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The Impact of Organizational Culture on Intention to Remain in Public Child Welfare: A Case Study in Tennessee

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Introduction

Public child welfare organizations around the country recently have come under public scrutiny regarding the provision of services to children and families. Such criticism has focused on decisions and actions of caseworkers, culture, organization, and procedures of the public agencies. Researchers who have studied the delivery of child welfare services in the public sector indicate that several factors contribute to this phenomenon: training and skill level of the worker (Hopkins, Mudrick, & Rudolph, 1999), (Ellett & Millar, 2005) professional organizational culture and retention and turnover (Ellett & Millar, 2005) organizational structure and procedural rigidity of the agency (Cohen, 1992; Cohen & McGowan, 1994; Gregoire, 1994), and structured supervision (Collins-Camargo, 2003). These areas of concern are linked to the extant that caseworkers who are inadequately trained, who do not receive appropriate supervision, and are not a part of a culture that supports such may not be able to move their organization forward in providing more effective means of delivering services. This impact on service delivery is most reflected in outcomes to children and families, including safety, permanence, and well-being.

The shortfalls of child welfare service delivery are documented in recent data related to professional organizational culture and staff turnover. According to the U.S. Government Accounting Office (GAO) 2003, it is estimated that annual staff turnover in child welfare range between 30 and 40% nationally, with an average tenure for workers less than two years. The GAO (2003) further reports that while the lack of employee recruitment and retention are significant contributors to this decrease, supervisory and agency support are primary factors that cannot be ignored.

This article presents findings from an exploratory study of frontline child protective services supervisors in Tennessee and the impact professional organizational culture had on their intent to remain employed in public child welfare. This study was a part of a larger research demonstration project that examined the impact of supervision on worker practice, intent to remain employed and overall outcomes to children and families. The study contributes to existing child welfare literature on supervisory practices, organizational culture, and retention by (1) focusing specifically on frontline child protection supervisor, and 2) accessing the effects and the impact of organizational culture in a public child welfare agency.

What is Organizational Culture?

Organizational culture has been defined as the shaper of human interaction and the outcome of it (Jelinek, Smircich, & Hirsch, 1983), the social process by which members share their values, beliefs, and norms (Rousseau, 1990), and as the shared assumptions that are taught to new members but restrict this socialization process to perceptions, thinking, and feelings, specifically excluding behavior (Schein, 1992). Kasperson and Kasperson (1993) described the culture as a synthesis of four approaches that are social functions, systems of common beliefs, systems of shared knowledge, and patterns of symbolic discourse. Thus, common definitions of culture are the shared values, beliefs, norms, and knowledge that guide behavior in an organization.

Ellett (2000) defined Professional Organizational Culture in child welfare context. Professional Organizational Culture refers to the norms (both formal and informal), values, interests, and beliefs shared among members of an organization that

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emanate from established professional ethics and standards that guide individual and collective behavior of organizational members. Professional culture frames organizational members' sense of who we are as professionals and what we do around here (Ellett & Millar, 2005).

The Importance of Professional Organizational Culture in Public Child Welfare

Previous research from business environments has demonstrated that organizational culture affects organizational effectiveness (Fjortoft & Smart, 1994; Smart & Hamm, 1993; Smart & John, 1996; Smart, Kuh & Tierney, 1997), job satisfaction (Johnson & McIntyre, 1998), organizational performance (Petty et al., 1995; Wilkins & Ouchi, 1983), and employee retention (Sheridan, 1992). Glisson and James (2002) posit that both organizational culture and climate are linked to individual attitudes, perceptions, and behavior. In essence, if workers feel their basic needs are being met, they will view work more positively. There are a number of factors that influence the culture and climate of an organization. Some include: history, organizational structure, interpersonal qualities of group members, and management and supervisory behavior (Morton & Salus, 1994), of these management and supervisory behavior have the greatest impact.

Research in education and psychology has identified professional organizational culture as instrumental to affecting meaningful organizational change (Fullan, 1993; Reachers & Schneider, 1990). Thus, according to Ellet & Millar (2005), personal as well as organizational beliefs, norms and values (culture) have powerful influences on individual and organizational behavior, which makes professional culture an important and rich variable to explore as a correlate of employee retention in public child welfare agencies.

