

FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO VOLUNTEER ADMINISTRATION LEADERSHIP PROFICIENCY OF SOUTHERN REGION 4-H COUNTY FACULTY

Nicole Stedman, Assistant Professor
Texas A&M University

Rick D. Rudd, Associate Professor
University of Florida

Abstract

Volunteer administration leadership is an important component of any successful 4-H program. Proficiency in competencies associated with volunteer administration can prove to be one's greatest asset in his/her ability to successfully develop the leadership of youth. With that, leadership style is also an important consideration because it provides a means for working with individuals and reaching programmatic goals. The purpose of this research was to determine factors which contribute to volunteer administration leadership proficiency of 4-H county faculty in the southern region. In order to do this, demographics and correlations among identified independent variables were analyzed. The primary intent was to develop a prediction equation for perceived proficiency in VAL competence. Although seven variables correlated with perceived proficiency in VAL competence, organizational culture (importance) and age were responsible for 43% of the variation in the model. These factors can guide efforts related to volunteer programming, including professional development opportunities for 4-H county faculty in the southern region. A focused curriculum addressing organizational culture and a mentoring program for faculty has the potential to increase VAL proficiency.

Introduction

In 2003, there were 7,090,920 youth enrolled in 4-H programs across the nation (National 4-H Headquarters, 2004). Yet, the NAE4-HA (2004) reported only 3,600 youth development professionals as members. Though this is not inclusive of all 4-H faculty, it provides a basis for comparison. This creates a county faculty to youth ratio of 1:1,970, an ineffective means for producing outcomes, like "care," "guidance," and "wisdom" (National 4-H Headquarters, 2001). However, the National 4-H Headquarters (2004) reported 449,966 volunteers last year, decreasing the adult:child ratio to 1:16, a ratio more appropriate for programmatic effectiveness.

Today, the 4-H county faculty member wears a number of hats: educator, facilitator, leader, and volunteer administrator. Boyce (1971) addressed the concerns that 4-H county faculty alone would not be able to serve the growing number of youth in 4-H

programs. It is essential for 4-H county faculty to understand volunteer administration leadership (VAL), when 450,000 adults contribute to 4-H programs across the nation. The most effective way to ensure the continued contributions of volunteers to the 4-H mission is by providing a quality volunteer experience. Boyce explored the notion of withholding information as power in his application of the ISOTURE model to 4-H adult volunteer leaders. He understood the value of volunteers to the organization and provided a framework for 4-H county faculty to adhere.

Volunteer administration is only 20 years old, yet the contributions of extension personnel to the field are still prominent (Boyce, 1971; Culp, Deppe, Castillo & Wells, 1998; Kwarteng, Smith, & Miller, 1988; Penrod, 1991). Previous researchers examined extension faculty's perceptions of volunteer administration models across the U.S. (Deppe & Culp, 2001; Culp &

Kohlhagen, 2004; Hange, SeEVERS, & VanLeeuwen, 2002), including needs assessments, use of job descriptions, resource location and recruitment (Culp, 1996; Fritz, Barbuto, Marx, & Etling, 2000). Hange et al. (2002) showed differences between perception and importance in nine competency areas of volunteer administration existed, supporting King (1997).

Cooperative Extension Service (CES) faculty, especially those having a high level of interaction with volunteers, like 4-H county faculty, can benefit from research initiatives; including pinpointing key characteristics of 4-H county faculty proficient in the discipline of VAL. While research in VAL has been focused on the importance of and proficiency in competencies, there has been a piece missing - the prediction of VAL proficiency.

Theoretical Framework

Volunteer Administration

For 44 years The Association for Volunteer Administration (AVA) has been the professional organization supporting the needs of volunteer administrators. The AVA has continued to progress the field as a true profession and is recognized internationally for the wide array of services and resources it provides. This includes the establishment of professional competencies for volunteer administrators encouraging many professionals to seek new and challenging educational opportunities (Association for Volunteer Administration, 2001). In 2001, the AVA identified five core competencies of VAL which were (a) professional principles, (b) leadership, (c) management, (d) planning, and (e) human resource management. Competency-based criteria are an important in developing a profession and Boyd (2003) identified the competencies that professionals in VAL would need in the coming decade as: (a) organizational leadership, (b) systems leadership, (c) organizational culture, (d) personal skills, and (e) management skills.

