of males in regard to longevity in the role of superintendent and longevity in the developmental disabilities' field. According to the responses from the survey, the longer a participant is in the field and in the role of superintendent, the more likely the participant is a male. This finding demonstrates the incidence of males in the field and in the executive role longer than females, and also reflects the growth of females in the position of superintendent in county boards of developmental disabilities in the state of Ohio.

In examining the leadership styles of superintendent in the county boards of developmental disabilities in the state of Ohio, both commonalities and differences exist with the findings and current research. For instance, the self-reported answers of participants regarding leadership styles and behaviors reflected the transformational style, followed by the transactional style. The least reported style by superintendents in the study based on self-reported responses is the passive-avoidant style of leadership. This reflects and aligns with Bass (1997) and the belief that leaders

may exhibit both transformational and transactional leadership styles and behaviors with effectiveness. P. O. Smith (2015) concurred that both styles may exist, however believed that the transformational style is most affective and creates positive culture and organizational change. As the superintendents' responses revealed, the transformational leadership style was the most self-identified leadership style. In a social service setting assisting society's most vulnerable citizens, the transformational style is indeed needed and impactful.

The results of this study compare with the results of Allen's (2017) research in regard to school superintendents self-reported leadership style. The participants in Allen's (2017) study also self-reported characteristics of transformational leadership as the most prevalent style, however school outcomes did not positively correlate with the self-identified leadership style. In the present study, the self-reported leadership outcomes were positively correlated with transformational leadership styles and behaviors.

The mean response of superintendent responses for passive-avoidant leadership styles and behaviors was 1.72 reflecting that the superintendents in this study do not utilize this style nearly as often as transformational and transactional. According to Bass and Avolio (1994), passive-avoidant leadership style, also known as laissez-faire leadership, is the furthest on the continuum from the transformational leader and the least effective leadership style. Dussault and Frennett (2015) noted a relationship between the work environment and leadership styles, using the continuum of transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership styles in their work. Dussault and Frennett (2015) found a correlation with bullying in the workplace and laissez-faire leadership, while also asserting that transformational leadership style is not indicative of negative work environments. Skogstad et al. (2014) noted that poor leadership behaviors, as described in the laissez-faire and passive-avoidant leadership styles, are related to employee stress. The low

responses to the passive-avoidant leadership questions in this study, in addition to the positive responses to transformational leadership questions provide an optimistic view of the work environments in the county boards of developmental disabilities. Agencies that serve people with developmental disabilities and their families need assistance from public employees who have positive work environments and quality leadership.

Research by Bird and Wang (2015) exploring leadership styles of superintendents in the educational setting revealed respondents equitably reporting their styles among the categories of democratic, situational, servant, and transformational. While the research in this study used the three leadership styles of transformational, transactional, and passive-avoidant, the responses were not equally divided and demonstrated the significant finding of transformational leadership as the self-reported leadership style. As the scales differ, the responses are important. As Bird and Wang (2015) noted, authenticity appears to be the catalyst to success with demonstrated leadership style among leaders. The practice of authentic leadership provides a predictable, transparent work environment needed for agencies that serve people with developmental disabilities and their families.

The lack of differentiation in leadership style among males and females in this study reflect the existing research by Burns and Martin (2010). The authors found no significant differences in leadership styles among males and females in their work with educational leaders. While Burns and Martin (2010) found that both males and females self-reported the invitational leadership style, the current study found participants self-reporting the transformational leadership style. Both found no gender differences. However, Garrett-Steib and Burkman (2015) found that, while there were no differences in leadership practices of men and women in their study, their research did reflect “female superintendents do seem to have stronger self-concepts in two leadership areas that

have the highest effect on positive institutional outcomes” (p. 164). This correlates with the results in the current study, where female participants self-reported higher outcomes of leadership than their male counterparts. An interesting finding was that Garrett-Steib’s and Burkman’s (2015) study had far more male respondents (86.4% male and 13.63 % female), and the current study had equal male and female participants.