In child welfare research, few studies exist that document the intersection of organizational culture and employees' intention to leave child welfare. More recent studies have documented worker commitment as being related to outcomes such as workers' intent to remain with the organization (Gifford, 2003). Wallace (1995) completed a study that examined the degree to which professionals in general are committed to their organizations as well as their profession. This study indicates that organizational commitment is highly dependent on perceived opportunities for career advancements and the criteria used in the distribution of rewards.

Organizational Commitment, Turnover, and Intent to Remain Employed

For the purposes of this paper, organizational commitment is defined as the relative strength of the individual's identification with and involvement in his or her employing organization (Mowday, Porter, Steers, 1982). Personal characteristics such as age, tenure, sex, sense of competence and education (Blau, 1985; Glisson & Durick, 1988; Mathieu & Zajac, 1990; Morris & Sherman, 1991) and psychological variables such as role conflict, role ambiguity and beginning work experiences (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990; Meyer, Bobocel & Allen, 1991) are cited as antecedents of commitment.

Turnover

Turnover is defined as the actual leaving of an employee from his or her place of employment. Researchers (American Public Human Services Association (APHSA), 2005; Brett, Guastello, & Aderman, 1982; Goodman, & Boss, 2002) have identified two types of turnover within the literature: *preventable/voluntary* and *unpreventable/ involuntary*. Preventable/voluntary turnover refers to an employee leaving his or her organization freely and without restriction. In contrast, unpredictable/involuntary turnover refers to an employee leaving his or her organization for reasons beyond their control such as illness or termination of employment.

Preventable turnover occurs after an employee develops an *intention to leave* the organization. *Intention to leave* refers to an individual's reduced

level of commitment that results in an increased desire to leave the organization (Mowday, Porter & Steers, 1982). *Intention to leave* the organization has been positively correlated with age, years of employment, education, caseload complexity, self-esteem, organizational culture, and job satisfaction, among other factors (Blankertz & Robinson, 1997; GAO, 2003; Jayaratne & Chess, 1984; Poulin & Walter, 1993; Rycraft, 1994). Although studies support the importance of these variables, researchers further admit that there is no single identifiable variable that can be pinpointed as the leading cause of intention to leave.

Intent to Remain Employed
Predictors of Intention to Leave

Researchers have examined job satisfaction and burnout as they relate to intention to leave and scholars have primarily focused on job satisfaction as a major cause of intention to leave (Acker, 2004; Barber, 1986; Penn, Romano & Foat, 1988). Studies indicate that among child welfare workers, community mental health workers and family service workers, promotional opportunities were the best predictors of job satisfaction and turnover intentions (Jayaratne & Chess 1984).

Mor Barak, Nissly, and Levin (2001) conducted a meta-analysis of 25 studies that included variables such as job satisfaction and burnout as antecedents to intention to leave. Results indicated that burnout, job dissatisfaction, availability of employment alternatives, low organizational commitment, stress, and lack of social support were the strongest predictors of intention to leave the organization.

Burnout is a syndrome of physical, emotional, and interactional symptoms related to job stress that includes emotional exhaustion, a sense of lacking personal accomplishment, and depersonalization of clients (Maslach & Jackson, 1981). Thus far, studies indicate that there is a significant and reciprocal relationship between employee burnout and job satisfaction (Anderson, 2000; Arches, 1991; Jayaratne & Chess, 1984; Siefert &

Jayaratne, 1991; Patton & Goddard, 2003; Winefield & Barlow, 1995). Consequently, employees who experience a significant degree of burnout are more likely to be dissatisfied with their employment and equally, employees who are dissatisfied are more likely to experience a degree of burnout.

Job Satisfaction and Organizational Commitment

Other studies have sought to establish a link between job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Job challenge and skill variety were found to be the best predictors of job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Glisson & Durick, 1988). As a result, organizational practices that increase job satisfaction will likely enhance both employees' service to clients and their commitment and willingness to contribute to the organization's success (Balfour & Weshsler, 1991). Additionally, as age and tenure in an organization increases, the opportunities for alternative employment may be restricted due to too many years invested within the organization or the perceived lack of employment opportunities due to age (Meyer & Allen, 1991; Meyer, Becker & Vandenberghe, 2004).

Purpose of Study

The purposes of this study were to explore group differences with regard to POC and IRE and to examine the impact of professional organizational culture on intent to remain employed in public child welfare in Tennessee. The *working hypothesis* of the study is that elements of professional organizational culture predict employees' intentions to remain employed in public child welfare.