Stedman and Rudd (2004) developed the theoretical dimension of the discipline including seven key competencies. These competencies were the basis for

the development of the Volunteer Administration Leadership Competency Instrument (VALCI) (Stedman, 2004). The seven competences integrated both the AVA (2001) and Boyd (2003) competencies.

Stedman and Rudd (2004, p.10) identified the competencies as:

- (a) Organizational Leadership: leadership taking place in the context of the organization includes planning and operation at the program level,
- (b) Systems Leadership: leadership involving the expressed knowledge of one's discipline,
- (c) Accountability: knowledge and practice of skills addressing the planning, operation, and evaluation of a volunteer program,
- (d) Management Skills: knowledge and skills addressing the day-to-day operations of a volunteer program,
- (e) Personal Skills: knowledge and skills addressing effective communication and relationship building in volunteer programs,
- (f) Organizational Culture: knowledge and skills addressing positions and relationships within a volunteer organization, and
- (g) Commitment to the Profession: knowledge and skills addressing individual commitment to the field.

These competencies provided the framework for evaluating southern region 4-H county faculty's VAL perceived proficiency and competency importance.

Leadership Styles

In an effort to address the leadership styles of 4-H county faculty in the southern region, the model of Full Range Leadership (Avolio & Bass, 1991) guided the researchers. Full range leadership specifies a leader has three styles, which should guide them in their leadership; transformational, transactional and laissez faire (Bass & Avolio, 2000b). With transformational being the most effective and active of the leadership styles, followed by transactional and laissez-faire. This work expanded on the definitions of leadership as described by Burns (1978).

The Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) developed by Bass

and Avolio (2000a) measures nine behaviors (factors), which influence three leadership styles (outcomes). The nine factors are:

- a) Idealized influence attributed (refers to the socialized charisma of the leader, whether the leader is perceived as being confident and powerful, and whether the leader is viewed as focusing on higher-order ideals and ethics) , b) idealized influence behavior (refers to charismatic actions of the leader that are centered on values, beliefs, and a sense of mission), c) intellectual stimulation (gets followers to question the tried and true ways of solving problems), d) inspirational motivation (provides followers with a clear sense of purpose that is energizing; a role model for ethical conduct which builds identification with the leader), e) individualized consideration (focuses on understanding the needs of each follower and works continuously to get them to develop to their full potential), f) contingent reward (focus on clarifying role and task requirements, rewards for fulfillment of contractual obligations, g) management-by-exception active (focuses on monitoring task execution for any problems that might arise and correcting those problems to maintain current performance levels), h) management-by-exception passive (tends to react only after problems have become serious to take corrective action; will avoid making any decisions at all), and i) laissez-faire leadership (avoid accepting their responsibilities, are absent when needed, fail to follow up requests for assistance, and resist expressing their views on important issues) (Antonakis, Avolio, & Sivasubramaniam, 2003, p. 264-265).

Within the CES, research aimed at identifying leadership style of county faculty has become of interest due to the changing goals facing extension programs (Woodrum & Safrit, 2003). With that, measurement instruments like the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) (Bass & Avolio, 2000a) have proved to be valuable tools in county faculty leadership development (Rudd, 2000; Woodrum & Safrit, 2003).

Demographics

The prevalence of women in 4-H in state and county level positions provided the impetus for further studying the influence of gender on leadership. In the past thirty years, the study of gender on leadership grew considerably (Bass, 1990; Carless, 1998). However, empirically based research has shown a significant lack of evidence to support gender differences in leadership behaviors.

There is no conclusive evidence as to the relationship between race and leadership. In some instances, researchers were able to show differences in 360° inventories, in which followers scored leader behavior and in self-scored inventories in which leaders scored themselves (Kouzes & Posner, 1993; Kochamba & Murray, 1996). In others there was no relationship found (Holder, 1990; Sykes, 1995).

Moore (2003) found in using the MLQ within the CES no significant findings in the relationship between age and leadership style. Sykes (1995) concluded younger CEDs' (<45 years of age) perceived they demonstrate more leadership behaviors; however, Sykes concluded age was not a significant factor significantly influencing leadership behavior. Organizational tenure is important to the CES and Moore (2003) did find individuals reporting a longer tenure were less likely to engage in the transactional leadership style of Management-by-Exception (passive and active).

