How Supervision Relates to Workforce Outcomes

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Level of Evidence: The effect of supervision on workforce outcomes has been the subject of research in numerous meta-analytic, multivariate, and correlational studies. There is correlational evidence that high quality supervision plays a role in the retention of child welfare workers. There are no studies that evaluate the impact of a supervisory intervention on workforce outcomes.

Current Best Evidence

- *What types of supervisory behavior influence retention?*
  - The three supervisory dimensions: *task assistance, social and emotional support, and interpersonal interaction* contribute to beneficial outcomes for workers. Of these, task assistance had the greatest impact on positive worker outcomes.[1]
    - **Task Assistance** - Supervisors, who provide tangible, work-related advice and instruction, provide assistance in job-related tasks, support training and learning activities, coach employees, and offer solutions to work related problems contribute to workers having higher rates of retention.
    - **Social and Emotional Support** - Supervisor who listen to workers as they discuss job difficulties, provide supportive statements, and relate to the emotional needs of the workers when they feel overwhelmed, stressed, or confused by their work have workers with higher rates of retention.
    - **Interpersonal Interaction** - There is a positive link between a worker's perception of the quality of the supervisory relationship and worker outcomes such as sense of competence, sense of personal accomplishment, organizational citizenship behavior, and job satisfaction.
  - Supervisors who interact with subordinates as professionals and encourage child welfare staff to share responsibilities for organizational vision and leadership and to continue personal and professional development increase the likelihood that a worker will remain employed in child welfare.[2]
  - Workers who remain employed in child welfare:
    - Have high quality supervision/leadership [3,4]
    - Have high supervisor and coworker support [3,4,5,6,7,11,12,13,14,19]
    - Have supervisors who facilitate their learning [8]
    - Have supervisors who support workers practice [9]
    - Report more guidance from their supervisor [10]

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- Have a strong sense of security and emotional closeness with their supervisor [10]
- Feel assured that they can rely on their supervisor for tangible support [10]
- Feel more positive about the role of their supervisor and have a more favorable view of their supervisor [11]
- Have supervisors who are more competent in doing their job, are more concerned with the worker's welfare, acknowledge the worker when they have a done a good job, help the worker complete difficult tasks, and are warm and friendly when the worker is having problems [12]

- *What job-related factors work with supervision to influence retention?*
    - The following factors increase the likelihood of retention:
        - Role clarity [9][13]
        - High organizational commitment [9][13]
        - High professional commitment [3][4][14]
        - High levels of job satisfaction [12][13][14][15]
        - High job autonomy [5][13]
        - Better working conditions [13]
        - Satisfaction with extrinsic rewards [3]
        - Higher salaries [12][16]
        - Spend less time on court related tasks [12]
        - Less emotional exhaustion [12]
        - Less stress [14]
        - Less job tension [16]

- *How do personal characteristics interact with supervision to influence retention?*
    - Supervisory support is especially important for retaining workers who have a low perception of self-efficacy. [15]
    - Workers who use control coping (positive thinking, help seeking, and direct action) are more likely to remain employed in child welfare. [4]
    - Low supervisory support has a larger effect on intention to leave for men than women. [16]
    - Women are more likely to receive supervisor support than men. [17]
    - More experienced workers are more likely to perceive less supervisory support. [17][18]
    - More experienced workers who have high levels of supervisor support are more likely to remain employed in child welfare. [16][18]
    - Supervisory support is more important for retaining less experienced workers. [2][19]

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- o Levels of human caring, self-efficacy, motivation, and persistence play a more important role in the intent to remain employed than elements of organizational culture.[2]

Practice Implications

- The findings regarding supervision and worker retention imply that certain supervisor behaviors should be increased or maintained through setting *clear job expectations, training, coaching, monitoring and rewarding desired behaviors*. These behaviors can be categorized as task assistance, social and emotional support and interpersonal interactions.
- **Task Assistance-** Supervisors need to:
  - o Provide work related advice and instruction
  - o Offer assistance with job related tasks
  - o Support training and learning activities
  - o Coach workers
  - o Provide task assistance more frequently with newer workers
- **Social and emotional support –** Supervisors need to:
  - o Listen to workers as they discuss job difficulties or problems
  - o Make supportive statements
  - o Recognize the emotional needs of workers feeling overwhelmed, stressed or confused
  - o Acknowledge and reward workers for doing a good job
  - o Be warm, friendly, and respectful with workers
  - o Clarify the workers role and job responsibilities
  - o Encourage job autonomy
  - o Encourage workers positive thinking and help seeking to manage stress
- **Interpersonal interaction**
  - o Encourage coworkers to support each other
  - o Encourage a sense of competence in workers
  - o Interact with workers as professionals and encourage staff to share the organization's vision
  - o Project a sense of emotional closeness to workers
  - o Support male and female workers equally
  - o Provide support to workers regardless of how long they have been on the job

Kansas Workforce Initiative Evidence Review

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