Methods

Sample

The sample consisted of 203 supervisors from 12 Regions in Tennessee that comprise the Tennessee Department of Children's Services. The participants in the project were primarily Caucasian women, which is consistent with the overall make-up of the Department. Of the total respondents,

81.8% were female and 18.2% were male. More than three-fourths (75.9%) were Caucasian, followed by African American (21.2%), and others (3%). 78.3% of sample had annual salary of $20,001-30,000. The majority of sample (87.2%) held bachelors degree, followed by 11.8% Masters degree, and only 1% high school degree or GED. Table 1 presents the main characteristics of the sample.

Sampling Procedures

Data for the study were collected in Tennessee primarily by means of a web-based survey during the May 2003. Prior to administration of the survey, a list of e-mail addresses of all designated employees is obtained from the state. Each staff member was sent an e-mail with a brief description of the study, the use of the data and the risks involved in participating in the study, and the confidentiality of the data. The e-mail also contained a link to the URL containing the survey instrument, as well as login and password information. No identifying information is solicited, however, in order to track changes over time participants are asked to provide a unique identifier that consists of the first two letters of their mother's maiden name, the last two digits of their year of birth, and the last two digits of their social security number. Reminder e-mails are sent twice, one week and two weeks after the initial contact. The website is designed to only collect information for a three week period and the link is not functional three weeks after the initial contact.

Measures

Professional Organizational Culture Questionnaire — Social Work (POCQ-SW)

The POCQ-SW (Ellett & Millar, 2000) is a 34-item instrument designed to assess three dimensions of organizational culture by means of the following subscales: Administrative Support, Professional Sharing and Support, and Professional Commitment. *Administrative support* refers to the extent to which administrators interact with

Table 1: The Main Characteristics of the Sample (N = 203)

Characteristic	N	%	Characteristic	N	%
Gender			Ethnicity		
Female	166	81.8	African American	43	21.2
Male	37	18.2	Caucasian	154	75.9
Salary			Hispanic/Latino	1	.5
$0-10,000	10	4.9	Native American	2	1.0
$10,001-20,000	6	3.0	Multiethnic	3	1.5
$20,001-30,000	159	78.3	Level of Education		
$30,001-40,000	23	11.3	High school or GED	2	1.0
$40,001-50,000	3	1.5	Bachelors degree	177	87.2
$50,001-60,000	1	.5	Masters degree	24	11.8
More than $80,000	1	.5			
Mean (s.d.)			Mean (s.d.)		
Age		36.6 (11.30)	Years in Social Services	7.20 (10.47)	
Years at DCS		4.29 (5.54)	Years in Child Welfare	5.15 (6.75)	
Years in Current Position		2.28 (4.11)	Amount of Supervision (Hours per month)	12.38 (27.35)	

subordinates as professionals and encourage child welfare staff to share responsibilities for organizational vision and leadership and to continue personal, professional development. *Professional sharing and support* refers to the quantity and quality of interpersonal relationships among staff that enhance professional interactions, learning and development. *Professional commitment* refers to the extent to which shared values among staff reflect child welfare practices that demonstrate commitment to the continuous improvement of services to clients (Ellett, 2000). Each POCQ-SW item is assessed using a four-point, forced choice Likert scale ranging from 1=Strongly Disagree to 4=Strongly Agree. Investigation of internal consistency resulted in coefficient alphas of .92 for Administrative Support, .83 for Professional Sharing and Support, and .83 for Vision/Professionalism/Commitment. Further, evidence supported the factor validity of the instrument (Ellett & Millar, 2000). The data obtained for the current study indicate high internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha of .94 for Administrative Support, .93 for Professional Sharing and Support, and .89 for Vision/Professionalism/Commitment.

Intent to Remain Employed-Child Welfare (IRE-CW)

The Intent to Remain Employed-Child Welfare (IRE-CW) measure was specifically developed to measure employees' intentions to remain in child welfare by Ellett and Millar (2005). The IRE-CW consists of 9 items to which child welfare employees respond using a four-point, forced-choice Likert scale ranging from 1=Strongly Disagree to 4=Strongly Agree. For the total measure, possible scores range from 9 to 36. Item numbers 3, 5, and 7 asked respondents about their *intentions to leave employment* in child welfare and these items were reverse coded for subsequent data analyses. The scale had a reliability score of .87 for the current sample, indicating high internal consistency.

