Chapter 30
Social Work Leadership

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ABSTRACT

The concept of leadership has always been a subject of interest from ancient times to the present. The requirement for different types of leadership styles has emerged over time due to the change and innovation taking place in the organizations, and therefore, new leadership approaches have been established as a result. The aim of this study is to examine the concept of social work leadership, as a new leadership approach, and present a general framework within the scope of the studies conducted on social work leadership. Within this context, the concepts of leadership, social work, and social work leadership have been addressed, the competencies required by the social work leaders have been reviewed, and the studies conducted with respect to social work leadership were discussed. As a result of a comprehensive literature review, it was concluded that the studies regarding social work leadership were not sufficient, and the existing studies underline the lack of interest in leadership in the field of social work and make a call for leadership accordingly.

INTRODUCTION

The perception of social state as well as social work and social welfare have become different concepts as a result of globalization. Different and new social requirements have emerged in today's societies where change and development are very rapid, however, whether social work organizations have leaders who are competent to satisfy the aforementioned requirements has become a controversial issue and, usually the lack of interest in leadership in the field of social work has been underlined in the relevant literature and a call for leadership has been made in this field. Since social work organizations have different characteristics compared to other organizations, the leaders of social work organizations must have competencies specific to these environments. The aim of this study is to understand why social work organizations require social work leadership and the leadership competencies required by social work organizations.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study has been prepared using the systematic review method. The first step to conduct a systematic review is to formulate specific key questions that will lay the basis of a research (Robinson & Lowe, 2015, p.103). In this context, 'who is a social work leader and what competencies should he/ she have' are the key questions laying the basis of this study. After the research question and framework were determined, the concept of leadership and the significance of the concept of leadership, service, social work, social work leadership, and the competencies of social work leaders in the current literature were reviewed and the findings obtained were organized systematically.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Leadership

There are hundreds of books and many leadership models on leadership, which is among the most studied subjects on human behavior (Jacobsen, 2009, s.29). There is no consensus on the concept in question although people have been concerned about leadership and the idea of leadership from ancient times to the present day. The lack of consensus on the subject gives us an idea about the substantiality and multidimensional nature of the subject. Although the phenomenon of leadership is one of the primary subjects studied in the literature of social sciences and management and still maintains its sophistication, it is acknowledged that there is no common perception among social scientists about what leadership means (Ünal, 2012, s.79).

Macbeath et al. argues that the reason for the lack of a common consensus on the definition of leadership is the continuous change in organizations which operate in the global environment and the change of the functions expected from leaders as a result of the said change (Karip, 1998, citation from p.445). Moreover, the definition of leadership has increased by the influence of cultural differences Hodgetts and Luthans, 2003, p.356) and this has led to a to a lack of consensus on the definition of the concept.

Some of the definitions with respect to the concept of leadership, which cannot be addressed in a single dimension due to its substantiality and comprehensiveness, are listed below:

Leadership is the use of power with the aim of influencing the thoughts and actions of the followers. (Zaleznik, 1977, p.267).

Leadership includes the process of persuasion in order to direct them in line with the set goals. (Davis, 1988, p.141).

Leadership is to direct subordinates towards entire activities the execution of which are necessary (Hodgetts, 1999, p.534).

Leadership is a learned or acquired ability that guides people to perform their duties enthusiastically towards achieving set goals (Hinterhuber and Friedrich, 2002, p.5).

Leadership is the art of influencing behaviors and actions by infusing specific values into the followers to achieve the desired goals under certain circumstances and conditions (Özkalp and Kırel, 2010, p.309).

Leadership consists of the sum of the skills and knowledge to gather a group of people around defined goals and to motivate them to achieve these goals (Eren, 2010, s.435).

Leadership is the process by which one person influences and directs the activities of others in order to actualize certain goals of an individual or group under certain circumstances (Ünal, 2012, p.82).

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