

TITLE The Relationship between Leadership Practices of First-Line Supervisors and Job Commitment of Deputies in Jail Facilities

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OBJECTIVE The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship exists between leadership practices of first-line supervisors and the job commitment of deputies at 13 county jail correctional facilities located in the Midwestern United States.

METHODOLOGY

The total population for this research consisted of 630 deputies assigned to corrections, employed by varying sized sheriff's offices located in 13 counties in the Midwestern United States. There were five jail facilities with small inmate populations (< 200), four medium facilities (from 201-449), and four large-sized facilities (460+ inmates), and the 13 jail facilities had a combined average inmate capacity of 416 inmates. The number of line-level deputies assigned to these 13 facilities ranged from 12-181 deputies, with the average being 49 deputies; and 171 participated in the study (27% response rate). Respondents completed the Leadership Practices Inventory Observer and the Organizational Commitment Scale (Meyer & Allen, 1991).

KEY FINDINGS

All five leadership practices were significantly correlated with both Affective (desire-based) and Normative (obligation-based) Commitment, and not significantly with Continuance (cost-based) Commitment. Between small, medium, and large-size facilities, Enable was the only leadership practice that showed a significant difference (higher frequency in small vs. large facilities); and none of the three types of commitment varied by facility size.

The author concludes:

First-line supervisors wanting to increase the level of affective and normative organizational commitment and deputy performance may want to focus on developing leadership skills beyond transactional behaviors. Specifically, leaders who develop transformational leadership skills and behaviors may improve their ability to model the way, inspire a shared vision, challenge the process, enable others to act, and encourage the heart of deputies with whom the leader interacts. Improving these skills could have a positive effect on raising the level of deputy affective and normative organizational commitment. This study may provide an understanding for employers that strong

leadership may have a positive effect on enhancing the performance and commitment of their employees (p. 107).