Data Analysis

First, descriptive statistics for demographic characteristics, Professional Organizational Culture and Intention to Remain Employed were conducted. To explore group differences with regard to Professional Organizational Culture, a t-test, a number of one way ANOVAs and correlations were conducted. To examine the impact of Professional Organizational Culture on Intention to remain Employed, a two-step hierarchical regression analysis was performed for IRE with demographic characteristics and three subscales of Professional Organizational Culture as independent variables. In the first step, ten demographic characteristics were entered; and in the second step, three subscales of Professional Organizational Culture were entered.

Results

Descriptive Statistics and Bivariate Relationships

Table 1 displays the means and standard deviations for continuous demographic characteristics. Table 2 shows descriptive statistics for POC and IRE and presents group differences with regard to POC and IRE based on different gender, ethnicity and education. Table 3 also presents bivariate relationships between several continuous demographic characteristics and POC and IRE.

For POC-Administrative support, there were significant group differences based on gender (t= 2.02, df=185, p<.05), ethnicity (F [2, 184] = 4.99, p<.01) and education (F [2, 184] = 4.01, p<.01). Women (M = 31.88, SD=6.77) were more likely to feel administrative support than men (M = 29.25, SD=7.09). Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) revealed that Caucasians perceived most administrative support (M = 32.27, SD=6.61), followed by others (M = 30.67, SD=6.28) and African American (M = 28.39, SD= 7.26). The Tukey HSD (Honestly Significant Difference) test indicated that significant differences exist between African American and Caucasian. ANOVA also found that

Table 2: Professional Organizational Culture and Intention to Remain Employed by Gender, Ethnicity and Education

	POC-Admin Support Mean (SD)	POC-Prof Sharing & Support Mean (SD)	POC-Commitment Mean (SD)	POC Total Mean (SD)	IRE Mean (SD)
Total	31.43 (6.88)	21.62 (4.13)	24.17 (3.77)	77.21 (13.10)	22.36 (3.23)
Gender	$t = 2.02*$ (df=185)	$t = 1.31$ (df=185)	$t = .95$ (df=185)	1.73 (df=185)	2.10* (df=199)
Female	31.88 (6.77)	21.79 (4.15)	24.29 (3.72)	77.96 (12.93)	23.69 (5.47)
Male	29.25 (7.09)	20.75 (3.95)	23.59 (4.03)	73.59 (13.55)	21.76 (6.77)
Ethnicity	$F=4.99**$ (df=2,184)	$F=3.04*$ (df=2,184)	$F= .44$ (df=2,184)	$F=3.62*$ (df=2,184)	4.28** (df=2,198)
African American	28.39 (7.26)	20.16 (4.54)	23.66 (3.50)	72.21 (14.16)	21.09 (5.20)
Caucasian	32.27 (6.61)	21.98 (3.98)	24.31 (3.85)	78.55 (12.56)	23.95 (5.78)
Others	30.67 (6.28)	22.17 (3.43)	24.17 (3.43)	77.00 (13.36)	23.83 (5.91)
Education	$F=4.01**$ (df=2,184)	$F=3.04*$ (df=2,184)	$F=4.21**$ (df=2,184)	$F=4.76**$ (df=2,184)	$F=2.95*$ (df=2,200)
HS or GED	29.25 (.50)	20.75 (2.36)	22.75 (2.06)	72.75 (.96)	17.00 (5.66)
Bachelor	31.91 (7.01)	21.61 (4.18)	24.33 (3.95)	77.93 (13.60)	22.45 (3.23)
Masters	28.90 (7.23)	20.00 (4.11)	22.53 (4.19)	71.43 (13.44)	22.17 (2.78)

$*p < .05$, $**p < .01$, $***p < .001$

significant differences exist among high school graduate, bachelor, and master, with the bachelor's feeling most administrative support (M = 31.91, SD=7.01) followed by high school graduate (M = 29.25, SD=.50) and Masters degreed subjects (M = 28.90, SD = 7.23). Years at DCS and Years in Child Welfare were significantly but negatively related to POC-Administrative Support (r = -.20, p<.01; r = -.20, p<.01). Amount of supervision was significantly and positively related to administrative support (r = .20, p<.01).

