Evidence-based Practice


This article examines the ways in which evidence-based practice (EBP) implementation has been shaped by organizational context and processes in the human services. The author provides information on a study of staff support for EBP in a disability services organization where the senior staff has made a commitment to EBP implementation.

Human services organizations face expectations from funding bodies, government regulatory bodies, and the wider society to use evidence to inform practice and interventions.

Literature on EBP implementation and knowledge translation and transfer highlight the importance of a number of relational and organizational processes to bring research findings and practice closer together. This study found strong support for evidence-based practices, using a case study methodology to address the following research question: “What characteristic of human service workers are associated with support for the implementation of EBP?”

The study used two standardized scales to measure levels of support for EBP – the Evidence Based Practice Attitude Scale (Aarons, 2004), and the Brief Individual Readiness for Change Scale (Goldman, 2009). The case study design examined the process of EBP implementation within the organization related to internal and external factors. Sixty-two questionnaires were distributed, and 55 completed (89% response rate).

The majority of respondents were frontline workers, along with team leaders and middle managers with direct client contact. Empirical evidence from this study indicated that higher qualifications, working at a higher level within the organization, and being female were correlated with greater support for evidence-based practice. Years employed in the organization was negatively correlated with support for EBP.

Age of workers and length of experience in the human services were not, however, found to be significant factors associated with attitudes toward EBP.

While a critical time period was not identified, the finding regarding years of service supports the view that staff can become entrenched in particular practices after a length of time in an organization. If EBP implementation is to be successful, strategies to address resistance among long-term staff are warranted.