In order to maintain high quality volunteer programs, which attract and retain the best volunteer resources, professional development of 4-H county faculty is a necessity. By focusing on the two elements which have the greatest impact on the administration of volunteer programs, volunteer administration leadership proficiency and leadership style, there can be a greater effort to focus professional development opportunities for 4-H county faculty in the southern region. Researchers combined the theoretical framework of leadership (Avolio & Bass, 1991) with the theoretical framework of VAL (Stedman & Rudd, 2004) to provide a basis for measuring and interpreting the role of leadership and volunteer administration

competence importance in predicting 4-H county faculty's volunteer administration proficiency.

Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of this research was to determine contributing factors to volunteer administration leadership proficiency of 4-H county faculty in the southern region.

The objectives of this study were to:

1. Determine selected demographics of southern region 4-H county faculty,
2. Identify the relationship between selected demographics, leadership styles, and perceived volunteer administration importance and proficiency, and
3. Predict volunteer administration leadership proficiency based on demographics, leadership style and perceived volunteer administration leadership competency importance.

Procedures

This study used a survey research methodology with three questionnaires to collect information necessary to accomplish the objectives. This was a correlational study with the intent of assessing the predictability of the criterion, perceived volunteer administration leadership proficiency, by demographics, leadership styles, and perceived importance of volunteer administration leadership competencies.

The data collection for this study was completed during a larger national 4-H study, which had the target population of all 4-H county faculty in the United States (Stedman, 2004). Researchers considered each extension region as an individual population, with the final study sample including a random selection of states within each region. Selected states were contacted regarding use of their 4-H county faculty database, in order to randomly select individual participants representing the state and region. Using Dillman's (2000) Tailored Design Method, researchers minimized sources of error, including

coverage, non-response, and sampling error. Sixty-five participants were randomly selected from the southern region to participate in the study. The southern region included Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia. States from the southern region randomly selected included Mississippi, South Carolina, Texas, and Virginia. However, a viable sampling frame was not received from Virginia. Researchers calculated a response rate of 52% ($n = 34$).

Early and late respondents were compared in order to determine if any statistical difference existed (Lindner, Murphy, & Briers, 2001). Using the guidelines established by Linder and Wingenbach (2002), the double-dipping technique was used to determine if nonresponse was a concern. Ten non respondents were contacted, the responses were then combined and analyzed for differences in early and late respondents. Miller and Smith (1983) reported late respondents are often similar to early and this was the case when the two groups were compared in this study. Analysis confirmed no significant differences existed between early (the first 50%) and late respondents (the last 50%).

The questionnaires used in the collection of data were the Volunteer Administration Leadership Competency Instrument (VALCI) (Stedman, 2004), the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) and a short demographic instrument. The VALCI was designed as a web-administered questionnaire containing 52 independent statements allowing respondents to provide answers on two levels, perceived proficiency and importance. The questionnaire was divided into seven categories, each addressing one of the seven competencies of volunteer administration. The reported Cronbach's alphas for each construct were: organizational leadership ($\alpha=.88$), systems leadership ($\alpha=.83$), accountability ($\alpha=.85$), management skills ($\alpha=.88$), personal skills ($\alpha=.87$), organizational culture ($\alpha=.82$) and commitment to the profession ($\alpha=.80$). Perceived proficiency statements were measured using a Likert-type scale of 1

(Poor) to 5 (Excellent) and perceived importance statements used a scale of 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). The mean difference between perceived proficiency scores and perceived importance scores determined competence in volunteer administration. The researcher-developed demographic questionnaire was included with the VALCI for ease of data collection. Demographics included were gender, race, age, and tenure. A literature review revealed each of the selected demographics had some influence on leadership outcomes.

The MLQ was a 45-statement questionnaire measuring leadership behaviors and styles (Bass & Avolio, 2000b). Transformational leadership was measured using 20 statements associated with five of the factors, transactional leadership was measured using 12 statements associated with three factors, and laissez-faire leadership was measured by four statements, comprising the final, ninth factor. Using a Likert-type scale, 0 (Not at all) to 4 (Frequently) respondents self-reported leadership styles. For the purposes

of this study, the questionnaire was administered on the web. Bass and Avolio (2000b) reported the reliability of leadership factors, ranging from .74 to .91 and leadership outcomes, ranging from .91 to .94.

Findings

Objective 1.

Determine selected demographics of southern region 4-H county faculty

Of the faculty responding, 76.5% ($n = 26$) were women, with 23.5% ($n = 8$) reporting male. Race was analyzed as a dichotomous variable, white and people of color. There were significantly more white respondents (82.4% ($n = 28$)) than people of color 8.8% ($n = 3$).