There were significant association between ethnicity and POC-Prof Sharing and Support (F [2, 184] = 3.04, p<.05) and education and POC-Prof Sharing and Support (F [2, 184] = 3.04, p<.05). Other ethnicity felt most Prof Sharing and Support (M=22.17, SD= 3.43) followed by Caucasians

(M=21.98, SD= 3.98) and African Americans (M=20.16, SD= 4.54). Bachelor degree subjects perceived most Prof Sharing and Support (M=21.61, SD= 4.18) followed by high school graduates (M=20.75, SD= 2.36) and masters degree subjects (M= 20.00, SD= 4.11). Years at DCS was significant, but negatively associated with Prof Sharing and Support (r = -.14, p<.05).

Significant difference was also found between level of education and POC-Commitment (F [2, 184] = 4.21, p<.01). Bachelor degree subjects were most committed (M=24.33, SD=3.95) followed by high school graduates (M = 22.75, SD= 2.06) and master degree subjects (M=22.53, SD=4.19). Amount of supervision was positively and significantly related to POC-Commitment (r= .19, p<.01).

Table 3: Intercorrelations among Age, Tenures, Amount of Supervision, POC and IRE

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. POC Administrative Support	1									
2. POC- Prof Sharing and Support	.73***	1								
3. POC-Commitment	.62***	.62***1								
4. POC Total	.93***	.88***	.81***	1						
5. Intention to Remain Employed	.33***	.31***	.43***	.40***1						
6. Age	-.07	-.04	-.06	-.07	.08	1				
7. Years in Social Services	-.13	-.05	-.07	-.10	.18**	.58***1				
8.Years at DCS	-.20**	-.14*	-.12	-.17*	.18**	.55***	.59***1			
9. Years in Child Welfare	-.20**	-.08	-.07	-.15*	.22**	.54***	.58***	.83***1		
10. Years in Current Position	-.08	-.02	-.06	-.07	-.01	.44***	.38***	.71***	.63***1	
11. Amount of Supervision	.20**	.07	.19**	.19**	.01	-.14**	-.06	-.06	-.08	-.05

*p < .05, ** p < .01, ***p < .001*

For IRE, there were significant group differences based on gender (t= 2.10, df=199, p<.05), ethnicity (F [2, 198] = 4.28, p<.01) and education (F [2, 200] = 2.95, p<.05). Women (M = 23.69, SD=5.47) were more likely to remain employed than men (M = 21.76, SD=6.77). Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) revealed that Caucasians were more likely to remain employed (M = 23.95, SD=5.78), followed by others (M = 23.83, SD=5.91) and African American (M = 21.09, SD= 5.20). The Tukey HSD (Honestly Significant Difference) test indicated that significant differences exist between African American and Caucasian. ANOVA also found that the bachelor were more likely to remain employed (M = 22.45, SD=3.23) followed by master degree subjects (M = 22.17, SD=2.78) and high school graduates (M = 17.00, SD = 5.66). Years in Social Services, Years at DCS and Years in Child Welfare were significantly related to IRE (r = .18, p<.01; r = .18, p<.01; r=.22, p<.01).

In sum, women, Caucasians, employees with bachelor degree, employees with shorter tenure at DCS and child welfare, and employees who received more amount of supervision felt more administrative support than their counterparts. Caucasians, employees with bachelor degree and employees with shorter tenure at DCS felt more professional sharing and support among staff. Employees with bachelor degree and employees who received more amount of supervision were more committed to the continuous improvement of services to clients. Lastly, women, Caucasians, employees with bachelor degree, employees with longer tenure in social services, DCS and child welfare were more likely to intent to remain.

Multivariate Relationships

Hierarchical regression analysis was conducted to assess the association of Intention to Remain Employed with ten demographic characteristics and three subscales of Professional Organizational Culture. In the first step, age (β = .25, p<.01) and years in current position (β = -.26, p< .01) were significant predictors of IRE among ten demographic characteristics. The equation for these variables was significant (F [10,175] = 2.81, p < .01) and they accounted for 14% of the variance. In the second step, three subscale of POC were entered and the results showed a significant increase to R^2

Table 4: Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Intention to Remain Employed

