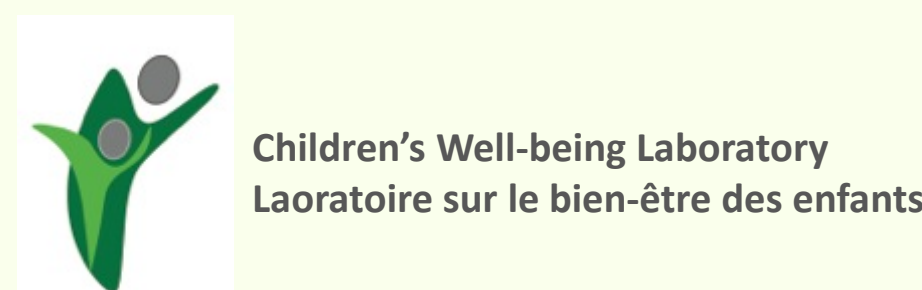


Understanding the Characteristics of Child Welfare Agencies Participating in a Child Neglect Implementation Study



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Introduction

- Neglect is one of the most frequent types of child maltreatment across North America. It occurs when a caregiver fails to provide for or protect a child through acts of omission. Despite its high incidence, the Ontario child welfare system currently does not make use of any evidence-based child neglect interventions.
- This study included seven child welfare agencies in Ontario, with a sample comprised of 29 practitioners and 22 senior management from those agencies, prior to the implementation of an evidence-based practice (EBP).
- The objectives were to examine the characteristics of the seven participating agencies, the training background of both stakeholders, their attitudes towards evidence-based practice, their agency's support of innovative clinical practice, and its readiness for change.
- The results of this study will eventually be tied to the fidelity and implementation of the evidence-based practice.

Methods

Measures

The Evidence-Based Practice Attitudes Scale (EBPAS) is a questionnaire that assesses attitudes toward innovation of evidence-based practice in mental health service settings. Participants are asked to what extent they agree with each item on a scale ranging from 0 (not at all) to 4 (very great extent). The practitioners completed the full 50 item questionnaire, whereas the executive directors completed an abridged version (30 items) that contained only questions relevant to their positions. The EBPAS measures 12 domains (ex: burden and feedback). Cronbach's α for the total score was 0.94 for practitioners and 0.60 for senior management.

The executive directors completed an abridged version of the Texas Christian University's Four Domains of Organizational Readiness for Change scale (TCU). This scale asks how strongly participants agree with the statements on a scale ranging from 1 (disagree strongly) to 5 (agree strongly). The Cronbach's α for the total score was 0.45.

The 61-item Siegel Scale for Support of Innovation (SSSI) was completed by the practitioners. It assesses five domains related to the level of creative functioning the organization promotes in its staff on a scale ranging from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (disagree). The Cronbach's α for the total scale was 0.74.

Table 1. Demographics and Training

Variables	Senior Management (N = 22)			Practitioners (N = 29)		
	M	SD	%	M	SD	%
Males	NA	NA	18.2	NA	NA	10
Females	NA	NA	63.3	NA	NA	90
Age	51	7.94	NA	44	8.30	NA
Years of Experience	23	8.58	NA	15.5	6.60	NA
Level of Education	-	-	-	-	-	-
High School	NA	NA	0	NA	NA	6.9
College	NA	NA	4.5	NA	NA	55.2
Bachelors Degree	NA	NA	4.5	NA	NA	20.7
Masters Degree	NA	NA	72.7	NA	NA	6.9
Doctoral Degree	NA	NA	4.5	NA	NA	3.4
Other ^a	NA	NA	0	NA	NA	3.4

^a The other degree mentioned by a practitioner was Police Foundations
Note. three senior management did not report their level of education

- The senior management are on average 7 years older than the practitioners and have 7.5 more years of experience

Results

EBPAS Findings

- The mean score for the senior management was 2.71 (SD= .29; possible range = 0-4)
 - Variability of scores: 2.34-3.29
- The mean score for the practitioners was 3.40 (SD= .41; possible range = 0-4)
 - Variability of scores: 2.39-3.92
- The means of the two stakeholders were significantly difference ($t_{(39)} = 5.43, p=.000$)