The highest percentage of southern region 4-H faculty were under age 30 (26.5%, $n=9$), with the majority of respondents under age 40 (67.7%, $n = 23$), depicted in Table 1. Tenure ranged from 1-5 years (32.35%, $n = 11$) to 21-25 years (5.88%, $n = 2$).

Table 1
Age of Southern Region 4-H County Faculty (n=34)

Age Range	<i>f</i>	%	Cumulative %
26-30	9	26.5	26.5
31-35	7	20.6	47.1
36-40	7	20.6	67.6
41-45	3	8.8	76.5
46-50	5	14.7	91.2
51-55	2	5.9	97.1
56-60	1	2.9	100.0
Total	34	100.0	

Objective 2.

Identify the relationship between selected demographics, leadership styles, and perceived volunteer administration leadership importance and proficiency

Pearson product-moment correlations were computed to determine the strength of the linear association between variables. Perceived volunteer administration leadership competence proficiency was found to have relationships with seven variables. Relationship strength was

determined using the scale: .00-.19 (Negligible), .20-.49 (Low), .50-.69 (Moderate), .70-.85 (High), and .86-1.00 (Very high) (Ary, Jacobs, & Razavieh, 1996).

With an alpha level of .05 set a priori, seven variables had a significant correlation with volunteer administration leadership. There were five variables categorized as having low relationships age, $r = .46, p < .05$, race, $r = .44, p < .05$, systems leadership (perceived importance), $r = .45, p < .05$,

accountability (perceived importance), $r = .43, p < .05$, commitment to the profession (perceived importance), $r = .47, p < .05$. Two variables were categorized as having a moderate relationship perceived VAL importance, $r = .58, p < .05$ and organizational culture (perceived

importance), $r = .57, p < .05$. These relationships are summarized in Table 2. Variables associated with leadership style were found to have no significant relationships with perceived VAL competency proficiency.

Table 2
Pearson Product-Moment Correlations for Perceived Volunteer Administration Leadership Competency Proficiency and Importance, Leadership Style, and Demographics

Variable	Perceived Volunteer Administration Leadership Competency Proficiency	
	<i>r</i>	<i>n</i>
Accountability (Importance)	.43*	23
Race	.44*	24
Systems Leadership (Importance)	.45*	24
Age	.46*	25
Commitment to the Profession (Importance)	.47*	24
Organizational Culture (Importance)	.57*	25
VALC (Importance)	.58*	20

* $p < .05$

Objective 3.

Predict volunteer administration leadership proficiency based on demographics, leadership style and perceived volunteer administration leadership competency importance

The goal of objective three was to predict perceived volunteer administration leadership competency proficiency based on demographics, leadership style and perceived volunteer administration leadership competency importance. The Pearson product-moment correlations from objective three guided the building of a predictive model. With that, there were seven variables analyzed for their predictability of perceived

volunteer administration leadership competency proficiency using stepwise regression. However, due to the low number of respondents, only two variables were analyzed at a time. This process was repeated to determine the model with the greatest level of predictability, R^2 .

During analysis, two variables were found to have the greatest predictability on the dependent variable of VAL proficiency, organizational culture (perceived importance), $\beta = .52, t = 3.37, p < .05$ and age, $\beta = .40, t = 2.58, p < .05$. The completed model had an adjusted R^2 of .43, $F = 10.04, p < .01$. Table 3 summarizes the findings of the regression model.

Table 3
Multiple Regression Explaining Perceived Volunteer Administration Leadership Competency Proficiency in Southern Region 4-H County Faculty (n=21)

	B	SE B	β
Constant	9.53	15.73	
Organizational Culture (Importance)	.60	.18	.52*
Age	2.26	.88	.40*

Note. Adjusted $R^2 = .43$.

* $p < .05$

Conclusions and Recommendations

In presenting the following conclusions and recommendations, the researchers provide there should be careful consideration made due to the selection process of the participants.

Objective 1

The impact that demographics may have on leadership and volunteer administration were the basis for collecting the data. In the southern region, 76.5% of 4-H county faculty were female, which is higher than the 66% reported nationally (Stedman, 2004). Male county faculty in the southern region are not as well represented, at 23.5%, versus at the national level (33.0%). However, the southern region is considerably lower in percentage of male 4-H county faculty when compared to the national percentage. 4-H county faculty in the southern region have a higher percentage of non-white faculty (8.8%) compared to the national level (4.2%) (Stedman, 2004). The percentage of non-white faculty members at both the national and regional level is not proportional to the number of 4-H youth reported as non-white (31% national and 40% southern region) (National 4-H Headquarters, 2004).