Employed	Independent Variables		Intention to Rema	
	β	T	R²	ΔR²
Step 1			.14**	.14**
Gender (Male=1; Female=2)	.12	1.58		
Ethnicity (dummy-coded)				
African American or not	-.01	-.03		
Caucasian or not	-.02	-.10		
Education	.05	.73		
Salary	-.04	-.49		
Age	.25	2.53**		
Years in Social Services	.16	1.71		
Years at DCS	.25	1.58		
Years in Child Welfare	.22	1.63		
Years in Current Position	-.26	-2.45**		
Amount of Supervision	.02	.49		
Step 2			.30****	.16***
Gender (Male=1; Female=2)	.17	2.40**		
Ethnicity (dummy-coded)				
African American or not	-.01	-.04		
Caucasian or not	-.05	-.30		
Education	.05	.83		
Salary	-.02	-.22		
Age	.29	3.11**		
Years in Social Services	.18	2.13*		
Years at DCS	.30	2.03*		
Years in Child Welfare	.21	1.74		
Years in Current Position	-.25	-2.52**		
Amount of Supervision	.02	.57		
POC-Administrative Support	.19	1.79		
POC-Prof Sharing and Support	.26	2.57**		
POC-Commitment	.41	4.59***		

*p < .05, **p < .01 ***p < .001

(F [13,172] = 5.49, p < .001). This significant increase showed the strong impact of professional organizational culture on intention to remain. These variables explained an additional 16% of the variance and thus accounted for 30% of the variance.

Gender (β = .17, p<.01), Age (β = .29, p<.01), Years in Social Services (β = .18, p<.05), Years at DCS (β = .30, p<.05), Years in Current Position (β = -.25, p<.01), POC-Prod Sharing and Support (β = .26, p<.01) and POC-Commitment (β = .41, p<.001) were significant predictors of IRE. Thus, women, older employees, employees with longer tenure in social services and DCS, employees with shorter tenure in current position employees who had great senses of Prof Sharing and Support and commitment were more likely to remain in the organization. POC-Commitment emerged as the strongest predictor of IRE. Findings from hierarchical regression analysis supported working hypothesis, demonstrating that two elements of professional organizational culture predict employees' intentions to remain in public child welfare. The results of hierarchical regression were reported in Table 4.

Discussion

Major Findings

The purposes of this study were to explore group differences with regard to POC and IRE and to examine the impact of professional organizational culture on intent to remain employed in public child welfare in Tennessee.

The study found significant group differences with regard to POC. Generally, women, Caucasians, employees with a bachelor degree and employee who received more amount of supervision perceived their organizational culture positively, demonstrating that they felt more support from administration and interpersonal relationships. Interestingly, employees with shorter tenure in DCS and in child welfare viewed their organization more positively, showing that they received more support. There are two possible interpretations for this finding. First, organizational culture in DCS and child welfare might

change in a positive direction providing more administrative support and enhancing professional interactions. Second, although organizational culture is the same, new employees might receive more support in a short term period or they have not recognized negative aspects of their organizational culture. At this point, generalization seems hasty and replication is needed to confirm these findings.

Other interesting findings were that there were no significant associations between gender and commitment, between ethnicity and commitment as well. Although Caucasian women viewed their organization more favorably, their professional commitment was not significantly better than men and other ethnic groups. This result is consistent with previous findings (Mor Barak, Findler, & Wind, 2001; Wahn, 1998), which suggest that there are no consistent relationships between gender and level of commitment. Another interesting finding which is consistent with previous research (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990) was that there was no consistent relationship between level of education and commitment. Employees with a bachelor degree perceived their organizational culture most positively followed by high school graduates, and employees with a master's degree. However, we must draw definite conclusions cautiously since most samples had bachelor's degree and there were only two high school graduates.

The study also found significant group differences with regard to IRE. Generally, women, Caucasians, employees with a bachelor's degree and employee with longer tenure in social services at DCS and child welfare were more likely to remain in the organization. Although employees with longer tenure in DCS and child welfare perceived their organizational culture more negatively, they were more likely to remain employed in child welfare. The reason for this can be attributed to the different causes related with age. Employees with shorter tenure can find another job more easily than their counterparts as they are young thus they are more willing to leave their organization when

there are better opportunities. On the contrary, employees with longer tenure do not have as many opportunities and they have worked for this profession for a long time so they want to stay and maintain their job even though they are not really satisfied with their organizational culture.

Hierarchical regression analysis also supported the significant relationship between several demographic characteristics and IRE. Women, older employees, employees with longer tenure in social services and DCS were more likely to remain in the organization.

As hypothesized, two elements of professional organizational culture — Prof Sharing and Support and Commitment — strongly predicted intentions to remain in public child welfare. This finding suggested that employees who had supportive and cooperative relationships with other staff and employees who were more committed to their profession and organization were more likely to remain in child welfare organizations.