The results of this study that reflect no differences in leadership styles in relation to longevity in the role as superintendent and longevity in the field of developmental disabilities are worthy of discussion in regard to research by Allen (2017). In Allen’s (2017) study of educational superintendents, superintendent longevity in a school system was statistically significant with regard to school performance. In the present study, transformational leadership was correlated with self-reported outcomes of leadership, and there was no relationship with longevity in the role of superintendent. The only differential relationship with self-reported outcomes of leadership was with the variable of gender, with females reporting higher outcomes of leadership than males.

The findings of this research add to the existing research literature on leadership theories and styles. This study is unique in its focus on superintendents in the county boards of developmental disabilities in the state of Ohio, an executive population not known to have been previously studied. The information gleaned from the results in this study informs the field of current self-reported leadership styles and behaviors. Responses of the superintendents in the study support the transformational leadership style and relate to the theoretical framework of not only Bass (1997) and Bass and Avolio (1994), but also in relation to the research of East (2018). East (2018) noted the importance of social service leaders adopting the transformational leadership style, complementing the work of Bass (1997). East’s (2018) clear depiction of a transformational leader included characteristics that may be considered essential for a superintendent’s success in

the field of developmental disabilities, most notably when addressing the challenges facing the developmental disabilities' leaders today.

Superintendents in the study might benefit from understanding the results reported in the aggregate. The realization of similarities of the self-reported styles and the outcomes of leadership with the transformational leadership style are a helpful starting point. Also of use to the superintendents in the study is the information noting females report higher outcomes of leadership than their male counterparts. An interesting finding is that in both the transformational and transactional responses, males reported slightly higher ratings on the scale than females. This leads to the question of gender differences in answering surveys regarding a person's own leadership behaviors and styles.

In addition to superintendents in the field finding this research beneficial, boards of directors, search committees, and leadership coaches and trainers may see the results of the study as valuable. Understanding the styles of leadership and the impact that transformational leadership has on an organization, specifically the developmental disabilities' public agency, might assist in candidate screening, interviewing, and selection. Research reflects the positive effects of transformational leadership in a variety of work settings (Bass & Avolio, 1994; Kovjanic, Schuh & Jonas, 2013; Spinelli, 2006; Guerrero, Fenwick, & Kong, 2017). Additionally, Cerni, Curtis, and Colmar (2010) discussed the benefits of transformational leadership supported by executive coaching. Other research (Kovacs & Corrie, 2017; C. L. Smith, 2015) noted the impact of coaching in regard to leadership resilience and handling the complexity of an executive role.

As new superintendents are hired into positions, issues regarding transition of leadership and managing change may lead to executive coaching as a strategy to boost leadership style and outcomes. Understanding the correlation between transformational leadership and self-reported

outcomes of leadership may lead to an informed selection committee and, subsequently, appropriate coaching as needed. The changing climate in the field of developmental disabilities necessitates leaders who exhibit passion, vision, and cultural competence. Understanding the various leadership styles and positive impact of transformational leaders provides a needed framework for professional growth and development of superintendents.

Future Directions

The most relevant future research should focus on the ability to identify leadership style and the relationship to specific performance outcomes provides the opportunity for greater analysis of the effectiveness of leadership style. Results from the accreditation process administered through the Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities and the creation of other benchmarks relevant to every county board in the state of Ohio is a future direction in the study of effectiveness of leadership styles.

Conclusion

This study provides the only known study examining the leadership styles and behaviors of superintendents in the county boards of developmental disabilities in the state of Ohio. By examining the leadership styles through the self-reported survey responses, trends were identified and analyzed. As the field of developmental disabilities changes, the need for strong leadership exists. The strength of a superintendent's leadership style impacts the success of the county board and services for people. The analysis in this research confirmed much of the literature review yet identified unique characteristics among the superintendents. Understanding the superintendent leadership behaviors and styles, the growth of females in the role of superintendents, and the theoretical background of leadership assists superintendents, boards, search committees, and stakeholders of the existing trends. Furthermore, the research initiated necessary dialogue

regarding leadership styles and the qualities of a successful leader in the public human services field of developmental disabilities.

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