Southern region 4-H county faculty are younger than their national counterparts, with 47% ($n = 16$) 35 years of age and younger compared to 29% ($n = 28$) at the national level (Stedman, 2004). Another dimension measured was tenure; tenure represented the length of time in extension and length of time as a volunteer administrator. Similar to the age of respondents, 55.9% ($n = 19$) of respondents

reported tenure 10 years and less. These two variables, when considered together indicated that 4-H is investing time and energy in acquainting and preparing younger and less experienced faculty for their roles as 4-H county faculty.

There needs to be a stronger initiative to recruit and retain faculty that are more representative of the population that is being served (National 4-H Headquarters, 2004). Candidates that are qualified and underrepresented, including men and people of color, should be sought out and encouraged to apply for opened positions.

Objective 2

The purpose of objective two was to determine the strength of the linear association between the variables, perceived proficiency in VAL competence, perceived importance of VAL competencies, leadership styles, and demographics. Taking into consideration objective three, correlations were identified as they related to VAL proficiency.

There were seven of twenty-one variables identified as having significant relationships with perceived VAL proficiency. Age was a natural fitting relationship, although positive low, showing older people report themselves more proficient in this area ($r = .46$). However, tenure, which took into consideration length of time in extension and volunteer administration did not correlate significantly. Additionally, race had a low positive correlation indicating non-white respondents reported a higher level of perceived proficiency ($r = .44$). Organizational culture ($r = .57$) had a

positive moderate relationship, providing evidence supporting the importance of knowledge and skills addressing positions and relationships within a volunteer organization. VAL competency importance also correlated highly with perceived proficiency ($r = .58$). This indicated if respondents believed VAL was important, they also believed themselves to be proficient.

There should be a concerted effort to ensure more in-service educational program opportunities, especially to meet identified needs. Implementation of a mentoring program that orients and provides a supportive contact for new or younger faculty members can assist in overall job satisfaction and retention (Kutilek, Gunderson & Conklin, 2002; Zimmer & Smith, 1992).

Objective 3

In building a predictive model for perceived proficiency in VAL, there were two key variables, which contributed to 43% of the variability in the model. Age ($\beta = .40$, $p < .05$), contributed to the model and provided a means for addressing the notion that the older an individual is the more proficient they are due to various factors, including more varied experience, education, and practice. Organizational culture ($\beta = .52$, $p < .05$) contained items related to encouraging professional development, confidence in volunteers, seeking additional resources, identifying motivational needs, and designated organizational resources for volunteer development, all items identified as also important in VAL (Stedman, 2004).

However, there should be additional research addressing proficiency. First, the number of respondents brings into question the predictability of the model. In multiple regression a small sample size may introduce questions about the generalizability of the model. The adjusted R^2 value was used to compensate and be conservative due to the smaller sample size. The model was found to be significant ($F = 10.04$, $p < .01$).

Research should address the actual competence of 4-H county faculty versus their self-perceptions of their proficiency.

Professional development opportunities should be tailored around items related to organizational leadership.

Discussions/Implications

It is important to continue discussions related to the VAL competence and leadership styles of 4-H faculty, nationwide. If volunteer administrator educators are to guide programs based on needs prediction models can provide a great source of information about sources of variation among the learners. However, when there is uncertainty in the validity of the model, researchers must be prepared to continue the effort.

As we begin to gain a better understanding of the effects of these independent variables on VAL proficiency, we can also develop strategies, which integrate these principles into planning. The support for this need is apparent in the number of youth seeking services from 4-H county faculty. This fact has not varied over the years and remains a driving force of extension program offices. Volunteers are in the position to assist in the reaching of organizational objectives and can assist 4-H in meeting the needs of all their clients and staff.

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NICOLE STEDMAN is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Agricultural Education at Texas A&M University, MS 2116, 176 Spence St. Rm. 119B Scoates Hall, College Station, TX 77843-2116. E-mail: nstedman@aged.tamu.edu.

RICK D. RUDD is an Associate Professor in the Department of Agricultural Education and Communication at the University of Florida, 218 Rolfs Hall, P. O. Box 110540, Gainesville, FL 32611-0540. E-mail: rrudd@ufl.edu.