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Is Transformational Leadership the best fit for Self-Managed Teams cohesion improvements within Nursing Homes for Elderly People?

ABBREVIATIONS

SMWT:..SELF MANAGED WORK TEAM(S)
NHFEP...NURSING HOME(S) FOR ELDERLY PEOPLE
TFL .... TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP
GT ....GROUNDED THEORY

Declaration of originality

I, Jaap Zwart, declare that I am the sole author of this dissertation, and that the work is a result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. All references have been duly cited.

Acknowledgement

This is to express my sincere appreciation to all members of the St John University and Robert Kennedy College who helped me to make this journey an unforgettable learning experience which shaped my life in many unforeseen areas. Thank you!

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to determine whether Transformational Leadership has a positive impact on the cohesion of Self-Managed Work Teams (SMWT) within a Nursing Home for Elderly People. This was done by researching the viewpoints of members of SMWT on the leadership given by their team leaders. It also investigates how the team members experienced the cohesion of the team. The research reflects on how the leadership style influences the cohesion of the SMWT and proposes a way to improve this cohesion by focusing on TFL development. The Grounded Theory methodology was used in this qualitative research to explain how the interaction between the leadership style and team cohesion works and to develop a theory that emerges from the reality that the theory is developed to explain (Jing, 2010).

1   Introduction

Self-Managed Work Teams (SMWT) determine themselves how a certain goal is being fulfilled. A SMWT is also named self-directed work team, autonomous work group, self-managed team, and other terms (Yeatts & Seward, 2000; Bhatia, 2012; Silverman & Propst, 1996; Franz, 2012, 2004; Forsyth, 1999). They preferable consist out of up to 16 people and make their own decisions on how to implement the equipment, planning and coaching (Holbeche, 2006).

Existing theory around the effectiveness of SMWT within Nursing Homes for Elderly People (NHFEP) is difficult to find because the use of SMWT in NHFEP is still very rare. The outcome of different analysis shows that there is still a command and control management structure within most NHFEP after implementation and use of SMWT (Yeatts & Seward, 2000). Effective SMWT have positive team cohesion. NHFEP are not aware of which leadership style is best suited to guide SMWT towards a better team cohesion. This lack in team cohesion of many SMWT within NHFEP is probably related to the absence of having a proper leadership style to guide these SMWT (Legatt, 2007; Borrill,.et al.,1999; Yeatts & Seward, 2000).

This dissertation aims to provide a better understanding towards TFL as the preferred leadership style to improve the SMWT cohesion within NHFEP. The study will investigate if TFL is best suited to improve the SMWT cohesion within NHFEP. This is done in a unique situation where new SMWT are formed within a NHFEP where the management structure is still hierarchical and transactional in nature. These SMWT have difficulties in creating effective team cohesion. Will SMWT cohesion benefit from the TFL Style?

The research question that shaped and guided the design and execution of this study is formulated as follows:

Can the team cohesion of self-managed work teams within Nursing Homes for Elderly People be positively influenced by transformational leadership?

This study tries to clarify this relationship between TFL and SMWT cohesion and as a secondary challenge formulates a guideline on leadership development improvements.

The research objectives are to:

1.   Critically review theories and possible evidence of the relationship between TFL and SMWT cohesion relevant to NHFEP
2.   Evaluate how TFL influences SMWT cohesion within a NHFEP.
3.   After evaluation recommend how TFL can improve the SMWT cohesion within the NHFEP

1.1   Relevancy of the Study

TFL is build up on transactional leadership and it produces levels of effort from followers that go beyond what could be achieved with a transactional approach (Senior, 2006; Robins, 2005).

Momentarily many NHFEP are in a transition phase between old hierarchical team structures towards SMWT. They find it very difficult to define the proper leadership style to guide these SMWT. It seems that the old hierarchical management structures and the transactional leadership style are not very well suited to cope with these new SMWT. They do not improve the cohesion of these teams and this results in SMWT that are not able and allowed to manage themselves; which is in essence their rationale of existence.

These difficulties and the search for the right leadership style to make a successful transition towards effective and highly cohesive SMWT, was the motivation to research the expected positive influence of TFL on SMWT cohesion. The literature review tells something about the relationship and positive influence of TFL on SMWT cohesion. The semi-structured interviews - combined with the nonparticipant observations - investigate the relevance of these outcomes within a real-life situation where SMWT are introduced. The results of this study can be used during future transitions within NHFEP from hierarchical managed teams towards SMWT.

1.2   Methodology of the Study

This study uses the qualitative research method. Qualitative research examines the nature of (human) phenomena. The phenomenon being analyzed in this research is the presumed positive influence of TFL on the cohesion of SMWT within a NHFEP. This research analyzes what the different forms are of the specific phenomenon being analyzed. What are the different perspectives under which this phenomenon can be considered and in what context does it occurs (Philipsen & Verbooy-Dassen, 2004)?

The qualitative research used in this study is characterized by its analytical goals being the development of categories, the elaboration of concepts and the formulation of a theory. As a result of this analytical openness, the research design shows successive phases. Each of these phases bare their own objectives and specific demands for data collection, textual analysis and analytical reflection. Three steps in qualitative analysis are presented here. Firstly, the use of interpretative analysis using open coding, secondly comparative analysis using axial coding and thirdly integrative analysis using selective coding (Wester, 2004).

This research approach falls into the category of Grounded Theory (GT) developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967). GT is a general research method which guides this study on the matters of data collection and it details strict procedures for data analysis. It enables this research to seek out and conceptualize the latent social patterns and structures of the area of interest through the process of constant data comparison. Initially an inductive approach was used to generate substantive codes from the data. In a later stage the developed theory suggested where to go next to collect data, formulate new and different codes and categories and which questions to ask (Scott, 2009).

Conform the GT research methodology, the primary data for this study was collected and analyzed until theoretical saturation was reached (Hollander, 2012).
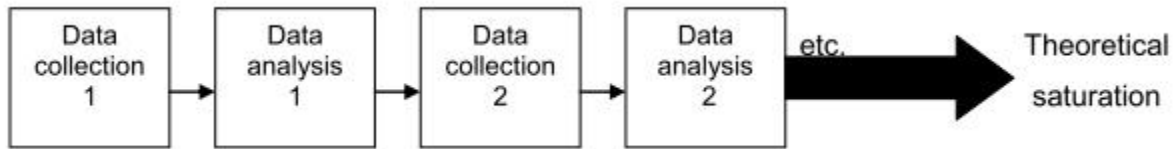
Figure 1: GT Process (adapted from Punch, 1998, used by Hollander (2012))

1.3   Overview of the chapters

The following structure is used in this research:

- Chapter 1: Creates a context for the research.
- Chapter 2: Provides the theoretical surrounding for the research.
- Chapter 3: Outlines the methodology and design of the research.
- Chapter 4: Forms the presentation of the qualitative data.
- Chapter 5: Discussion of the results, limitations, reflection and recommendation.
- Chapter 6: Final Conclusion.