Table 2. Correlations for Senior Management N=22

	1	2	3	4	5
1. Age	-				
2. Years of experience		-			
3. TCU autonomy	-.62*		-		
4. TCU communication		-.64*		-	
5. TCU change					-
6. EBPAS burden				-.62*	
7. EBPAS feedback					.64*
8. EBPAS total score				.60*	

Note. only variables which were significant were included in this table due to space limitations

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$

- Older age of the senior manager was associated with a lowered sense of autonomy among employees
- Greater years of experience was associated with perceptions of lowered openness to communication within the agency
- Greater openness to communication within an agency was associated with positive attitudes towards EBP
- Greater openness to change was associated with greater use of feedback to improve clinical practice

Table 3. Correlations for Practitioners (N = 29)

	1	2 ^a	3	4	5
1. Age	-				
2. Level of education ^a		-			
3. Years of experience	.44*		-		
4. Time doing administrative work				-	
5. Time doing Psychotherapy					-
6. Time being supervised		-.53**			
7. Time supervising others					
8. SSSI norms of diversity	.43*				
9. SSSI ownership					
10. EBPAS limitations	.52**				
11. EBPAS burden				.44*	
12. EBPAS openness		-.31*			
13. EBPAS organizational support					.51*
14. EBPAS feedback					.57*

Note. only variables with significant relationships to at least one other variable were included in the table due to space

Pearson's * $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$

^a correlations with level of education were run with Spearman's because it is an ordinal variable

- The lower the education level of the practitioner, the more supervision they received
- Older practitioners felt their agency encouraged staff to hold different views
- The perceived limitations of EBP decreased with age
- Practitioners with lower levels of education were more open to trying new interventions
- Practitioners who spend more time doing psychotherapy were more likely to be interested in EBP with the support of their agency
- Practitioners who spend more time doing psychotherapy felt feedback was important for improving clinical practice

Table 4. SSSI for practitioners (N = 29)

	M	SD	Possible Range
Total score	14.58	1.07	5-25
Subscales	-	-	-
Leadership	2.75	0.31	1-5
Ownership	3.00	0.27	1-5
Norms of Diversity	3.26	0.33	1-5
Continuous Development	2.82	0.38	1-5
Consistency	2.76	0.38	1-5

- On average the practitioners responded that they either agreed with the statement or slightly agreed with the statement and therefore were fairly supportive of the concepts
- Practitioner total scores were within the slightly agree range, indicating the practitioners perceived their agency to support innovative change

Table 5. TCU for Senior Management (N = 22)

	M	SD	Possible Range
Total Score	32.31	1.62	10-50
Subscales	-	-	-
Staff needs	40.73	4.81	10-50
Staffing	33.61	4.25	10-50
Training	33.33	6.34	10-50
Cohesion	31.39	2.34	10-50
Autonomy	23.67	4.33	10-50
Communication	34.33	2.53	10-50
Stress	29.59	2.98	10-50
Change	31.83	4.13	10-50

- According to Lehman, Greener, Rowan-Szal and Flynn (2012) **scores above 30** indicate some level of agreement with the concept the scale is measuring, scores below 30 indicate a level of disagreement with the concept
- Overall, the senior management tended to agree with the concepts to some extent, though the large variation in some of the subscales suggests that there was a wide range of opinions, particularly on the training subscale

Limitations

- Generalizability: all of the senior management and the majority of the practitioners were Caucasian (90%), and most of the sample was female
 - The opinions of our sample may not reflect those of all agencies in Ontario and therefore the outcomes of the larger EBP study may not be generalizable to the entire province
- Comparability: the questionnaire package for the senior management and the practitioners contained different measures, except for the EBPAS. Therefore, we were limited in the extent to which we could compare the two stakeholders.
- The analyses are preliminary

Implications

- These results will be used to examine the fidelity and the results of implementing the EBP
- The characteristics of the agencies that are most successful in implementing the EBP could be used as a model for other agencies who wish to adopt this program

References

- Lehman, W. E. K., Greener, J. M., Rowan-Szal, G. A., & Flynn, P. M. (2012). Organizational Readiness for Change in Correctional and Community Substance Abuse Programs. *Journal of Offender Rehabilitations*, 51, 96-114. doi: 10.1080/10509674.2012.633022

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