One of the most important findings was that the POC-commitment was the strongest predictor of IRE. This result highlights the importance of commitment, as indicated by previous studies (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990). Interestingly, POC-Administrative Support did not predict intention to remain, which is inconsistent with recent study in child welfare (Ellett & Millar, 2005). Unlike previous study (Ellett & Millar, 2005), the sample of this study only included supervisors and managers, thus administrative support might be less important and did not predict their intention to remain. Again, replication is needed to see whether this finding pertains to public child welfare in other states and whether this finding is due to organizational differences, sampling issues or different statistical analysis.

Overall, employees' perceptions about their organizational culture can be influenced by their demographic characteristics. Considering that vast majority of samples were Caucasian women with bachelor's degree, we can conclude that employees who were majority of that organization felt more

support and perceived their organization more favorably. The way employees feel about their organizational culture affects their intention to remain. The findings suggest that when individual workers have cooperative relationships with other staff that enhance professional interaction, and they are committed to their organization and profession, they are more likely to remain in the organization.

Limitations and Strength

There are several limitations of the current study that should be noted. The first stems from generalizability. The study sample consisted of supervisors and managers in public child welfare in Tennessee without including direct service workers. Thus, these results may not be generalized to general public child welfare workforce or to public child welfare workforce in other states. Moreover, the majority of subjects were Caucasian women with bachelor degrees; therefore such homogeneity of participants can make it difficult to uncover relationship between variables.

Second, the cross-sectional nature of this study limits our ability to make causal inferences from the data. Also, this study is susceptible to the problem of omitted variables [burnout, stress, organizational climate, and professional commitment]. Due to the fact that these important variables are related to organizational culture and intent to remain employed, inferences cannot be made. Therefore, the relationship between the variables included and the omission of these variables could be misleading. It should be noted, that while the research literature indicate that the omitted variables are important to the phenomenon under study, they were not included. Furthermore, this study reflects a moment in time specific to Tennessee's public child welfare organization, and includes a purposive sample of CPS supervisors. The use of purposive sample is common in exploratory research. However, the consequence of this method is that an unknown segment of the population is excluded (e.g., those who did not volunteer) from the study. In addition to the fact that this study was specific

to Tennessee, it also important to note that the sample obtained was small, though the results were in the predicted direction. Therefore, the extent to which this method actually represents the entire child welfare population cannot be known. Replications of this study are strongly recommended with a larger sample size, multiple child welfare agencies, with the use an experimental design for a broader representation of child welfare workers.

Strengths

The strengths associated with this study reflect that this is one of a few research studies that linked professional organizational culture and intention to remain in public child welfare. Also, this was unique sample — only from supervisors

Implications

Implications for Practice and Policy

Over the past decade, public child welfare organizations, both nationally and internationally have struggled with the increased demands for greater accountability, particularly as it relates to service delivery. Tennessee, like most states have been embroiled in lawsuits that have forced them to make sweeping changes in service delivery. These changes have focused very little attention to the agency's organizational culture and its impact on worker's intent to remain employed. The current exploratory study contributes to the beginning dialogue and research that is examining this phenomenon.

The research literature in education and psychology has identified organizational culture as being very instrumental to affecting meaningful organizational change (Fullun, 1993; Reachers & Schneider, 1990). Therefore, if public child welfare organizations desire to maintain a steady workforce, which may contribute to consistency in service delivery to families, it is strongly suggested that the issue of organizational culture and its impact on worker intention to remain employed become an ongoing part of the dialogue between agency administrators, collaborators, and policy makers. It

is further suggested that the focus on community collaborations with local and state universities continue to be implemented. The need for professionally trained social workers in public child welfare agencies is critical.

Implications for Future Research

Given the limitations of generalizability, replication utilizing samples from all levels of child welfare workers in different states is needed. Due to the significant relationship between demography and POC, POC and IRE, future research needs to examine the whole conceptual model that links demographic characteristics, POC and intention to remain. Further research also needs to consider various personal and organizational contexts as possible moderators and mediators. In addition, future research needs to employ longitudinal designs to determine casual inference, whether variables effect change over time and, if they do, whether this change is different across different samples and organizations. Given the strong and important effect of POC-commitment, exploring antecedents of commitment is noteworthy.

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