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Utilization of Leadership Behaviors in Athletic Training According to Job Title

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Context: The frequent practice of leadership within Athletic Training is critical to the profession's growth. While there is some research into the importance of leadership behaviors in Athletic Training (AT), there is little in regards to the practice frequency (utilization) of leadership behaviors.

Objective: To examine the frequency of use for leadership behaviors within AT and to make recommendations to AT educational programs.

Methods & Procedures: Non-experimental, exploratory and descriptive research design.

Intervention: The forty-nine item Leadership Utilization in Athletic Training Scale (LUATS) was developed based on important leadership behaviors described by Kutz (2010). Each behavior was rated on a five-point scale (1=never to 5=always)

Participants: Ninety-nine Certified Athletic Trainers (n=63 women; 64%) responded to the survey. A majority of respondents (n=55, 55.6%) reported working in College/University setting. The most frequent job title reported was educators/clinician (n=37; 37%), followed by Head AT (n=33; 33%).

Data Analysis: Internal consistency of the LUATS was measured using Chronbach's alpha and item analysis. Descriptive statistics and central tendency were calculated using Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS) 22.0. Statistical significance was determined a priori at $p \leq 0.05$. Independent samples t-test and one-way ANOVAs with Sidak post-hoc analysis were used to measure the differences between respondents and groups.

Results: Internal consistency of the LUATS was $\alpha = .96$, item analysis for individual behaviors

ranged from $\alpha = .961$ to $.963$. The three most utilized leadership behaviors were credibility ($M=4.8 \pm .43$), thrives on responsibility ($M=4.67 \pm .55$), and critical thinking ($M=4.59 \pm .61$). The three least utilized leadership behaviors were scholarship ($M=3.32 \pm 1.24$), socially responsible ($M=3.72 \pm 1.02$), and risk taker ($M=3.84 \pm 0.89$). Women utilized discipline more than men ($M=4.25 \pm .65$, $M=3.97 \pm .72$, $p=.05$). Courageous leadership (confidence) was utilized more frequently by those with 20 or more years of experience compared to those with 9 or less ($F(3,92)=3.421$, $p=.021$). Clinic-based athletic trainers reported uses excellent verbal communication more than college/university-based athletic trainers ($F(3,93)=3.399$, $p=.037$). Educator/clinical AT's reported using ethical behavior more than head athletic trainers ($F(3,94)=3.159$, $p=.025$); and intentional leadership, social responsibility, excellent written skills, scholarship, identification of leaders, risk taking, responsibility for actions, knowledgeable, and nurtures professional relationship more than staff athletic trainers ($F(3,94)=2.791$ to 4.906 , $p=.003$ to $.048$); and courageous leadership more than head athletic trainers ($F(3,94)=7.332$, $p=.002$) and staff athletic trainers ($F(3,94)=7.332$, $p=.001$).

Conclusions: Leadership behaviors were reported to be practiced with similar frequency between work settings, years of experience, and sex. The most notable differences were between job title, with Educator/Clinical utilizing leadership behaviors more than Head and staff AT's. These findings can be used to recommend non-clinical continuing education and professional preparation for specific AT roles and settings.

Key Words: Leadership behaviors, certified athletic trainers, clinical practice