



Leadership in Occupational Therapy

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Background

- Leadership supports growth and success in groups, organizations and professions (Heard, 2014)
- Mentors promote the transition to leadership roles (Shams, Batth & Duncan, 2019)
- Transformational leaders inspire others, instill creativity, identify and drive change, and create visions to align with values of OT (Phipps, 2015b; Stoffel, 2013; Wylie & Gallagher, 2007)
- Despite a growing demand for OT services, understanding the phenomenon of leadership within the profession is limited (Stoffel, 2015)

Research Question

How do established leaders in the profession of occupational therapy perceive and describe their experiences as a leader?

Methods

- Qualitative, phenomenological design
- IRB approval
- Recruited via email, state association websites, and connections
- 30 to 45 minute semi-structured interviews
- Recorded and transcribed
- Individual coding of data, line by line by researchers
- Researchers analyzed transcriptions to determine categories and emerging themes

Participants

Gender	Male	2
	Female	14
Years of Experience	0-9	1
	10-19	1
	20-29	5
	30-39	5
	40-50	4
Educational Level	Bachelor	16
	Master's	10
	Doctoral	10
Organization Involvement	AOTA	9
	State	13

Study Results

- Formal and informal mentorship are important in leadership development
- All participants discussed their passion and desire to give back to the profession
- Challenging personal experiences and past histories were discussed by many participants as an indicator of leadership readiness
- All leader participants utilize a number of styles of leadership (servant, transformational, authentic, social learning). Most participants discussed their emphasis on transformational approaches to leadership.
- Key leadership skills include strong communication skills, and the ability to listen to the ideas of others
- All participants discussed the importance of empowering others
- Leaders embrace opportunities, which arise in a variety of ways



Discussion

- All participants identified mentorship as key to a leader's success (Heard & Scott, 2018; Shams, Batth & Duncan, 2019)
- Not surprising is the fact that positive, empowering relationships are a key factor in the development and growth of OT leaders
- Self-awareness and reflection are important considerations in the development of vision and leadership abilities (Hunter, 2013; Phipps, 2015b)
- Surprisingly, leaders must be willing to relinquish duties and adopt other roles when necessary
- Leaders must be open-minded and open to opinion of others (Hunter, 2013)

Limitations

- Lack of prior research
- Small sample size
- Snowball sampling

Ethics

- Limited number of professional leaders could result in participant identification

Recommendations for the Future

- Recruit a larger sample size
- Continue further study about leadership in OT, across different types of organizations
- More diverse representation

Outcomes for OT Practice

- Greater development of future leadership
- Growth of OT profession
- Advocacy

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References on handout